

The Liberal Christian

Herald

Easter Meditation

Thought for Today

He who sings prays twice

March 2014 No79



*Teddy Bears celebrate a Bear's 90th birthday - Hastings Week October 2013,
Hastings Unitarian Church*

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From the Editor



I was recently at a large Churches Together meeting in Hastings. What surprised me was not so much the wide variety of beliefs within such a broad Christian gathering but the evidence of activity and support within our local community.

There were 29 stalls focussing on the many ways that groups of Christians are active in the town, ranging from food banks to healing centres. It struck me that it was much easier to identify what it means to be a Christian on an occasion like that, for it was very obvious what we do, if not so clear what we believe or what the differences are. It seemed a very positive approach and one which, maybe, we Unitarians could learn from.

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Many readers will be aware that, since the last publication of *The Herald*, Rev Bob Pounder has resigned as Moderator. We are deeply appreciative of the work he has done over many years for the UCA and send him our love and prayers for his future work.



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Does God communicate with people?

Roger Booth

Many people of faith would claim that God has communicated with them during prayer or otherwise.

Some may believe that God has spoken to them through the voice of conscience. Such fortunate people do not need to analyse the evidence for their claim because they have experienced the communication personally. But for people without that personal experience, the question of whether God has communicated with other persons can only be answered through a weighing of the evidence supporting and opposing the claim.

For the principal counter-evidence against a divine communication consists in the amazing nature of the claim. Indeed, the evidence against such a communication appears so strong that the validity of the claim must depend on the compelling nature of any corroboration produced to support it.

The strongest corroboration would be a confirmatory message from God, but this would be extremely unlikely. However, corroboration could be provided by another person or persons who could testify that the alleged communication from God was made in their hearing also.

There are many assertions by writers in the Old Testament that God has communicated with persons on earth .. Exodus 3 and 4 are full of alleged conversation between God and Moses. God also spoke to the prophets – e.g. to Samuel at 1 Samuel 3,4-14; to Elijah at 1 Kings 19,9-19. He also spoke to Solomon at 1 Kings 3,5-14.

There are also assertions of God-like communication in the New Testament. It is reported that after his baptism Jesus saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending like a dove and he heard a voice from heaven, “Thou art my beloved son; with thee I am well pleased.” (Mark 1,11) This is a vision, but God may speak through visions and dreams. At Mark 9,2-8 Peter, James and John see Jesus transfigured with Moses and Elijah, and hear a voice from the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him”. This again is a vision, but the words of God are presumably witnessed by the three disciples.

At Acts 10,10-16 Peter in a trance saw a great sheet with all kinds of animals on it, and heard a voice from heaven commanding him to kill and eat. Peter demurs but the voice says, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” This happened three times. God has here condemned Peter’s natural Jewish inclination to abstain from ritually unclean food which inclination is evidenced by his subsequently eating separately from Gentiles (Galations 2,12).

At his conversion at Acts 9,3-8 Paul and the spirit of the risen Jesus speak together and Jesus commands Paul to enter Damascus and receive further instructions. A light from heaven flashed about Paul, and this also indicates a vision. Paul indicates at 2 Corinthians 12, 1-4 that he had other contacts with the spirit world. In verses 8-9 he describes how three times he asked Jesus for relief from his ‘thorn in the flesh’ and received the reply, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul is unlikely to have invented this reply since he presumably

wanted to hear that the ‘thorn’ would be removed.

The Holy Spirit may be understood as the voice of God and at Acts 16.6 Paul and Silas are forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. At v.7 the Spirit prevents them from going into Bythnia Presumably the Spirit is here answering their requests for guidance.

There is naturally no corroboration by God or Jesus that they have made these communications, so a decision on whether they did communicate in these and other instances has to be based upon a review of the evidence supporting and opposing the communication. Evidence against the assertion of words from God consists, as mentioned above, in the enormity of the claim that the Creator Spirit has spoken to persons on earth.

However, for those enquirers who accept the possibility of speech from the spirit of a deceased person to a person on earth, the force of this unlikelihood is weakened by any proof that other spirits have communicated from the spirit world. For if there is testimony that other spirits have communicated to people on earth, how much more likely it is that (a) God, being the almighty Creator Spirit, and (b) the spirit of Jesus, may also have communicated. There would thus be evidence that there are open ‘pathways’ from heaven to earth, which have been trodden by some spirits and so may have been traversed by the Creator Spirit and the spirit of the risen Jesus.

