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## LEADING ARTICLE

Welcome to this slightly larger than usual issue of *The Herald*.

As most of you will have seen by now a new prayer-book written by me and John Morgan has just been published by the Unitarian Christian Association. The work preparing and publishing that rather filled all my available time and so I apologise for



the absence of an autumn edition of the journal. However, I hope this expanded edition will make up a little for that loss. I particularly pleased to be able to include in this edition an introductory letter from our new Honorary President, the Revd Brian Cockcroft. Brian is a minister of our sister church in Northern Ireland, the *Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland* (NSPCI) with who we have recently reestablished important links.

Connected with our restoration of links with one historic European liberal Christian community is the inclusion in this edition of *The Avignon Manifesto* which the UCA has recently signed. The political and religious realities of our world are, as we are all aware, rapidly changing and it is important that we, as Unitarian Christians, make efforts to respond appropriately to them. One key change has been the continuing growth and development of the European Community. Because Unitarian Christianity has been a key player in

the development of European identity—especially in terms of religious tolerance—it seems important that we begin to reconnect with our brothers and sisters on the mainland of Europe and, as you will see, by extension with two Francophone African groups. For too long there hasn't been much activity in that direction so the preparation and publication of the *Avignon Manifesto* is of some significance. Please do make its message more widely known because, as denominational structures become less important everywhere, broader liberal Christian networks such as the manifesto is promoting will become increasingly relevant to our small community of faith.

While I was in Avignon preparing the *Manifesto* the Secretary-General of *l'Assemblée fraternelle des chrétiens unitariens*, Jean-Claude Barbier, very kindly gave me a reproduction of the medal reproduced on the front cover of this edition. The French historian Albert Blanchard-Gaillard tells us that the medallion was worn by young Polish Brethren of noble origin who, without superstition, loved Jesus and held him as their master and began, in the late sixteenth century, to frequent foreign universities to study under anti-trinitarian ministers or theologians, principally in Holland or Germany. Because to be a Socinian (that is to say a Unitarian) was still to risk execution the medal was, in addition to being a statement of their faith, also a way of identifying each other without making their heresy obvious. The inscription, because it was in Hebrew, would not be understood by most people and the wearer could either claim ignorance as to its meaning or, if someone could actually read it, it would be possible to give it an orthodox spin. But to most it would be understood as a simple symbol of devotion to Jesus (*Revue Regard*, no. 2, Summer 1997, Institut d'études et de recherches sur l'histoire, les traditions, la nature et les sciences, pp. 30-34).

The beautiful picture of the human Rabbi Jesus, is surrounded by the single word “man” (“ishi”) which is also used in Hebrew as a balance to the idea of God and so has the additional connotation of ordinary, customary or common—i.e. that which is not God. On the reverse the inscription reads “Mashiah melekh ba besgalom wa' Adam-Adam 'asui hai” which can be translated to mean “The Messiah of the Kingdom of Peace became a human being.” A perfect message to offer you all at Advent and Christmas.

It was with a strange delight and pride to be able to wear it openly around my neck in Avignon before the mighty but now empty (apart from thousands of transient tourists) *Palais des Papes*. I could not help but muse that since all the might of Rome at its worst hadn't managed to stamp us out over the centuries there is surely real hope for our future survival and flourishing. You may obtain copies of this medal from Marc Lauer, rue de la Gabelle, 57400 Sarrebourg, France. Tel: 00 33 (0)6 13 37 70 25 Email: [bmlauer@tiscali.fr](mailto:bmlauer@tiscali.fr)

The medallions are available in various metals and several formats. Prices were (as of August 2007): Small 16 mm in diameter: silver (25€), gold (120€); Medium 20 mm: bronze (15€), silver (35€), 'vermeil' (58€), bronze with gold-plated edging (61€); Large 36 mm: bronze (23€), silver (56€).



