

The Liberal Christian

Herald

An Unlikely Alliance

Gems for the Journey

**What's good about
Good Friday?**

April 2016 No86



*Rev Lewis Rees with his wife Cheryl and daughter Liela
after Lewis's induction service at Nottage Chapel Porthcawl, South Wales*

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*From
the
Editor*



Most of the content of this issue focuses on Easter, but it will quickly be apparent that there are as many approaches to Easter as there are Liberal Christians meditating on its meaning.

History has unfortunately shown us that ideas can all too readily become fossilised - particularly when in the hands of those who use them as a means of maintain power. It is a sad reality that the Church itself has a poor reputation for being open to new ideas and what is my insight through the power of the Holy Spirit may seem like heresy to you.

Hopefully we can see through the pain this can cause, to a point where we can live with difference of understanding and belief - even at the deepest level.

I once heard a Vicar say 'when I hear two totally different interpretations of scripture I think, well, why not? God is far greater than our limited understanding.'

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Contents

3	Editorial
4	What's Good about Good Friday? Adrian Long
6	Thoughts for Easter 2016
8	Induction of Rev Lewis Rees
9	Gems for the Journey UCA publications
10	An Unlikely Alliance Rev Jeff Gould
12	A Unitarian Anabaptist Faith Stephen Lingwood
14	Radical ?
15	UCA events

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What's good about Good Friday?

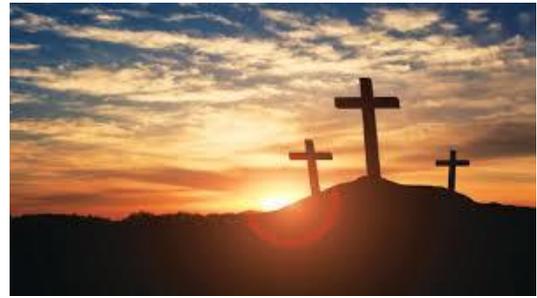
Adrian Long

This article is about religion. So if you object to religion, stop reading now. However, if you can bear with me, you might just come to see that being religious doesn't mean you're opinionated, self-righteous, and in-your-face, or that you necessarily have to believe in implausible miracles.

I don't propose to write often about religion on my blog, and I certainly don't wish to bore people who are not interested, but if I can't write about religion at the most important times of the Christian year, when can I? It is very sad that it seems to be becoming embarrassing to call yourself a Christian: a gay clergyman friend of mine recently told me that he now finds it harder to tell people he is a Christian than to tell them that he is gay. I rejoice with him that we live in a society that now overwhelmingly accepts peoples' sexuality as no big deal and certainly no reason for hostility and prejudice, but there is something wrong if peoples' religion has become an object of embarrassment and even hostility.

I am a Unitarian Christian (the subject of a lengthy explanation which I won't bore you with here). This means that the whole business of Jesus's death and resurrection is complicated for me. Many people now pay little attention to the traditional meaning of Good Friday and Easter, yet nobody can deny that the events of what we call Holy Week are as significant as any in the history of mankind. The fact that many of us are on holiday from work, that we are eating hot cross buns today and chocolate eggs on Sunday is a direct consequence of our commemoration of those events 2000 years ago. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the events of Holy Week and Easter are pretty hard to deal with. The day on which the hero of our belief system was cruelly and violently put to death by a tyrannical occupying power is called, in English at least, "Good".

As if that's not bad enough, Christians are then supposed to believe that he did it "for their sake" and that he then rose from the dead, thereby defying the one certainty in life: death. According to many, that's what's "good" about



Good Friday – the idea that Jesus “died to make us good”, to quote C F Alexander’s wonderful hymn, “There is a Green Hill far Away”. Actually, calling it “Good” is a largely English-speaking oddity. Most other languages have a different term, most commonly some variant on the word “Holy” – in French, for example, it is “*Vendredi Saint*”. Of the major European languages, only Dutch – which is the living language closest to English in many ways – uses the term “good”: “*Goede Vrijdag*”. I actually think the German term is pretty apt in terms of telling us what happened: *Karfreitag* – which means *Sorrowful* or *Suffering Friday*. Whatever you call it, it wasn't a very good day for Jesus and his followers. They would have taken some convincing, at the end of that terrible day, that what he went through was in any way good. I too struggle to see what's good about the cruel and horrible death of a patently good man.