The resurrection and continuing existence of spirits of deceased persons is a basic tenet of the Christian faith, for the risen Jesus was “the first fruits of those who have died.” (1 Corinthians 15,20). Jesus is not reported in the synoptic Gospels as saying that those spirits can communicate with earth, but an inference to that effect might be drawn from the Transfiguration where the risen Moses and Elijah speak to the earthly Jesus (Mark 9,4).

A Biblical assertion of a non-divine spirit communicating to earth is made at 1 Samuel 28 where the deceased Samuel appears to Saul and converses with him. Modern alleged instances of communication by spirits of deceased humans have been collected by the Society for Psychical Research.



Medjugorje

David Fontana examined closely the circumstances and content of communications made by many spirits who have allegedly communicated through mediums, notably through Leonora Piper, Gladys Leonard and Eileen Garrett. He concluded that if you believe that “you are more than a biological accident whose ultimately meaningless life is bounded by the cradle and the grave, I agree with you.”

If the assertion of such communications were supported by corroborating evidence, then the proven ability of these non-divine spirits to communicate with persons on earth would constitute corroboration of the possibility of

communications by God, the Creator Spirit. The necessary corroboration of the communications by these non-divine spirits may consist of any circumstance which renders the authenticity of the communication alleged more probable.

Thus, as mentioned above, the hearing of the voice by more than one person at the same time may be such a circumstance (e.g. six persons were present at some of the visions of, and conversation with, the Virgin Mary at Medjugorje, which continue today).

The book and newspaper tests provided for the Rev Drayton Thomas, and the 'spirit' photograph of himself provided by the spirit of Conan Doyle seem to be other examples of satisfactory corroboration of the communications alleged. It is arguable that the tapes allegedly recording spirit voices, (such as those of Elizabeth Fry, Father O'Leary and Ted Butler) in conversation with living persons, are persuasive corroboration of their communications. No absolute proof of the genuineness of these communications can be adduced, but there are so many recorded instances where communication by the spirit of a deceased may be thought to be satisfactorily corroborated, that the cumulative weight of their evidence supports the possibility of communication by God to persons on earth.

However, counter-evidence to be set against the alleged communication by God may consist not only in the amazing fact of God so communicating but also in any sentiment of the communication being incompatible with the qualities of God revealed in scripture. Thus the reported words of God at 1 Samuel 15,3 that Saul should smite every man, woman and child of Amalek, conflict with the Biblical description of a God of mercy. Again, God's alleged assertion (a 'bath qol') in a rabbinic dispute that the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer was always correct, is faced with the counter-evidence of the unlikelihood of God making and announcing a judgement of this nature (Bab.M.59b).

We accordingly conclude that, even in the absence of personal experience, it is possible to believe that God does communicate with people. But whether God has in a particular instance communicated with a person on earth, should be judged on whether the balance of evidence, assessed in accordance with the above considerations, renders the communication more probable than not.

And the decision there, has potentially another important consequence, for if God does communicate with people, then ipso facto his existence becomes incontrovertible.

David Fontana
Is there an afterlife?
(O-Books, 2005)

Drayton Thomas, C
Life beyond Death with Evidence
(Collins, 1928)

Cooke, I
The Return of Arthur Conan Doyle
(White Eagle Publishing Trust, 1963)

Roger Booth January 2014.

Thought for the Day 26.12.2013

Good morning.

Today's guest editor, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, must be one of the best-known Unitarians in the world; more correctly, Unitarian Universalists, their name in the United States.

One of the principles of Unitarian Universalism is 'respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part' – a phrase that embodies our connection to each other, to the world, to *all that is*.

Nine years ago today, what became known as the Boxing Day Tsunami caused devastation in 14 countries around the Indian Ocean. Right round the world though, people responded generously to appeals for help – it was a powerful example of how we *are* all part of this 'interdependent web'. And the thousands of people caught up in the severe weather in Britain today will be in need of the same social solidarity and help.