## MODERATOR'S COMMENTS

Dear Friends, one of the challenges of ministry is finding fresh words to speak anew to the changing seasons of the Christian year. When you read this newsletter, it will be during the time of Advent. The time of anticipation and of expectation, when Christians of all traditions recall again the Nativity Story—and look again for the return of Jesus. So often, this story can get caught-up with complex and unnecessary theological speculations, when its real power is in its simplicity. We need, all of us, at this time of Advent and Christmas to be able to wonder, to open our hearts, to suspend disbelief, in the same way as would a small child. Perhaps, that is why Jesus taught of the importance receiving the Kingdom of Heaven, as would a child—in a trusting and open manner?



What then is this Nativity Story? It is, in the words of the American Bishop Spong, the powerful and arresting idea of God met in a child. That in, and through, the life of one child, dare I say, of all new-born children, God is intervening in the world. God is with us, in the birth of all children, but uniquely so, it seems to me, in the birth of Jesus, all those millennia ago. It is also story of a world turning-upside down, where the Messiah, the Chosen, Anointed One

of God, comes not from a family of power, bearing a sword, but from a family of unmarried parents, a peasant family, later a refugee family, whose trade and life was everyday and common-place. God has intervened in and through the lowest of the low. In the common-place, the uneducated, the poor, and in the everyday is encountered the Divine.

None of us should ever forget this. That God is encountered when and where we least expect it; in the different, when we least expect it, in the stranger, and in the child born in a manger....

The way we, as Unitarian and Free Christians, mark Christmas also demonstrated how we can never simply be narrow monotheists. God may be One, but God is never, just, out-there, or up-there, somewhere above the sky. This idea of the God-as-King, is a monarchical conception of God. This may be advocated by dogmatic and narrowly-doctrinal Unitarians, and perhaps even by some with Islam, but it is not truly our view. With other Christians of all denominations, we say that God is indeed with us, does indeed intervene in human life and human history, through the Nativity Story. Something wonderful, something profound did occur. In a sense, our Unitarianism doesn't so much reject the Trinity, as to transcend its limitations.

Perhaps all Christians together can say: 'God is met in Jesus' but perhaps we are still unique in adding: 'and in all new-born children'—whatever unique, pre-eminent and privileged status we give to Jesus himself. There is another—and radical—consequence that arises from this line of thinking. It is this. That the Second Coming is not a historic event to anticipated in a fixed moment of time. It is, rather, a process of moral and spiritual reformation in all of us. Like Jesus, we have a spiritual and a human nature. In his life, work and witness, he led the way. We can choose to follow—or choose to ignore. Either way, his birth, all those years ago, changed the world forever. God intervened in a way that demands a response. To show wonder, or not? To follow, or not? God is met in a child, and asks now for us to respond. It's your move....

Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year. Chris.

The Revd Chris Wilson is the Moderator of the Unitarian Christian Association and the Associate Minister of the Eastern Union of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches.

## HONORARY PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends, I don't know whether I was more surprised or more delighted to be elected Honorary President of the Unitarian Christian Association. I cannot think of a greater privilege than to follow the late Rev. Dr. Arthur Long into this office. He was the inspiration and driving force of the U.C.A. from its inception and for more than half a century championed the cause of Liberal Christianity, particularly in the Unitarian Church. He was also a lovely man who, for more than twenty years, was a revered colleague of mine and, in later years, I was privileged to call him a friend. Although I am following in Arthur's footsteps, I could never hope to fill his shoes.

Who is your new Honorary President? Well, on my mother's side my Unitarian roots go back to 19th Century Halifax and I appreciate being brought up in a family where Christian values were the rules of the home. Now in her nineties my mother attends New Meeting in Birmingham and is also a member of the UCA. For over seventy years, until his death in January Rev. Dr. John McLachlan (himself a UCA member) was our family minister and my guide and mentor during my training and early ministry.

In 1970, aged 20, I moved to Hibbert House, the Unitarian Hostel (now closed) near Regent's Park. Many of my fellow residents were also young Unitarians and some, including Cliff Reed [Unitarian minister in Ipswich], later entered our ministry. I attended worship at most of our London congregations and had the thoughts that maybe, perhaps, sometime I would be called to the ministry.