As a Unitarian, I certainly don't accept the idea that we are all inherently sinful and need someone to suffer and die in order to save us. I believe that we human beings are all capable of the most terrible sins, but that's not the same thing as being sinful, and I certainly believe that our salvation lies in our own hands, not those of an innocent man. So in that sense, there is nothing good about Good Friday for me. However, I have an aversion to well-meaning attempts to manipulate language to make it match literal truths. After all, Easter is a term derived from the name of a pagan goddess of Spring and fertility, so at one level I'm happy to accept Good Friday as “just a name” for an important day.

Yet the explanation that today is a good day because it recognises the good thing that Jesus did for us is not necessarily the correct explanation for the name of the day. Another very plausible explanation comes from the fact that the words “good” and “God” are often interchangeable in the English language. We need look no further than the word “goodbye”, which means “God with you” (God-by-ye) for proof of that. So if we accept this explanation for the term, “Good Friday” is

perhaps a little easier to accept. I certainly prefer this explanation: to call it God's day is much easier for me to accept, in that my own interpretation of God is that it simply means "good". My concept of God is not as an omnipotent father-figure and creator who ordains all that is, was and shall be, but rather that "God" means all that is good in the world. After all, it is commonly observed that there is only one letter of difference between *God* and *good*, and also only one letter of difference between *devil* and *evil*. Etymologists rightly point out that this is probably just a neat coincidence, but it certainly suits me to believe that "God" can simply mean all that is good in the world, while "devil" can simply mean all that is bad in the world.

Jesus's death, and especially the manner in which he was condemned by a fickle and baying mob, was surely the work of the devil – of evil. No different from many other acts of betrayal and violence throughout history. But it is my view that wherever there is evil, good is never far away, and good always has the last word. Time and again, when something dreadful happens in our world, we are left to despair of humankind's capacity for evil. Yet invariably, and especially if we look for it, there is a response which is good, although you often have to look harder for it, because the media prefer bad news to good news.

There are so many examples, but one that always sticks in my mind is the way in which the family of 12-year-old Tim Parry, the boy killed by an IRA bomb in Warrington in 1993, used his death and that of 3-year-old Johnathan Ball in the same incident as a catalyst to set up a peace foundation, contributing in no small measure to the eventual end of the IRA bombing campaign and the start of the Ulster peace process. I could quote numerous other stories from throughout history to make the same point. Good – or God – had the last word.

So instead of despairing when something dreadful happens in our world, and bemoaning the absence of God at such times, perhaps we should look for the good – the God – which is always there to respond, to comfort and to heal. And in that respect, Good Friday is aptly named, in that it however hard it must have been to believe it at the time, God (or good) was not far away. Good Friday comes just two days before we remember that even if the physical Jesus was put to death, his spirit, his values and his example of how to live a good

life continued to shine in an at times dark and evil world, and still do so to this day.

This Friday is indeed good.



Adrian Long is the son and grandson of eminent 20th century Unitarian ministers Walter and Arthur Long. Brought up a Unitarian, he has remained true to those beliefs, but is a practising (but non-communicant) member of his local Anglican Parish Church, in the ecumenical spirit of his late father.

Theologically liberal but liturgically conservative (thanks partly to a strong Anglo-Catholic heritage on his mother's side and a love of choral music), he enjoys living out his beliefs as part of a strong church community and in his work as a schoolteacher. He is a member of the Unitarian Christian Association, of which his father was a founding member.

He is a prolific tweeter and a blogger who writes on a variety of topics including music, football, religion and diabetes: as a Type 1 diabetic, he is a prominent member of the GBDOC, an online community of people with the condition.

Married with three adult children, Adrian lives in Lancashire and works as a Head of Sixth Form and university entrance advisor at a leading independent school.

Thoughts for Easter 2016

One characteristic of Unitarian life is that in church one has no idea what the person next to you really believes; almost by definition we each maintain our individual 'theology'. So it is appropriate I believe to begin writings with an indication of 'where one comes from' in order to set any writing into its correct milieu.

In that respect I have to say that my thoughts on the nature of Jesus would be based on the view that Jesus was what would now be called a yogi 'master'; that is, one who had achieved the highest level of consciousness of the divine. From this viewpoint I have found an interesting theory of Jesus' death and resurrection.