Unitarians in Britain have historically reached out to others and have a long tradition of being champions of Reform – against the slave trade, and in promoting religious freedom.

We respect difference, both within our own ranks and without. And that includes a tradition of bringing different faiths together. Our Unitarian Meeting House in Ipswich, where I minister, helped found the annual multi-faith celebration of community there more than 30 years ago, and we hosted it for many years.

In recent months our Unitarian and Free Christian denomination has been prominent in the campaign for equality in marriage, which has now passed into law. Together with Quakers and Liberal Jews, we showed there *are* religious organisations who want to carry out same-sex marriage ceremonies in their places of worship, believing, as we do, that love between two people is a gift of God – a gift to be celebrated.

We well understand that many mainstream religious bodies don't share our understanding of marriage. But the world we live in, and our understanding of it, is ever-changing.

Change is hard - we cling to old ways of doing things, including, of course, to our much loved Christmas traditions. But this festive inheritance, rooted in the Nativity story, points to something deeper – to love within family, love for others.

This is what we ask in my own congregation – can we allow the Spirit of love to come into our hearts this Christmas, the Spirit that demands change -- and help for those most in need.

Jim Corrigan is Minister for Ipswich & Framfield

'BBC Radio 4 "Thought for the Day" broadcast on 26.12.2013 by Rev Jim Corrigan.' reprinted with permission

Dwelling in possibilities

***I dwell in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –***

Emily Dickinson

*It is the fool, the Psalmist writes, who
Hath said in his heart, There is no God,
And closed his mind to possibility.*

*Spare us from the arrogance of thinking
We know all there is to know about God,
And all there is to know about everything.*

*Spare us from the dogmatic certainties of
Atheism and fundamentalism,
all authoritarian
Ideologies both secular and religious.*

*May we be always open to possibility,
Never insulting ourselves within
Walls of closed-minded certainty;
Never hedging in the Great Mystery
Within which we dwell;
Never mistaking the words we use
For the realities they conceal;
Never confusing the prose of philosophy
With the poetry of faith.*

*Whatever we may believe,
Whatever our minds may tell us is true,
There is always the possibility
That we may be wrong.*

*And we would be fools
To think otherwise.*

*Rev Cliff Reed
New Year's Eve, 2013*

*And the LORD answered me, and said,
Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables,
That he may run that readeth it.
For the vision is yet for an appointed time,
But at the end it shall speak, and not lie.*

Habakkuk 2 verses 2-3 AV



Can we all have visions from God?

I think some do, but most of us have our own personal visions, affected by our life journeys. Some of us are moved to action by great kindnesses or cruelty which can give them a loving vision of what faith can be and the good work that can come out of it, while others feel angry and frustrated by the whole notion of faith, thinking it to be a diversion from reality. When I was a child, I had no pressure from my family to attend a church and certainly no one had told me that there was a God that I must worship, unless we counted school assemblies, where most of the children seemed to be whispering to each other rather than listening to the teacher's instructions.

Yet I had always been curious about religion. As a very young child I made a little altar on my dressing table in my bedroom and carefully placed special things on my sacred place, including daisies, dandelions and occasionally 'real' flowers from our garden! As I approached my adolescence, I decided to attend the local Church. It was a rather high Anglican parish and I was completely captivated by the sense of theatre. The flowing gowns, the choir, it all seemed like another world to me with its wonderful ceremonial, the mutterings of the prayers and creed.

At that young age, I somehow believed that I had found myself sitting among saints. Everyone looked extremely serious and no one ever smiled. It was obviously a serious business being a religious person! But sadly, as I grew older, my thoughts about the church became more cynical. I had noticed people in the pews making disparaging remarks about other people and instead of 'loving our neighbour', it seemed to be more like competing with our neighbour.

I also had deep problems about taking communion as it all sounded too literal to me. The symbolism was never explained and there was no sense of joy in this ceremony. I couldn't understand why God didn't want us to be happy.

Then as time went by, I became more aware of the world with its conflicts, disasters and terrible cruelty inflicted by us human beings on one another and I came to the conclusion that there could not be a God. If there was a God, surely that God wouldn't let us live in such unhappiness. So I became an atheist. Several years later, when I found myself having personal difficulties, I felt a need to find, 'my childhood faith', a need to have something greater than myself for consolation and support. I remember very clearly trying to reason with myself, trying to convince myself that there was no God, yet I found myself returning to that same Anglican church.