Eight years later I became the full time Executive Commissioner for the City of Bradford Scouts and also joined the Russell Street Chapel. There I came under the influence of another remarkable minister, Ben Downing. Shortly after his death, I felt that God was calling me to the ministry and I started my training at Manchester College Oxford in 1982. In my second year, among others, Steve Dick, now Chief Executive, and Ann Peart, currently principal at Unitarian College Manchester, commenced their training. Our different theological views made for interesting debates!—but did not, I hope, stand in the way of good friendships!

My first ministry saw a return to the Pennines, but this time to the

land of the red rose. After more than six happy years in Padiham, I was called to serve the *Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland* (NSPCI), specifically to the congregations of Greyabbey, Newtownards and Ballyhemlin. I was made so welcome there and, within a year had married Lena Baxter, the first female minister in the NSPCI, whom I already knew through meetings in England. My congregations are on the Ards Peninsula and Lena's some fifty miles away in the glens of Antrim. Six lovely congregations in peaceful and outstandingly beautiful areas. We are truly blessed!

Our home is in Greyabbey. Lena was one of Arthur Long's students and later they worked together on the compilation of *Hymns of Faith and Freedom*, commonly referred to as the red hymnbook! After twenty six years with her congregations in January 2008, Lena is starting a well earned sabbatical term at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

I was delighted that the NSPCI Synod in June of this year voted 3 to 1 in favour of joining the UCA. Many church members have spoken of their pleasure in the revitalization of our very long standing links with Unitarian Christians "over the water" and enjoyed meeting the UCA members who visited Belfast during the year.

Friends, the Association would not be in such a strong position without the hard work of the officer group and many others. On behalf of us all I thank them and wish them well. I am pleased and proud to be joining the team and look forward to being with you all at UCA events.

With best wishes for a happy and Holy Christmas,

Brian Cockroft.

The Revd Brian Cockroft is the newly appointed Honorary President of the Unitarian Christian Association and an NSPCI minister.



## THE AVIGNON MANIFESTO

*In order that Unitarianism preserves its position amongst  
Christians throughout the world.*

Prepared on the 16 and 17 August 2007 by a Unitarian Christian working group at the Hotel Bristol in Avignon consisting of the Revd Andrew James Brown, member of the British Unitarian Christian Association (UCA), editor of The Herald, minister of The

Memorial Church (Unitarian) Cambridge; Mme Susanna Brown, member of the UCA; Dr. Roberto Rosso, president of the Congregazione italiana cristiano unitariana (CICU); Mme Paola Zunino, treasurer of the CICU; Riccardo Bogazzi, member of the CICU; Jean-Claude Barbier, secrétaire général of the Assemblée fraternelle des chrétiens unitariens (AFCU).

Since the 1990s, Unitarian Christian associations have multiplied: the *Unitarian Christian Association* (UCA, founded in 1991), *l'Assemblée fraternelle des chrétiens unitariens* (AFCU, 1996), *l'Assemblée des chrétiens unitariens du Burundi* (ACUB, 2002), *la Congregazione italiana cristiano unitariana* (CICU, 2004), and *l'Assemblée des chrétiens unitariens du Congo* (ACUC, 2004). They are contributing to the growth of Unitarianism in countries where previously this tradition did not exist. The last four of these groups were recognised as 'emerging groups' by the *International Council of Unitarians and Universalists* (ICUU) in April 2006.

This manifesto is neither a creed nor a confession of faith but the result of a process of reflection in order that these new associations can position themselves in relation to our historic churches and congregations which exist in Transylvania, Hungary, Great Britain and the United States of America on the one hand and, on the other, in relation to Unitarian-Universalism, which presents itself as a new religion detached from its Christian roots.

This positioning is made in a positive and constructive manner and is complementary to the forms of Unitarianism already in existence; in no way is it in opposition to them. But it should be explained clearly and distinctly in order to avoid being presented in a confusing, evasive, not to say ambiguous, way. We are perfectly aware that the diversity of contemporary Unitarianism is a valuable resource but this diversity should not, in any fashion, be confused or give the impression that it is theologically lax and without any points of reference.