As a 'master', the theory goes, Jesus did not actually die, but entered a state of 'samadhi'. In this state he was taken down and placed in the tomb from where he was somehow released and went to meet his disciples. It is recorded that in a state of samadhi a yogi is often not in his body, so it could truly be said that Jesus did 'die'. This theory is fully set out at a very interesting web site called 'Original Christianity and Original Yoga'. (ocoy.org)

Although I do not accept all of that theory uncritically it does for me tie together some of the oddities that the New Testament recounts. As in the gospel of Mark where it is said that Pilate was 'surprised that he was dead' in such a short time; from 9am till 3pm, since it was often days. In John's gospel it is said that a spear was thrust in his side and it 'issued blood and water' indicating that there might still be life. Also in a recent account on television about the Shroud of Turin, where it was indicated that it may indeed be genuine, an attempt was made to discover how its image might have been created. The outcome was that it was a form of charring caused by a very high electric current. To me this might also indicate that the person beneath it had used very unusual powers.

Following through to the accounts of the resurrection there are also slightly odd comments in the gospels. In John 21 Jesus appears to some of the disciples while they are fishing yet 'none of them dared ask who are you? They knew it was the Lord'. Surely you and I would have been full of questions? Also in John when he meets Mary in the garden but tells her not to touch him; and at the end of

Matthew when the disciples fall prostrate in front of him, but 'some doubted'. One wonders whether he was indeed resurrected but there was something a bit different about his appearance.

The resurrection was a catalyst to the disciples and it seems that they believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Acts recounts a typical speech to their fellow Jews and the fact that they 'were daily in the temple praising god' and tells of their communal life. Messianic Jews continue to this day and still the same divergencies appear of whether they are 'Jewish Christians' of 'Christian Jews'. The beliefs of the early disciples are best set out in the gospel of Matthew, which contains the Sermon on the Mount and also Jesus' earnest instruction that his disciples should be more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees since Jesus had not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it. It follows in Acts 3 where the disciples Messianic beliefs are explained to the crowd.

Yet this is not the 'Christian message' we have inherited today. In a wonderful book, 'The Reluctant Parting', Julie Galambusch explains in detail how the first Jewish 'Christian' sect continued as one of the several sects taking part in synagogue worship. However, the theology of the some of the sect changed in places outside Palestine as the influences of the Pauline school of thought began to assert that Jesus was a 'sacrifice' to God for our sins. This view eventually assumed the commanding position and gave the 'orthodoxy' of the western church which we inherit today. The original disciples suffered at the hands of both the Jewish ultra orthodox and the Romans and so virtually disappeared. However, as stated above the Jewish Christians are now back in being and there are even small groups of Ebionites, those Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah but not as a god.

Briefly stated the orthodox message in Christian churches is that man sinned and continues to sin and that only the ritual sacrifice of Jesus can appease 'God'. I would suggest that this view of the message of a god demanding a sacrifice and that this is the only way to god is not especially appealing today and is leading to the emptying of churches.

In order to support their view it is of great importance that Jesus died and was born again since that is at the gist of their theology.

For me, as I have set out above, it is not that important. Episodes such as the transfiguration give to me a far greater re-assurance of the advanced state of Jesus. Also to continue on a personal level, I find that it was Jesus' teaching on the nature of the divine as being that of a loving parent.

Yet we see before us now a world wherein fewer people 'go to church' yet 'more and more' now meditate. Even the Christian churches now have their meditation groups. Our awareness of the real nature of the 'spiritual quest' is increasing and it is found that we no longer need the sacrificial story to help us. So I think that the 'forgotten' view of the gospel of Jesus, about a loving parent is one that will now go forward. Not just because it better accounts for our view of the Christian message, but because it can only be truly obtained experientially, which is how the new generations like to take things.

Peter Brown is a UCA member who has recently moved to Gloucestershire but is not at present affiliated to a particular Unitarian congregation

It is interesting that the Christian festival of Easter still carries the name of the Mythical German goddess that it supplanted. There is always the parallel dialogue of Spring and new life emerging from the darkness of winter. And the symbolism of the egg and the bunny in the full moon. It is easy to be satisfied with this old pagan tradition and I am pleased it survives. The Christian Easter is the cornerstone of faith, Don't believe it as a fact and you are not a Christian at all. If it really happened it really happened, but there is no physical proof for any of it, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen if you really believe it did. I can't see why there have to be so many theories to explain how actually it might never had. There is the alternative body theory, and the total fiction story, the survival story and more. I don't personally believe it as an historic fact but it is significant because it carries so much symbolism. There is the connection with the cave. The birth story is set in a

cave and the spiritual Christ has also emerged from a cave. He is man in a new form, taken up the immortal part of himself wholly and divinely. In spirit form he is known but not recognised.

