

**The Liberal Christian**

# Herald

**SUMMER EDITION**

**July 2018 No 93**



Dean Row Chapel chancel prepared for the Taizé service, Quiet Day.

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Front cover

*Nottage General Baptists  
and Unitarian Chapel. South  
Wales.*



*From the Editor*

**FROM THE EDITOR**

The summer season of 2018 has begun with a significant number of anniversaries and related commemorations. As a nation, we have been reminded of the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* from the Caribbean in 1948 and the establishment of the National Health Service in the same year. The second anniversary of the UK referendum on the country's relationship with the European Union has passed, as have the first anniversaries of the Manchester Arena bombing and the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. People of faith respond to each of these landmark events in their own unique ways—some identifying hope and redemption in the varied responses to the realities they present, and others are challenged beyond their immediate ability to process them sufficiently. It is helpful to be reminded that the Christian faith is grounded in an instruction from its founder, and related by the apostle Paul, to 'remember' each time table fellowship is shared:

“The tradition which I hand on to you came to me from the Lord himself: that on the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God broke it and said: ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me.’ In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: ‘This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me.’ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.” [I Corinthians 11.23-26] *Revised English Bible*

This edition of *The Liberal Christian Herald* is something of a miscellany, in that there is no single theme that connects the separate contributions that appear in it, but it does convey reflections on things past, offers thoughts on things to come, and seeks to keep the members of the Unitarian Christian Association informed on how this particular organisation remains connected to the body of Christ, in all its diversity.

Jeff Gould



**The Liberal  
Christian Herald  
July 2018 - No 93**

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Catherine Fozard (*see opposite page*)

*Back cover photo, Attenders of the Quiet Day.  
Photos taken by John Hutcheson.*

# Three years in the life of a newly-qualified liberal Christian minister.

Lewis Rees



I began my first settled ministry with the congregation of Nottage General Baptist & Unitarian Chapel, near Porthcawl in South Wales on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2015.

Due to the congregation's budgetary constraints, a part-time ministry was all that could be offered; however, because of my own health condition, and the fact that my wife and I share childcare duties for our daughter, this arrangement suits me nicely.

When I began my ministry at Nottage, I was expecting the imminent return of my driving licence. However, a week or two before I was in a position to reapply to the DVLA I suffered another major seizure, which meant I had to wait another year before I could drive. When I finally regained my driving licence, and a modicum of independence, a series of stressful events led to me suffering another major seizure, and the annoyance of having to surrender my licence once again.

As I live more than twenty miles away from the chapel, this meant that I needed to travel to work by public transport – which is a two and a half hour journey each way requiring travelling by three or four buses, depending on connections.

After a while this began to become a bind, so in desperation I contacted the DWP in order to see if there was any assistance available and was awarded the *'Access to Work'* benefit that pays an amount toward taxis, allowing me to be more productive (*and greatly reducing my stress levels!*)

At the very beginning of my ministry at Nottage I made it a priority to make contact with the clergy of the other denominations in the area. Perhaps somewhat naïvely, I had hoped that old hostilities had now disappeared. But, sadly, this was certainly not the case with two clergymen, and others were polite but keen to keep us at arms length.

Initially, we received an invitation to join the local *'Churches Together'* group; however, at the insistence of one local clergyman this was rescinded within about twenty minutes. This was despite the organisation's own constitution expressly saying that membership of the group was allowed as long as a congregation could adhere to 'the spirit' of the groups aims and objectives. I provided ample evidence proving this would not be problematic for a Free Christian congregation that imposes no creedal test upon its members. However, I failed in changing the view of 'Porthcawl Churches Together' and we were told that the 'executive committee' had agreed that we were not welcome.

Nonetheless, and perhaps surprisingly, we have made strong connections with the local Roman Catholic Church, who whilst being members of 'Churches Together' are somewhat marginalised by the group – and so we have something in common. Consequently, we have been invited to take part in a number of special services arranged by 'Our Lady Star of the Sea RC Church' in Porthcawl, and we hope to return the honour in the future.

As part of my ministry, I have concentrated on the visibility of the congregation, as it was surprising how many people in a fairly small village didn't even realize that chapel existed. Or if they were aware of the location of the chapel, they assumed it was no longer in use.

I have ensured that we had new signs, and that 'Wayside Pulpit' and information posters are up to date, and updated regularly, as there is nothing worse than shabby looking, faded posters on church noticeboards.

I have also started writing a monthly devotional for the local magazine, which boasts it has a distribution of 28,000 copies each edition. I have had many people stop me in the street to say how impressed they were with my articles, but sadly this hasn't brought these people through the doors on a Sunday.