Born out of the anti-Trinitarian currents at the heart of the Protestant reforms of the sixteenth century, Unitarianism is a movement which has its origin in Christianity characterised by:

- A radical monotheistic theology (God is One) which implies a rejection of the dogma of the Trinity and that of the

Incarnation; even if we think that God dwelt fully in Jesus, a condition we are all invited to experience, Jesus remains a man like us all.

- Jesus' teaching, as it has been transmitted to us by the evangelists, the other texts of the New Testament, and by the contribution of some of the apocryphal gospels, for example the Gospel of Thomas.
- An acceptance of reason and scientific progress, notably modern exegesis and the discoveries of first century archaeology which have allowed us to understand better who Jesus really was.
- An affirmation of freedom of thought and the rejection of all imposed dogma.
- Episcopalian (found in presbyterian/synodical forms), congregational, or even associational styles of organisation in which each Church or local community is free to choose its own direction and develop relationships with other communities.

Unitarian Christians affirm their solidarity with their historic Churches which have maintained this faith. Notably, they have the greatest respect for the Hungarian-speaking Churches which they feel, are worthy of the same order of consideration as that accorded to the Jews by Paul in his *Epistle to the Romans* (1:16) and John of Patmos in *Revelation* (7:4-9). The deep respect held for these churches' seniority is voluntary and filial; it is not at all subservient nor is it an obligatory duty. Moreover, these historic Churches demand no such deference.

Christian worship is not limited to discourse (sermons, preaching, meditations, etc.) even if it is very interesting and eloquent. Worship is neither a lecture nor a discussion club. The assembly addresses God (or uses an equivalent term); praises him as creator of the world; thanks him for the life which he has given us; it is in this sense a Thanksgiving.

Christian worship is also the opportunity to reproduce the precise actions of Jesus which are significant for our faith and which have been adopted by our tradition: baptism and The Lord's Supper (le partage du pain et du vin), to which one can add the historic gestures of feet washing, anointment with oil, the laying on of hands, etc. On its own,

the lighting of a candle cannot replace these rituals. Our ceremonies should not be diluted or rendered insipid under the pretext of modernisation or by attempting to make them accessible to the greatest number of people.

Because God has already given us life and all his grace we do not think that the sacraments will give us additional rewards. These acts simply connect us to our spiritual master, Jesus, whom we love and to whom we wish to be faithful. They establish a fraternal spirit amongst us and invite us to love all people.

Further to these Christian rites, it is well understood that each community will find other modes of spiritual expression which suit them.

When Unitarian Christians find themselves in multi-faith meetings (assemblées composite) where there are agnostics and non-believers for whom Christian rituals no longer have any significance, they can invite all to share in the spiritual traditions of those present. In this case, each person can present what is meaningful for them; Christians can offer bread and wine in the sense found in the *Didache*: the fruit of the earth and of the work of humankind.

Likewise, they can offer the Flower Communion as created in 1923 by the Czech minister Norbert Čapek, or the lighting of our chalice (explaining its historic significance as a symbol of liberty and of resistance in the context of Nazism).

Unitarianism has at its disposal a theology, a history, a tradition both spiritual and cultural, and its own rituals (the flaming chalice and the Flower Communion). We are extremely proud of this and have no reason at all to abandon the field of Christianity which saw the birth of our movement. On the contrary, we should collaborate with all other Christians who wish to construct a modern Christianity with a liberal spirit more faithful to its origins. As such, we launch a pressing appeal to European Unitarian Christians to actively participate in the *European Liberal Protestant Network* (ELPN).

In reaffirming a radical monotheism (God is One), Unitarian Christianity allows the establishment of theologically continuous relations with Judaism and Islam. The major obstacle to inter-religious dialogue with these religions lies, in effect, in the divinisation of Jesus.

During the twentieth century, some Unitarian congregations

decided that a belief in Christianity (One God and reference to the teachings of Jesus) was no longer a prerequisite for the recruitment of new members. These assemblies have thus become progressively multi-faith (hétérogènes). It is because of this that Unitarians who remain faithful to their original tradition call themselves “Unitarian Christians.” (Previously this was a tautology because all Unitarians were Christians.) In order to remove ambiguity about our faith and for clarity’s sake we recommend the use of this name.