Just who is in whose dimension ? Is Mary in his or is he in hers? It is the melting of the material into the spiritual, or maybe the opposite.

And who moved the stone? There can be many reasons,, from gravity to bribed guards, but better to see the simplicity of an angelic presence.

If there had not been this spiritual turning point on the axis of time, there would have been no Christianity. The Jesus followers would have been just another sect, like the Essenes or become a closed community like Qumran.

There was sufficient power in the story to relaunch the teachings of Jesus as a Greek mystery religion that became Christianity. As a personal religion it is sublime. As an organisation keen to preserve it, the church set rules and boundaries. The boundaries were set too narrow so as minds expanded the rules tried to restrict them and it ended in disorder after much bloodshed.

The church has lost so much influence because it insists on hanging on to Easter being a physical event and the Jesus of Peace being at one with a God whose wrath we should dread.

I wish we could go back to the simple symbolism that Easter heralded. Maybe one day it will and the Christian church will flourish again.



Tony McNeile is a former minister of Bank Street Chapel Bolton and is minister to the National Unitarian Fellowship. He was a founder member of the Bolton Interfaith Council.



Induction of Rev Lewis Rees at Nottage

Nottage is a delightful small village on the edge of Porthcawl, a scenic seaside resort in South Wales and the small General Baptist and Unitarian chapel, as it is called, stands in the centre of the village. The induction service for the chapel's new minister, Rev Lewis Rees, took place on a sunny Saturday afternoon, 16th January, with the building filled to capacity.

The service was led with style and gentle humour by Rev. Eric Jones, Minister Emeritus of Aberdare and a former President of the General Assembly, with over 50 years of ministry behind him. Other ministerial colleagues and friends who took part in the service included Rev John Carter who gave the Charge to the Minister, Rev Ant Howe who led the prayers, Rev Jeff Gould who gave a Biblical reading and a fellow Welsh minister, Rev Wyn Thomas who gave the Charge to the Congregation. The service was both dignified and happy. One thing which will stay in my memory was Wyn Thomas telling a story about his friend Budgie, a story both funny and with great pathos. Other friends and Unitarians came from near and far, several in particular bringing greetings: Ms Lis Dyson Jones (another former GA President) brought those of the General Assembly in the absence of the GA President, who had a previous engagement; Tony Foster, from the South Wales Unitarian Society (the local 'District'); Mrs Melda Grantham from the Unitarian Welsh Department; and Rev. Jean Bradley, Moderator of the Unitarian Christian Association, who, knowing no Welsh, nevertheless spoke a couple of sentences in her greeting, which a Welsh friend sitting next to me in the pew said she understood perfectly. The local community was represented by the Bridgend County Borough Mayor, Cllr. Richard Young and the Porthcawl Town Council Mayor, Cllr David Newton-Williams.

Lewis Rees has made a long and sometimes far from easy journey to ministry, including periods of ill-health, and the service was a splendid vindication and celebration of all his efforts and all those who helped him on his way. An induction service should reflect the character and personality of the minister and his congregation, and the happiness and love that was present shone through the proceedings like a golden thread. Lewis's family, his wife Cheryl and daughter Liela were there to share the joy of the day and perhaps the greatest highlight of the afternoon was when he lifted Liela up in his arms while speaking from the pulpit.

These are not easy times for churches of any denomination and Unitarians often struggle to make an impact on their local communities. It is all too easy to become disheartened and feel that there is little or nothing we can do to spread our message or give to the community. But the greetings brought by the local Town Mayor represented, for me at least, an answer to such discouragement. He spoke of his father, himself a local Presbyterian minister, who had a great friendship with the then Unitarian minister and every New Year the two friends would celebrate with a meal between them.