We have also commenced a weekly meditation group, which is followed by a coffee morning. I find this an important part of my ministry as people seem far more willing to open up about their pastoral needs once they've got some coffee and cake inside them!

Also, after many months in development, 1<sup>st</sup> Nottage Boys' Brigade & Girls' Association has been established, and meets each Friday evening. This project has taken a significant amount of my time and energy, as the Boys' Brigade central office initially turned down our request as we are not members of 'Churches Together'. However, when I contacted the BB's development officer for Wales he was only too happy to assist us in establishing a company. Currently, we have five adult officers – with the first meeting of the company attracting three children. But '*mighty oaks and acorns*' and all that!

All in all, my first three years in settled ministry have been very rewarding. The congregation has seen small but steady growth, but more importantly has become far more vibrant

Our social action work far outstrips the physical size of the congregation – and we truly aim to live our faith in practical ways.

I feel honored to serve such a wonderful congregation, and truly hope that finances will allow me to continue the work I have begun in growing the congregation and offering a genuine liberal Christian option to the people of the Porthcawl area.



## General Data Protection Regulation

Recently all members who have email addresses were contacted about the new regulations for protection of personal data and sent a form to complete. Many of you have already returned their form but if you have not done so please will you return it as soon as possible. Members who do not have email addresses will receive a form with this edition of the Herald.

Please will you complete the form and return it to 20 Handforth Road, Wilmslow SK9 2LU. Thank you.

The UCA would be willing to visit your church, chapel or district association to offer:

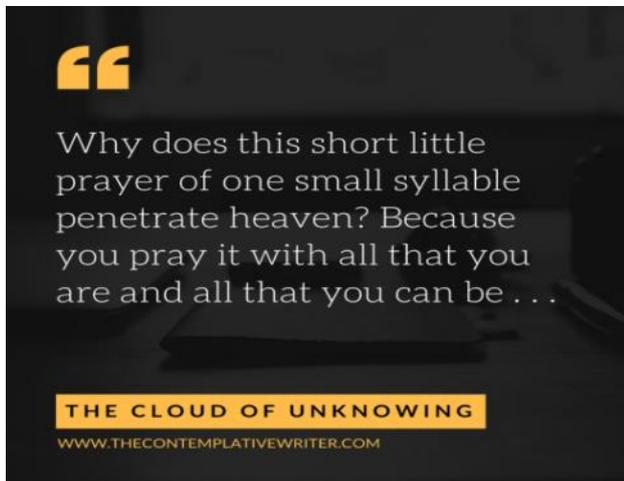
- Liberal Christian Worship
- Workshops
- Or a response to specific requests

To discuss a possible visit please contact Jeff Gould, UCA Secretary, Tel: 01625 402952 or Email: [jeffreylanegould1959@talktalk.net](mailto:jeffreylanegould1959@talktalk.net)

## A Journey of Discovery

Ross Howard

*Mr Howard is a Certified Lay Preacher of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches of the United Kingdom. He lives in Australia.*



Rightly or wrongly, I do not like writing about myself, but to tell the story of my last about twenty-five years, it seems that I have to do just that. The story really goes back much further however.

Sometime in the past, I read of Kuan-yin, “the Chinese goddess of compassion”, and was fascinated. She is a major figure in the Mahayana school of Buddhism and is an expression of vast compassion and sexual purity, just as Mary is in Christianity. In tradition, Kuan-yin is associated with a virtuous young Chinese girl called Miao Shan.

Much later, I learnt of the countless benefits of mentally reciting a brief mantra or holy name. Finally, I have discovered that “Kuan-yin” is the ideal mantra for me. In that remarkable work of fourteenth century England, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the anonymous Christian author advocates the use of a single syllable religious name, but I prefer two syllables. The saintly Gandhi of India wrote: “The mantra becomes one’s staff of life and carries one through every ordeal”, and I have found that the holy names of “Jesus”, “Mary” or “Kuan-yin” are the ones for me.

Becoming aware of the blessings of the mental recitation of holy names, I can only recommend the practice to others. To my mind, the modern world badly needs compassion, and especially sexual purity and self-control.

## A Day of Peace and Meditation

Jeff Gould,

*Minister, Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow*

The serene and historic setting of Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow, Cheshire was the venue for a quiet day on Saturday, 23 June. The event was a collaboration between the chapel’s congregation, the Unitarian Christian Association and the World Community for Christian Meditation. Participants were welcomed by Dean Row’s minister, Jeff Gould, and opening and closing worship sessions were led by Angela Gregson, who is a Benedictine oblate. The WCCM Co-ordinator for South Manchester and Cheshire, Patricia Higgins, introduced a series of recorded talks on Christian meditation, which led the group into two prolonged periods of silence. Lunch and afternoon tea were shared in the chapel’s hall, and a worship service at midday was offered in the chapel, according to the traditions of the ecumenical community in Taizé, France.