Unitarian-Universalism presents itself as a new religion which concentrates on immediate universal approaches to the concept of religion. We share with it many things, notably the first part of our history (up to the American thinker William Ellery Channing), our reference to Michael Servetus (his work and his martyrdom), our solidarity with the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, the Unitarian rituals of the Flower Communion and the flaming chalice and our liberal conception of the Christian religion and other sources of religion, etc. We have to establish solid and friendly partner relationships with Unitarian-Universalists, as is already the case within the *International Council of Unitarians and Universalists* (ICUU). The same attitude is advised in whichever country a UU community exists.

The ICUU was founded in 1995 from three spiritual families: Unitarianism (including our historic Churches and Unitarian Christian associations); Universalism (namely the sphere of influence which was that of the Universalist Church, a Christian Church in the United States between 1779 and 1961); and, lastly, Unitarian-Universalism (created in 1961 by the merger of American Unitarian congregations and the Universalist Church). Those Unitarian Christians and historic churches remaining faithful to the origins of Unitarianism in the sixteenth-century form an important part of this whole and intend to preserve their own identity. Respectful dialogue and fruitful exchange is conditional on the avoidance of any confusion and ambiguity as well as any cultural and religious imperialism. For this reason, we ask that ICUU should be written with an ‘and’ (i.e. Unitarians and Universalists), and not with a hyphen, nor with an asterisk.

The ICUU is an entirely appropriate meeting space and Unitarian Christians intend to participate in it with complete loyalty. It would be a mistake to envisage a separate international organisation reserved

solely for Unitarian Christians. Likewise, all our activities are open to Unitarians of all kinds.

As the ELPN has existed since 1998, it makes sense for European Unitarian Christians to make the most of this network so as to meet and consult with each other more easily and maintain close relations with their liberal Protestant friends.

We hope that all believers and humanists around the world will participate in the advent of inter-convictional societies where liberty of conscience prevails and not just a single system of thought, where the mutual benefits of engagement with each other rather than forced encounters are recognised, where laity and democracy (necessary for dialogue that is free from any kind of fanaticism) are found, and where respect for life and our environment exist so that we can pass on a better world to future generations. We Unitarian Christians can contribute joyfully to a creation, made by God at the beginning of time, still growing, ever progressing and moving towards greater fellowship, the bearer of understanding and love.

English translation by Marie-Claire Lefevre, Susanna Brown and Andrew Brown.

Electronic copies available on request in English, French and Italian.



*Left to right: Jean-Claude Barbier, Mme Paola Zunino,  
Dr. Roberto Rosso, Mme Susanna Brown, the Revd Andrew Brown*

If you wish to express your support by signing the Manifesto in a personal capacity please contact either the editor of *The Herald* or M. Jean-Claude Barbier at: Résidence “Les Saules”, bât. C1, avenue de Maréchal-Juin, 33170 Gradignan France. Tel: 05 56 89 62 35

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## THE MIND OF RELIGION

In the second of two sermons Prof. Victor Nuovo reflects on loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength

*‘Such knowledge is too wonderful’* Psalm 139:6

When I was last in this pulpit, I promised a sequel to my sermon on loving God with our whole heart. Following Jesus’ teaching that we ought to love God with our minds as well as with our hearts, it seemed right that I follow up a discourse on the heart of religion with one about its mind as well. In my first sermon, I ended up talking not about how we should love God but how we should love everything. I talked about a universal love that pervades everything, which is best represented in the love a mother has for her sucking child. This is a love that we all know about, although mothers who suckle their children know it with a greater intimacy than do any of the rest of us. It is concrete, tangible [I can still feel the comforting coolness and strength of my mother’s hands on my fevered brow]. Its perfection is unsurpassed. It is universal. Thus, we ought to honour motherhood more than we normally do, for reality is surely best described as mother love all the way down to the ground of being. The world would be a better place if this were more widely recognized and applied.