We are sowing seeds wherever we go and the benefits often come long after we, the individual sowers, have passed on. Just as the two minister friends from different chapels found companionship decades ago, so their descendants, literally and figuratively, reaped the benefit of that friendship. We may worship God in different ways, but we seek to apply the Golden Rule of Jesus, treating all as we would wish to be treated, respecting those of all faith traditions and those of none.

No induction service would be complete without the tea afterwards, and the Old School Room was a dream for lovers of savouries and those with sweet teeth and a nightmare for anyone counting calories. Old friends were greeted and new ones made. It was a happy and auspicious start for Lewis and his congregation and a fitting service of praise to God.

An Unlikely Alliance

Rev Jeff Gould

Ecumenism manifests itself in many ways. It was my honour to have experienced a unique event that has given me hope for future co-operation and dialogue amongst traditions that hold very different views of Scripture, focus on doctrines that potentially divide Christians and worship in contrasting styles. The Anglican Parish Church of All Saints', Hale Barns, Cheshire, the Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel in Hale Barns and the Seventh-Day Adventist congregation that meets in the Ringway Life Building, adjacent to Manchester International Airport united on Sunday, 11 October 2015 to commemorate 500 years of Christian worship on the site that features in each congregation's history and identity.

What had been the chapel of ease at Ringway, in the parish of Bowdon, Cheshire was the home of a congregation that became Presbyterian through the course of the English Civil War and the period following the 1662 Act of Uniformity. This anomaly was possible, owing to the dissenting sympathies of the landlords, but when the lord of the manor changed, so did the sentiments towards the occupying congregation. In an effort to curry favour with the Crown and to demonstrate his loyalist allegiance, the new lord expelled the congregation.

So it was that in 1723 the Presbyterians of Ringway Chapel crossed the Cheshire fields and erected a meeting-house on a plot of land in the village of Hale Barns that

was purchased for the sum of £5 (a good deal less expensive than property would command in that community today!). That chapel survives and continues to house a faithful congregation that is in membership of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (the denomination that resulted from the evolution of several dissenting traditions, of whom the English Presbyterians were but one).

The Church of England erected a Mission Church in Hale Barns in 1883 in order to respond to the needs of the growing population. The original building was replaced by a modern structure in 1967, which currently serves the needs of the Anglican community that worships there.

The chapel in Ringway had been opened in 1515, and was followed by another chapel in about the year 1730. That building was in turn replaced by the Ringway Church of St. Mary in 1895. That church was declared redundant in 1970, but remained under the auspices of the Diocese of Chester until 1997, when the building was sold to a commercial firm. The cemetery remained the responsibility of the parish church of Hale Barns, and continues to receive interments.

In the process of searching for a building that would meet the needs of a growing Seventh-Day Adventist congregation that draws members from the South Manchester/North Cheshire area, the former church at

Ringway was found to have the potential to return to its original use as a place of worship. The Ringway Life Building (as it was by then known), was purchased in 2010 by the Adventists, who now hold their regular Saturday morning Bible study and acts of worship on a site that has hosted Christian worship since 1515.

tears of joy and thanksgiving at the united acts of worship

It was thought appropriate to honour this important landmark by holding a united act of worship that would involve all three congregations that could claim a relationship to the site at Ringway. On the afternoon of Sunday, 11 October 2015 members of all three communities met first at the parish church of All Saints', then moved to the Unitarian Chapel, and ended their 'peripatetic devotions' with a final service at the Ringway church. The spirit that was present in the planning meetings was one of genuine Christian unity, whilst the distinct integrity of each separate tradition was maintained. The day of commemoration was splendidly sunny and mild, which seemed to match the expressions of those who led in the worship and attended the three-fold services. A touch of historical veracity was added by the presence of some of the Adventists, who dressed in Puritan costume! The quality of the fellowship and the abundance of refreshments that graced the social hour at the end of the day's celebrations spoke of 'unity with diversity'.

Whilst the day of united worship was a remarkable achievement in its own right, two marvellous by-products of the occasion have resulted. The members of all three congregations were so moved by the sense of shared values and faith they experienced that they have committed themselves to working intentionally with the other congregations in future efforts and to hold occasional united acts of worship. A moving resolution of the former exclusion and division has also been borne out of the occasion, as the Unitarian Chapel has agreed to serve as a temporary home to the Adventists, whilst their building undergoes significant re-ordering and refurbishment. Almost 300 years after one congregation was expelled from the Ringway site, the current congregation of that building will be welcomed into the chapel that resulted from that act of dismissal.