The goal of the day had been to introduce newcomers to the established heritage of Christian meditation, and to unite members of local WCCM groups with interested Unitarians and Free Christians. The increasing practice of meditation and the current high profile of mindfulness meant that the day’s event held a contemporary relevance for something that has a long and noble history. It was a bonus that the summer weather enabled participants to benefit from the welcoming chapel garden and graveyard, and the modern facilities of the chapel hall easily accommodated the healthy number who took part. The chapel was founded in 1688, so its building has been hallowed by prayer, reflection and worship over the course of more than three hundred years.

The occasion was marked by a spirit of collaboration, ecumenical co-operation and a shared interest in an age-old discipline. Thanks go to everyone who contributed to make it such a pleasant and convivial gathering.



## Come Down, O Love Divine.

Nick Long.

*Nick Long is the grandson of the Rev'd Dr Arthur Long and the great grandson of the Rev'd Walter Long.*

*He is a practising Anglican, and describes himself as theologically liberal and liturgically conservative.*

*He is a Physics teacher, living and working in Lancashire.*



When I was asked to write about my favourite hymn for the church magazine this month, I assumed my task was a simple one. But it has only dawned on me, in writing this, that I've never actually considered what my favourite hymn is. Now, having considered it for some time, I still don't know. The choice, it turns out, is too hard.

What follows, then, is my thoughts on *one of my favourites*, amongst many. I've chosen to write about "Come Down, O Love Divine".

*Come down, O love divine, seek  
Thou this soul of mine,  
And visit it with Thine own ardour glowing.  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
And kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.*

*O let it freely burn, 'til earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
And let Thy glorious  
light shine ever on my sight,*

*And clothe me round,  
the while my path illuming.*

*Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,  
And lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
True lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part,  
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with  
loathing.*

*And so the yearning strong, with which the  
soul will long,  
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace,  
ill he become the place  
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.*

What I perhaps like most about the hymn's words, though, is the manifesto for living that the verses deliver. In four beautifully-crafted verses, we are gently invited to imagine a life that is led by love. Verse two, for example, explains exactly why Christian living is desperately needed in the modern age. In a world addicted to "stuff", where we consume natural resources with impunity, where our short-term thinking is quite literally putting our planet's survival in doubt, the call for earthly passions to "turn to dust" rings true.

In verse three, the "lowliness of heart" described could be seen as an important antidote to any one of our numerous failings as a species, from our contempt for the natural world, to our obsession with the "self" over the collective, to the empty grandstanding that characterises all levels of our politics.

As I understand the final verse, it presents a daring speculation, a hope, as to the world that could exist if people were to follow this way of love, and "become the place wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling". It speaks, to me, of the prospect that we might one day come to see ourselves as one planet, and properly work together to create meaningful lives for everyone on it. That would, for me, be the true meaning of "Love divine".

Let me write a final word or two on the music. I said at the beginning that my choice of hymn was a tough one. What swayed me was that this hymn's music was written by Ralph Vaughan Williams, my favourite composer. All of his work is infused with a traditional English folk influence, which means that – despite his music being *relatively* new (by the standards of sacred music) – it has a timeless quality. I can think of no better accompaniment to a timeless message.

## **Chosen Charity**

### ***Jean Bradley***

If you attended our Annual General meeting at Ullet Road Church, Liverpool in March this year, you would have enjoyed the talk given by Rev Jo James. He is the Minister of Mill Hill Chapel at Leeds and spoke of his own chapel based initiative, the 'Conversation Club'. This charity has been created as part of the chapel's social action work and by using rooms within the Chapel building and working alongside of charitable agencies, they have created a wonderful organisation which offers practical help, friendship and a greater understanding of other cultures and nationalities. (Rev James also wrote an article on his congregation's work in Leeds in December's Herald)

The 'Conversation Club' offers a weekly place for asylum seekers and refugees to learn or improve their English language. They learn with the help of volunteers who not only help by teaching them English but also guide them through very many everyday difficulties, such as being able to read food packets and cans in shops, knowing the worth of money, asking for the destination on a bus journey and filling in official forms. Life is very challenging and lonely without the ability to communicate. The Conversation Club also develops friendship and trust within the group.