Sucking is an infant’s first act, its first engagement with the world. It is the beginning of experience, and when experience begins, the mind awakens. One could say that our first thoughts as well as our first actions are those of a sucking child. And when the mind becomes active along with the body, there follows curiosity and independence and the beginning of the human adventure. This is why mother love is superior to a love of a shepherd for his sheep. For shepherds only protect their flock, but a mother who properly loves her children

strives to bring them to maturity and then to let them go.

I should add that this set of two sermons needs to be complemented by yet a third, for loving God with our minds involves not just having free and open minds, but deliberative minds also, minds that reflect upon how to live and that engage us in moral adventures. So, at some future time, I hope to explore what Jesus might have meant when he commanded that we should be perfect even as god is perfect.

Briefly, the point I want to make today is this: the world is shaped by something else besides mother love, namely knowledge. Knowledge and mother love are complements. The theme of Psalm 139, which I read to you, is ‘omniscience’, a complete and perfect knowledge. And just as the thought of mother love fills our hearts with a tenderness and gratitude that we experience at the deepest level of our existence, so the prospect of perfect knowledge awakens in us a sense of surpassing wonder. In the former we love God with our whole heart, in the latter, with our whole mind.

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

Psalm 139 was most likely written during the reign of Solomon, who ruled for more than forty years in ancient Israel almost three thousand years ago. He was Israel’s greatest king, and his reign constituted ancient Israel’s golden age. He became a dominant figure throughout the Middle East and his political influence was far out of proportion to the size of his nation. Among his wives was a daughter of Pharaoh. And it seems that far from being a client of Pharaoh, Solomon was able to prop up the failing Egyptian empire and to seize some of its glory. His reign (970-928 BCE) was a period of extravagant splendour and proud self-expression. Jerusalem became a great city. Solomon built monumental buildings, including the temple dedicated to Yahweh. No doubt, under his patronage, the religion of Yahweh flourished. Not only did religion flourish, but literature, the arts, and the sciences as well. We all know about Solomon’s proverbial wisdom, but he also must have been a lover and a patron of learning and are encouraged exploration into the secrets of nature. This is evident in the psalmist’s praise of Yahweh, because he, that is the psalmist, has learned that he has been ‘fearfully and wonderfully

made'. Yahweh supervised his making in his mother's womb; the god perceived the yet imperfect substance of his being; that same god who had it written down in some mysterious book of knowledge, how the psalmist's physical frame, his 'members' should be fashioned and combined. These are early signs of an already sophisticated study of human anatomy and generation, of the origin of life, physically imagined.

If I might digress; if I had limitless time to live, I think I might someday become an Orientalist. The term Orientalist was first used to denote scholars whose area of specialty was the ancient history and culture of the area running from ancient Persia through Egypt. It involved learning the ancient Semitic languages, Persian (which is an Indo-European language) and later on, ancient Egyptian (which derives from Semitic and Hamitic, that is, North African sources). I would make the history of Solomon's kingdom my speciality. It was during this period that the earliest literary works that would become part of the Bible were composed. Yahweh, the tribal god, became ennobled through high literary expression, as in our Psalm. He becomes a great god. So Solomon's reign has interest not only for those curious about ancient history, but for anyone who wants to understand our religion and its sources. I would like to understand the world view from which this psalm was conceived and composed. I would like to be able enter into the mind of its author. Such knowledge would be wonderful.

But greater still is that knowledge described by the psalmist that doesn't require being an Orientalist to begin to comprehend. What is wonderful about this knowledge is that it carries us beyond the limits of our understanding, and yet it does not defeat our minds, but enlarges and enlightens them.

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.*

This is not a cry of despair, but of supreme intellectual delight. It is joyous, full of wonder; the mind is unfettered, and like a bird set free from a cage it discovers its true place within the limitless expanse of heaven.

How do we enter this state? We must become curious. Knowledge acquired by rote or by mere drudgery or routine has no wonder or joy attached to it. The best it has to offer is a weary self satisfaction or

smugness. But the curious mind is never at rest, a mind reaching out, looking beyond comfortable certainties. Knowledge acquired on the way is not an end in itself, but suggests an ocean of being, unfathomed yet not unfathomable, unknown by us, yet somehow already known, as though actively thought by an infinite mind that intimates its creative presence in the exquisite complexity of natural things and the abstract systems, logic and mathematics, and also language, which adds richness and concreteness, by which we comprehend them. Such knowledge lures us with promises infinite joy.