*I couldn't understand
why God didn't want
us to be happy.*

One day I plucked up courage to visit the church. I tried the door, (it was mid-week) to find it was locked. My logical thinking completely disappeared and I found that I had taken a personal slight from God who had locked me out! So there I was, confused, angry, hurt. Why? It was because the God that I didn't believe in had snubbed me! After quite a lot of thinking about my beliefs I realised that the Anglican Church was not

for me, so I tried other churches in the town, but stopped my search at the Unitarian Chapel where I was welcomed and accepted. It was then that I really could focus on my spiritual path. The Unitarian ethos allowed me the freedom that no other church had offered.

As time went by many changes came into my life. I moved house several times, met different people, took different work but remained a Unitarian. I attended GA meetings, went on different courses and workshops and continued to consider my theology. In the early years, I supposed that Christianity was rather 'old hat' in this modern day and age.

I feel my vision is a shared one, for the work we do together is very active and positive.

It seemed more important to examine our own personal behaviour and ethical way of life, rather than read the Bible. That suited me well for a number of years, but then I began to feel that there was something missing. I realised that I had no great example, no guide to follow. Although I was very happy looking to all the world faiths, there was no clear structure to my faith. God was there, but quite far off.

Slowly, cautiously, I started to look more at the Bible, read about those who had been influenced by Christianity and gradually grew closer to the teachings of Jesus. Later, I trained for the Ministry alongside four other Christian denominations at Luther King House Theology College in Manchester. I experienced marvellous friendships with the other students. As a Unitarian I was able to be genuinely interested in the different views and the various forms of worship, without ever feeling threatened about my own faith. My liberal and free Christian faith was strengthened by my experiences in that place and I am so thankful for my time

there. Once in ministry, I was able to offer my faith though my work, yet respect and learn from those who held differing beliefs. My ministry continues to be a joy to me and I sincerely feel blessed.

When I was asked to write this article as the new Moderator, it was suggested that I offer my vision for the Unitarian Christian Association. The UCA has always considered itself as a resource for the Unitarian denomination. We offer support to Ministry students, organise workshops at the General Assembly Meetings, publish books related to Liberal Christianity and travel around the country as guests of different churches and chapels, offering worship and seeking to explore various aspects of our liberal Christian faith. I totally support all these things and offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who make them possible, in particular the officers of the UCA.

So what of my vision for the Unitarian Christian Association? I feel my vision is a shared one, for the work we do together is very active and positive. On a personal level, my vision extends into the whole of my life; my ministry, my family life, my work with the UCA. All this I see as being the same simple message of Jesus, to love God and each other. From that simple statement comes a way a life, in which I find peace through my relationship with God and a constant striving for harmony with others. I know what it is like to be unsure of my faith. I know what it is like to feel hurt or disappointment.

I also know the joy that faith can bring and the sense of meaning that it has given me. This has helped me to understand others in their journey of faith. The words from the book of Habakkuk, the Old Testament prophet, speak well to me, when God says, write a vision, and make it so plain and clear that everyone will understand. I now have a vision which gives me comfort and peace and my vision is that we all may work together to support others on their journey in finding God and peace through our free faith.

May God bless you all and give you peace.

Jean Bradley

“HE WHO SINGS PRAYS TWICE”.

Stephen Page

This phrase has for a long time been attributed to St Augustine of Hippo but apparently the words have never been found in his writings. However they are words with which I find a particular resonance. For me, and for many, music and worship go hand in hand.

Although I appreciate an occasional act of Quaker worship and value times of silence and stillness in our own corporate acts I find it very hard to imagine participating regularly in times of worship that were devoid of music.

I often hear from visiting service leaders and others that many of our churches are now without a resident musician. I am saddened by the fact that a number of our congregations no longer seem to value the role the organ can play. Recorded music can be a valuable addition to a time of worship but it is tragic when this is all that the local congregation experience.

I also find it frustrating when congregations don't value and make the most of the resources they have (however unorthodox or ordinary they may seem). For me the organ will always have a special place in worship but if you have no organist and there is a violinist or a recorder player in your midst why not see if they would take the lead? Even without a competent instrumentalist most congregations have a ready musical resource. There has been a huge upsurge in interest in singing in this country over the past few years.