Nothing could demonstrate the fruits of ecumenism better to this clergyman, who wept tears of joy and thanksgiving at the united acts of worship last autumn. It felt as if it were a tangible answer to our Lord's prayer, 'that they all might be one.' If Adventists, Anglicans and Unitarians can work and worship together, ecumenism has the potential to achieve even greater things.

Jeff Gould
Minister, Hale Chapel, Hale Barns
(Unitarian and Free Christian)

A Unitarian Anabaptist Faith

Stephen Lingwood

I first find out about Unitarianism in Karen Armstrong's wonderful book "A History of God." There was a chapter on the Reformation which mentioned, in only one or two paragraphs, that there were Christians in Poland called "Unitarians" who tried to create a Christianity based on the teaching of Jesus, rather than concentrating on his death and atonement. "That's what I believe," I thought to myself, and I decided to investigate this Unitarian thing. At that time I didn't know whether the movement still existed, or whether it had ever existed outside of Poland, but I was going to find out. I researched and discovered, of course, that though the movement in Poland was extinct, there were Unitarians in Britain and I became one of them.

Some fifteen years later, I find myself coming around full circle. After thinking about and studying Unitarianism for many years I have concluded that I truly belong with those early Polish Unitarians; that's where I sit theologically, spiritually and politically. That movement was officially called the Minor Reformed Church of Poland. Unofficially they were called Socinians after their most well-known theologian Faustus Socinus. I call them Unitarian Anabaptists. That's also what I call myself. Increasingly I would understand my faith to be Unitarian Anabaptist.

Anabaptists were a diverse and radical group of people in the Reformation who went much further than the likes of Luther and Calvin. They believed the church needed a much more radical reformation to truly follow Jesus. They practised adult baptism as they believed a conscious decision to follow Jesus was needed. They practised some form of separation from the world, radical

discipleship, non-violence, and the rejection of wealth and status. These are of course generalisations, as I said, these were a diverse collection of radical groupings. Part of that diversity in Poland included Anabaptists who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity.

I'm not going to attempt a comprehensive history of the Polish Unitarian Anabaptists here, but let me just highlight one story, the story of Jan Niemojewski. Jan Niemojewski was a Polish nobleman and district judge. He studied in Germany and while there caught the spirit of the Reformation. When he returned to Poland he met Martin Czechowicz, a radical preacher, and he began to take on Czechowicz's teaching.

Niemojewski was baptised and committed to living a life based on the Sermon on the Mount. He used his considerable riches to found a Unitarian church; he freed all his serfs; he resigned his office as a judge as it might have involved him using the death penalty; he took Jesus' words seriously and sold his property and gave the money to the poor. When a meeting of noblemen was called he appeared, not dressed finely with a sword, as all other nobles were, but dressed plainly and with no sword. Soon after he and others relocated to the town of Raków, which became the centre for Polish Unitarian Anabaptism, and he was active in the movement for the rest of his life (Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism, Vol. I: Socinianism and its Antecedents (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947) 336-337).

I highlight this story because it says a lot about what the Polish movement

was about, and why I am attracted to it. For Niemojewski becoming a Unitarian wasn't just about "finding a spiritual home" or finding a place that fit with his beliefs and doubts - it was about a process of radical conversion that changed his life. It was about embracing generosity, equality, and non-violence. It was about following Jesus.

I find myself longing for this kind of commitment, this kind of discipleship. I love the progressive politics and intellectual freedom of Unitarianism but I need more. I need a faith that will challenge me to really transform my life through the love of God, and to really follow Jesus. I need a faith that rejects the materialism, hierarchy, and greed of the world. For all these reasons I am increasingly embracing an Anabaptist faith.

And I am not the only one. In recent years many Christians have been rediscovering the Anabaptist tradition and finding that it's riches are surprisingly relevant for the twenty-first century. The Anabaptist Network was formed in 1992 to bring together those exploring this tradition. They have a number of "Core Convictions" that include these words:

"Western culture is slowly emerging from the Christendom era when church and state jointly presided over a society in which almost all were assumed to be Christian. Whatever its positive contributions on values and institutions, Christendom seriously distorted the gospel, marginalised Jesus, and has left the churches ill-equipped for mission in a post-Christendom culture. As we reflect on this, we are committed to learning from the experience and perspectives of movements such as Anabaptism that rejected standard Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and behaving...