Let me give you an example: Robert Boyle (1637-91) was a very curious man. We know him as one of the founders of modern chemistry and the discoverer of Boyle's law, which is all about the pressure of gases and their volume. In 1681 he published a small book entitled *A Discourse of things above reason*. It was all about things that the mind can't comprehend, not necessarily theological things, but intellectual puzzles. He saw them as demonstrations of omniscience, as paradoxes that draw the mind beyond its customary limits into the inner sanctuary of being, where nature's creative processes may be perceived. Here are some examples from Boyle's reflections:

- How is it that the diagonal of a square is incommensurate with its sides?
- How is it that a finite quantity can be infinitely divided?
- How is it that things enter into our minds in the form of knowledge?
- How do we explain the spring of the air? That is, how is it that air, confined in a container under pressure, will, when a valve is opened, rush into the atmosphere? (Remember, Boyle is most remembered as the discoverer of Boyle's law. His curiosity about air extended to other things: he likened the spring of the air to the behaviour of a ball of new cut wool and the feel of it in the hand: how when gently squeezed, when one relaxes one's grip it springs back into its original form. And he wondered, how is it that natural things have persistent or habitual ways: air and wool, a natural springiness, or animate things, life? These seem like simple matters, until you think about them.)

He was curious about still other things:

- How is it that seeds germinate into trees or plants similar to those that produced them?
- How is it that all living things do not just come to be by a fortuitous gathering of small material particles, but that they seem to originate from a seed or reproductive cell, that germinates and grows as though according

to a plan, drawing its nourishment from the ground or from the womb that shelters it, until it comes forth wonderfully made? How is it that nature in this way produces an endless variety of living things, of exquisite complexity and design, endowed with magnificent powers. How is it that from this same process there emerge creatures like us, self-reflective beings, with expansive minds and freedom of action? How is it that the brain thinks; or, if (as now seems unlikely) there is superadded to a living body a spiritual entity that makes us conscious thinking beings, how does this spirit interact with a physical body?

Boyle attributed it all to God, a creative spirit whose intelligence comprehended the whole of nature and resolved all its puzzles; who did not contemplate nature from afar, but was a constant creative and sustaining presence, like a guiding spirit or supervising genius, hovering over each thing although not always with infinite care to preserve them or even to protect them. Boyle was a theist, but not a sentimental one.

These questions persisted, and two centuries later, Charles Darwin considered them anew. He did not deny God, but preferred to think of God as nature. Darwin was curious about the great variety of living things; how living things are more or less the same and yet each one subtly different. He also saw not only the complexity of individual things, but of their connectedness to each other. He abandoned the common belief that things were made by God in the beginning, each according to their respective kinds and remained that way ever since. Species evolved. Moreover, their boundaries were not precise. Species were just dominant variations, whose dominance was determined by circumstances and their fitness or capacity to cope with them. He came to realize that nature had a long history, through which the manifold forms of life developed from simple beginnings; this was a history of genealogies, of diverse, interactive and mutually dependent forms of life. He saw evidence of this everywhere.

It is interesting [he writes] to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.

He meant 'laws of nature', the more or less regular processes by

which things grow and reproduce: the inheritance of qualities, an internally directed variability that unwittingly produces features that make a new creature more or less fit to survive the struggle for life and the force of circumstance which he called 'natural selection', as though the natural environment were a breeder that selects and rejects. He saw how fragile and yet how persistent life is. He concluded the account of all this in his book *The Origin of Species* with this observation:

There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

These are not the wonders of magicians who prefer that we not be curious but only dazzled, or the deep mysteries of spiritualists or mystics that tend to smother all curiosity. These are the wonders of nature, all around us, ongoing, luring us out of our comfortable cages of belief into the great expanse of being. Darwin did not suppose that the enquiry about the origin of species was ended, but just beginning. He knew nothing about inheritance of physical qualities, or about the origin of life itself. His curiosity taught him that his discoveries were just another beginning of an adventure of the mind seeking truth of which he was a faithful lover. The love of truth was his orthodoxy.