After Jo's talk, there was a unanimous vote that the Unitarian Christian Association should support this charity for 2018/2019. Our treasurer, Cathy Fozard, suggested that the £70 that had been given as donations towards the refreshments should be given to the charity and

the Rev Phil Waldron of Ullet Road church immediately gave the £50 that had been offered by the UCA for the use of the church that day. This was a very good start but I feel that we, the individual members of the UCA, might be able to help as well. Perhaps we could have a coffee morning at home or within our chapel or church building. Perhaps you might raffle a prize and ask your neighbours and friends to buy some tickets. If you are creative, a cake or another item could be made and raffled or sold off. You may even feel energetic and do a sponsored walk or run. There are lots of things that we can do. We all have our own gifts and talents.

For myself, I have decided to have a 'Conversation Day' ' at my home, inviting people to attend for coffee and cake at a set fee. I intend to write some comments or questions on pieces of card and once each person has been given their refreshments, ask them to take a card and read it to those who are gathered, therefore starting a conversation. I don't intend to have anything too controversial or shocking, but a subject that will allow strangers to enjoy each other's opinions in a friendly atmosphere.

I hope that you will respond to this appeal so that together we can help support the very useful work that the Conversation Club does. It is so important that we are all able to integrate into society wherever we are, so that we can work towards the loving world that Jesus taught us to strive for.



I urge you to consider making an effort for those much worse off than ourselves. Let us put ourselves in other people's shoes and try to imagine how frightening it is to be a stranger in a strange land, with no hope of work or self respect. Let us have conversations with our friends and plan to do something to help this worthy cause and may God be with you in all you do.

Rev Jean Bradley

## **Ullet Road Church Rebels FC** **Philip Waldron**

In Liverpool, one of the first topics of conversation that is asked about yourself is, “Are you a Red or a Blue?” And so begins the banter or the fellowship.

Some of us may be aware of the origins of the two great clubs in Merseyside: it began with St Domingo’s Methodist Church; it was the Rev. Benjamin Swift Chambers, the original team was Everton FC, but after a dispute of ownership of the club, the team left Anfield and formed their own stadium, and Liverpool FC emerged.

The football club was formed so that young men who attended the church had something to do during the winter months. During the summer months they played cricket.

The parallels are similar, but more complex. The reason for developing the Ullet Road Church Rebels Football Club is primarily to give refugees and asylum seekers a sense of belonging, a sense of integration with the church community, a sense of identity and something to do in the winter months!

It began in January 2018 when I met Dr Chris Allen, a senior lecturer teaching Sociology at John Moores University. I met Chris at Keith’s Wine Bar on Lark Lane, during one of my Coffee and Chats, a form of outreach in the community. We discussed various topics from the history of Unitarianism to Chris’ involvement with Asylum Link Merseyside. Chris talked of his voluntary work, taking the young men from

Asylum Link to football games in the Wirral to watch Tranmere Rovers.

It was a lightbulb moment, when I said “Let’s work together to create a church football club!”



*The Rev. Phil Waldron, Dr Chis Allen and Mr Paul Miller (members of the football committee), signing the club with Liverpool County FA.*

It didn’t take long for us to get people on board. Ullet Road Church Council agreed that this was a worthy cause and would support the club. Conversations were made with Asylum Link Merseyside, and a growing interest and excitement began, with more people wanting to support the initiative.

The football team’s logo came from a basic sketch I did and sent to Adam Paxman, a graphic artist and lecturer at Hugh Baird College in Liverpool. I conducted his wedding ceremony in 2016. Adam designed a wonderful logo, which is the badge on the kit. The colours of the kit are the same as the colours on the library ceiling at Ullet Road Church, Blue and Gold, (*Yellow in actuality, as we couldn’t afford the gold colour*).

On Sunday 24th June 2018, Ullet Road Church had a celebratory service for the beginnings of the football club. It was well attended by refugees, volunteers, the community and nuns from St Anne’s Church, where Asylum Link is based. Afterwards there were wonderful curries made, a cake with the logo on it, and we watched England vs Panama in the World Cup on a big screen in the church hall. What a great game to watch for the founding of a football team; 6—1 for England!



The Rebels are seeking donations for this worthy cause.

It costs £2000 a year to run our football club, from purchasing the kit, travel expenses, pitch fees, official fees, fines when our lads get a yellow or red card and much more.

Can you help?

*Please send donations to:  
The Rev. Philip Waldron,  
Ullet Road Church,  
57 Ullet Road,  
Sefton Park,  
Liverpool.  
L17 2AA.*

Cheques payable to:  
"Ullet Road Church Rebels FC"



Participants in the Quiet Day exploring Dean Row Chapel graveyard