"The frequent association of the church with status, wealth and force is inappropriate for followers of Jesus and

damages our witness. We are committed to exploring ways of being good news to the poor, powerless and persecuted...

"Peace is at the heart of the gospel. As followers of Jesus in a divided and violent world, we are committed to finding non-violent alternatives and to learning how to make peace between individuals, within and among churches, in society, and between nations." (www.anabaptistnetwork.com/coreconvictions)

My Unitarian Anabaptist approach is manifested in my life in several ways. One is the fact that I was baptised as a conscious mark of following Jesus three years ago (I write about this in the UCA publication *Our Christian Faith*).

Another manifestation is my refusal to use the title "Reverend" as part of my belief in radical Christian equality. I'm also involved in several campaigns that fight against "Christendom" Christian privilege like discriminatory admissions policies in faith schools and prayers in local Council meetings. My Anabaptist faith is also at the root of my political commitments to democracy, socialism, republicanism and the fight against nuclear weapons.

At the same time am I aware that being an "Anabaptist by myself" is not a very Anabaptist thing to do. Community is needed. I am part of an Anabaptist study group but it's not really enough. I would be very interested to know if there were others who were interested in following a Unitarian Anabaptist path, and exploring ways we could be community together, finding out what a twenty-first century Unitarian Anabaptism might look like.

If anyone is interested I'd be very keen to hear from them through email to s_lingwood@hotmail.com.

R

adical – be radical
And upset where you can;
Cling to what you know is true
Don't wilt for any man –
Or woman, for we have to be
Religiously correct –
Though saying what we have to say
May find our fortunes wrecked.

There is no place for compromise
While going to the dogs
And your Word will be trampled down
As we take on the fogs
Of ignorance, the platitudes,
The selfishness and greed,
The meanness, spite and arrogance
That crushes every seed
Of love, respect and tolerance,
Equality for all –
Damning us because we are
The *Outcome of the Fall*.

But we are not – it is a lie
Couched to protect the few
As they condemn the rest of us,
Yes, even me and you,
Who were set free the moment when
We knew that Love was all,
When Christ came into our lives
When we took up his call;
And now his strength and joy are ours
No limit to his love
No end to what we can achieve
Ennobled from above.

For all the filth and decadence
The evils that ensnare
Are nothing in the face of Love
Which never can despair.
For we know loving totally
Makes *Radical* seem tame;
It pierces to the heart of all,
Ignites the Spirit's flame,
Until the world is set on fire
With Love that conquers all
The pain and separation
In the lie that is *The Fall*.

After Pelagius



Unitarian Christian Association



The Unitarian Christian Association was founded in 1991 in an effort to strengthen and preserve the liberal Christian witness within the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches of Great Britain. The year of 2016 therefore, marks twenty-five years of faithful witness to this effort.

An event will take place at Essex Hall, London on Saturday, 8 October 2016 in order to give thanks for the persons who have dedicated their time and talents to maintaining this cause over the past quarter of a century, and visions will be offered of ways in which the association might support the wider denomination in the years to come.

The occasion will begin at one o'clock in the afternoon with a buffet luncheon, served in the Lindsey Room at no charge. This will be followed by an act of worship at two o'clock. Dr. Tony Cross, who was a founding member of the UCA, will speak on the antecedents of the association, and will offer some insights into the circumstances that prevailed at the time of its foundation. The Chief Officer of the General Assembly, Mr. Derek McAuley, will speak on the current ecumenical partnerships that exist between the denomination and other bodies, and offer some possibilities of future co-operation with such organisations. The proceedings will conclude with afternoon tea. In order to indicate interest in attending the event, for catering and logistical purposes, please contact the UCA Events Officer, Jeff Gould (email, jeffreylanegould1959@talktalk.net; telephone, 01625 403509).

UNITARIAN THEOLOGY CONFERENCE

**Held at Cross St. Chapel, Manchester
Saturday 21st May 2016**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER - REV DAVID STEERS

10.30 for 11am - 5 pm

Please bring own lunch, for further details please
contact Rev Jim Corrigall on 07909572279
email corrigalljim@gmail.com



I am with you always