This is due in no small part to the success of television programmes including those fronted by Gareth Malone where people from a range of backgrounds and often with limited experience have been encouraged to sing together. So often people need to



believe that they can sing and then just be prepared to have a go. Although there are different techniques that can be learned there is no right or wrong way to sing. One of the glories of congregational church singing (like the church itself) is that it is made up of people from all different walks of life who would not necessarily normally be drawn together. I find it particularly sad to hear individuals say that they cannot sing or that they dare not because they sing flat. I even notice that some people leading worship make little attempt to join in with the singing.

In situations where there is no instrumentalist singing can still take place effectively. There is the CD backing option but this to me always seems unsatisfactory. Far better for someone who is able to pick out the starting note and then lead the singing unaccompanied.

Some people can confidently pitch a hymn in a way that is comfortable for the congregation without even finding the note in this way. Good, rhythmic, fairly upbeat unaccompanied singing can be very effective, together with the occasional more subdued item as the sense of the words and the moment in the service suggests.

Even in small congregations this can be effectively achieved. As long as everyone is prepared to have a go and people are not scared off by inappropriate criticisms confidence can be built over a fairly short time. People may develop new skills and confidences and actually enjoy an activity

they have previously left to others (including the organist!) By starting with a small repertoire of hymns that most people know (and making this known to those planning worship) it is possible to develop a good varied selection of hymns which could be drawn upon. An explanation of the metrical indexes in our hymn books would help people to see that even when an unfamiliar tune is set there is often a more familiar alternative that may be substituted. New hymns could occasionally be learned by inviting someone to come and lead a session or by asking someone to record a tune which can be listened to and learned together.

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Where there is a musician congregations can be encouraged to sing more enthusiastically by being consistent in the way hymns are introduced. At Hastings I began and have maintained the practice of giving a complete play through of the whole hymn tune for every hymn, even when it is a very familiar one. Some may say this is tedious but it leaves the congregation in no doubt when to stand (in good time to begin) and when to start singing. It also gives an opportunity to hear the tune for the first time or check it through before it is sung. Sometimes I will use the piano in preference to the organ, depending on the style of the music, although generally most tunes played appropriately can be adapted for the organ. Congregations can occasionally be encouraged to notice simple elements of notation to help with following unfamiliar music (e.g. whether the “dots” go up or down).

Sometimes when leading worship I have been in a position to offer encouragement as to how the congregation has just sung a hymn – although not to be overdone it can occasionally be a useful thing to do. New hymns should be repeated in the not too distant future. This is again an area where better liaison between worship leaders and

congregations is needed, especially where there is no resident minister or lay leader.

Variety and sensitivity in hymn accompaniment is important. If you have a musician who seems to always play at the same volume, speed and with the same organ stops drawn perhaps they could be encouraged to occasionally look at the text of the hymn and provide some colour. Failing that an occasional unaccompanied verse can be very effective!

Instrumental music often forms part of our worship. At Hastings, in addition to music during gathering and at the close we usually have a time of silence followed by a short meditative piece. I usually play this on the piano to add a different musical voice to our time together. Recorded music to listen to can be another added dimension – in my opinion more appropriate than it being used as a substitute accompanist.

In all of this we need to remember that we are taking part in a corporate act of worship. For some there will be a leadership element involved in what they do. For others it is important to be able to participate alongside others. In doing this we all make a contribution to something that is greater than the sum of its parts. When playing, singing or listening it is important that we respect the spirit in which this is done. When I first took up the role of organist at Hastings I was flattered by applause at the end of every closing voluntary but I was also uncomfortable about this. After some time it was mutually decided that the applause would be discontinued – not as a sign of disapproval (I hope!) but rather in respect of the fact that what we offer **together** is our worship of God. We all have an important part to play in that.

*Stephen Page is Organist at
Hastings Unitarian Church*

HOME RETREAT MEDITATION

Based on the Prayer of Jesus

THE AIM – to allow ourselves a short retreat – to be more aware of the details in our life and our faith – to permit our mind to think freely and openly.

PREPARATION – Preferably at least a few days before the retreat, print or write out, your preferred version of ‘The Lord’s Prayer’. Place the words into bite size pieces onto card, separate papers or folded paper, so that each part of the prayer can be focused on individually.

For example, on the first card OUR FATHER, then the next WHICH ART IN HEAVEN and so on. Whichever system you use, make sure that it is easy to read in order. Put the prayer away in a safe and peaceful place in readiness.

ALONE OR WITH OTHERS – If you choose to share this meditation with a friend or friends, there must be an agreement to keep to the rules of silence and reflection within the bounds of the retreat.

THE DAY – Once you have chosen your day, it may be for a morning, an afternoon or a whole day, there has to be a understanding with friends and family that you cannot be reached by phone and that you will be unavailable for the period that is designated to the meditation.

THE PLACE – This may be in your own home, or another place where privacy is guaranteed. It is possible to spend the time outside in a peaceful place, but this can be sometimes spoiled by the change of weather or strangers walking by.

A time limit is essential and a plan for refreshments will need to be in place, depending on the time you allot yourself. A reasonable time span may be from 10am until 4pm with break for drinks mid-morning and mid-afternoon and a light lunch at noon. Make sure that the refreshments are available without any time spent in preparation or cooking during the retreat.

THE MEDITATION – Once you are ready to start, sit or lie or stand, with eyes open,

note the breathing and check that the breath is regular and firm.

Look around you; note your sacred space, (for this is how it must be seen, a time spent with God). Take time to look at all the objects in the room or outside space. Acknowledge all you see and allow yourself to feel at peace with your surroundings.

After a few moments, be aware of any sounds or smells, you may hear bird song or cars driving by, you may smell newly cut grass, flowers or even the smell of food cooking. Acknowledge all that you hear and smell and feel peace with your surroundings.

You may now wish to sit down, allow yourself to be comfortable. If you sit, make sure you are comfortable by sitting with a straight back and feet firmly on the ground. Try not to cross legs or sit in a crooked way, as the body will start to feel discomfort and take your mind away from the meditation. If you prefer to stand from time to time, move slowly and purposefully.

If you are sharing this retreat with another person, there has to be a previous agreement that one person will say, ‘NOW READ’ or a similar phrase to allow spaces of time for meditation and reflection between each section. This must be agreed beforehand.

Slowly read the words and reflect upon them carefully and sincerely, let your sensitivity and faith speak rather than your intellect. If you are able, meditate on each phrase, let God come into your heart.

The words offered are only examples of possible thoughts each of us may have, each person has their own individual images of their faith and their ideals.

EXAMPLE OF THE MEDITATION

In your own time read ‘**Our Father**’, give lots of time to reflect on those two words. ‘**Our**’ we may think of the sharing of faith, we may reflect on the world as a whole.....

‘**Father**’ we may think of the word father, think of our own biological father, or ourselves as parent, we may think of how

Jesus spoke of God as Father, perhaps we may think of God as mother or father?

'Hallowed', what do we see as hallowed, is it blessed, sacred, do we think of the word God as a sacred word or do we consider the whole of creation sacred?

'Be thy name', do we say the word God lightly, do we use God's name in vain?

'Thy kingdom come', what is the kingdom? Do we go to it, or is it here all the time? Do we have to change ourselves to bring the Kingdom to us?

AT THIS POINT, STOP TO DRINK. Drink very slowly; acknowledge the process of putting the liquid into the mouth, feeling and tasting and swallowing. Be aware of this simple act as if it were for the first time.

'Thy will be done on earth' reflect on God's message to humanity and to ourselves. Is the world listening? Do we listen?

'As it is in heaven', is heaven the Kingdom? Or is it within God?

'Give us this day', let us consider living within each day, allowing us time to give our best to each day rather than hurry blindly into the next days, weeks or months without considering the joy of being alive and all that it involves.

'Our daily bread', reflect on the food we eat, do we waste, are we fussy? Reflect on those in the world who have very little to eat or drink.

AT THIS POINT, STOP FOR FOOD. Before eating look at the food, be aware of the colours, textures, smells and appeal. Think what the food is made from, is it grown, did it come from an animal or a fish? Think about all the people who brought the food to you. Then slowly eat, small bites, really tasting and appreciating.

'And forgive us our trespasses', are we worth forgiving? Do we so often say or do wrong things and expect forgiveness? Do we consider that we may be exempt from

avoiding hurt and pain to others? Are we too outspoken or too insensitive?

'As we forgive them that trespass against us', are we able to forgive others? Reflect on those who have hurt you in some way. Perhaps we can realise that they had reasons for their behaviour.

'And lead us not into temptation', do we sometimes think of our own ego more than caring for others? Are we tempted to consider ourselves a little better than our friends and family? Or are we tempted into greed or self-indulgence?

'But deliver us from evil', how do we ask God to keep us from harm? What do we see as evil?

AT THIS POINT, STOP TO DRINK. As before, sip the drink very slowly, but this time, visualise the drink cleansing your body, with each swallow you are feeling purified and closer to God.

'For thine is the kingdom', Do we really feel that we know what the Kingdom is? Offer prayers to God for more understanding.

'The power, and the glory', try to accept how small we are against the world and our universe, realised that we are a mere speck in comparison, yet we are precious to God. Reflect on the thought of God's power and wonder.

'For ever and ever', consider the profound meaning of for ever, for all eternity, for time without end. That is God.

TO CLOSE – If you have shared the time with others, gently, quietly allow each other to share their experiences ending with shared prayers and good wishes for each other.

If you have experienced the retreat alone, you may feel the need to write down your reflections, end your time with a prayer for your part in God's world

Rev Jean Bradley

Membership Renewal Reminder

Subscriptions for 2014 are now due. A renewal letter is enclosed in your copy of the Liberal Christian Herald. If you have not received a letter, it will be because you pay by standing order and do not need to do anything. Please consider setting up a standing order if you have not done so. If you pay UK income tax, please also consider gift aiding your subscription. Last year the UCA claimed £404 back from HM Treasury. Standing order forms and gift aid forms can be downloaded from the membership page of the website www.unitarianchristian.org.uk If you prefer you can telephone Cathy Fozard 01625 533110 or email cathy@fozard.com

Advance notice of Summer Meeting

Saturday 19 July 2014

Mansford Street, Bethnal Green

Simple Gifts & the Chalice Foundation

1.30 p.m.	Lunch
2.30 p.m.	Worship
3.00 p.m.	Workshop-Presentation
4.30 p.m.	Afternoon Tea

CHRISTIAN AID REPORT

In May 2013, a cheque for £500 was sent to Christian Aid for the malaria scheme in Sierra Leone to sponsor a third volunteer. The project has run for two years and ended in summer 2013. It has achieved a great deal in educating people about how to protect themselves better from malaria and to seek treatment promptly if they become ill. The UCA has supported this project by donating a total of £1500.

This completes our fund-raising for Christian Aid. In October 2011, we launched our appeal for Sierra Leone, to raise £5000 by January 2014 for the Kailahun Maternal Health Project. We completed this by April 2012. We continued to support Christian Aid in Sierra Leone by joining the malaria relief scheme. The UCA has raised £6500 in total (£21,500 with EU match funded) to support Christian Aid's work in Sierra Leone.



A nurse explaining to a pregnant woman that she is entitled to free treatment for malaria.

Below is a message from Christian Aid to all the fund-raisers for these projects.

'Thank you so much for your generosity. Your gifts have saved lives.'



Volunteers clearing swamp land around the village to remove the mosquitoes' breeding grounds



UCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Unitarian Christian Association will hold its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 8 March 2014 at the member congregation of Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

The day will begin with a lunch, offered free of charge, at one o'clock in the chapel hall. A service of worship will be held in the meeting-house at 2 p.m., which will be followed by the Annual General Meeting of the association.

The gathering will benefit from a workshop that will aim to introduce participants to the Christian liturgical year.

The day's proceedings will end with afternoon tea.

For further information, and to indicate numbers planning to attend, please contact the UCA Events Officer, Jeff Gould:

email jeffreylanegould@btinternet.com; telephone 01625 403509. Directions to the chapel may be obtained from the website: www.ukunitarians.org.uk/deanrow. Handforth Rail Station is 1 1/2 miles from the chapel. Wilmslow Rail Station is two miles from the chapel