I find it curious that there are no hymns in the hymnbook under the heading of curiosity. Should piety exclude it? I think not, but I also think that its absence is evidence that there is something lacking in our religion, call it a love of truth, a tireless quest to discover how the world is, how it has become as it is, how it is that there is anything at all. Unless we become curious we cannot love God with our whole mind, cannot love God as we ought.

The philosopher Hegel wrote that the end of science is to know everything completely. And we're all familiar about the ongoing discussion about what it requires to develop a theory of everything. This is a concern that should not be the preserve of specialists, for as Stephen Hawking has remarked, if we were to discover such a theory, it would have to be of a sort that it should be understandable 'in broad principle' by everyone, just as Darwin's theory is, in broad principle,

easy to understand. And if that time should ever come, we will all ‘be able to take part in the discussion of the question why it is that we and the universe exist.’ And he continues, ‘If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason’, or I should say, of our curiosity, ‘—for then we would know the mind of God.’

As I’ve grown older and, I hope at least in certain ways, wiser, I’ve come to believe that it was an error to separate nature and God, that God is at least nature, that nature is immortal, without beginning or end. Of this, at least, I am certain, that we are a part of nature, and that nature does not hide her secrets to the curious, and that as we become curious it is a kind of omniscience that draws us on, for everything is knowledge. This, I think, is what the Psalmist perceived long ago and expressed in such beautiful poetry:

*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold  
thou art there.*

*If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me . . .*

*If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about  
me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day:  
the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

*How precious are thy thoughts unto me O God!*

*How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number  
than the sand:*

*When I awake, I am still with thee.*

*Such knowledge is too wonderful.*

May we all come to live in that wonder! Amen

Victor Nuovo is Professor of Philosophy and Dean of Arts and Humanities at Middlebury College and a Senior Research Fellow at Harris Manchester College, Oxford. This sermon was originally given at the Congregational Church of Middlebury, Vermont in February 2007. The first sermon, *The Heart of Religion*, appeared in the last edition of *The Herald*.



## LEARNING TO SAY “WE”

Anthony Howe preached this sermon at this summer’s UCA Synod. He encourages us to think more deeply about in what consists our collective faith and how we might live it better.

### The Bible: Joshua 3:1–4a

*Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.*

Those of you who know me will know that I am famed for my appalling sense of direction. If there is such a condition as geographical dyslexia then I have it! If it is at all possible for me to get lost somewhere then I will. One of my greatest concerns about moving to take up a new ministry was that I would be moving to a completely new area and that I would never manage to learn the routes I needed to. However, I prepared myself: I got myself what I now consider to be one of the greatest tools for a successful ministry: Sat Nav! Now, all I need to do is to type the appropriate address into the system and a voice in my car tells me when to turn left and right and, no matter where I am, I can always get home again.

Now, when I mention to well meaning folk that I am going to a particular destination, they often helpfully try to direct me the way that they think is best. Directions are difficult for me to grasp at the best of times but the situation is exacerbated when two people try to give me directions and the directions contradict one another! However, I am always willing to give it a go; but, I keep my sat nav in my car at all times so that I can get back on the right road if I find myself hopelessly off course.

The Book of Joshua in the Bible describes a time where the Israelites were a nomadic people and we are told that they followed a cloud. When the cloud moved, they moved and when it stopped, they set up camp. What could be simpler than that? It’s a bit like my sat nav telling me which way to go.

Why did they need this direction? Because, as the reading says they had “never been that way before”.

I look at the decline in our movement and I wonder whether—sadly—the cloud moved on long ago but we didn’t notice.

We have a rich tradition and a heritage to guide us, but I fear we may spend just a little too much time listening to all the different directions offered by others, even when they contradict each other: borrowing from other faiths without truly engaging with them, continually trying different combinations of spiritual practises in the hope that we might suddenly hit the jackpot and see our movement thrive again.

Please don’t misunderstand me: as I said earlier, I am more than willing to listen to the directions given by others (and even give them a try) but I keep my sat nav in the car to guide me home again because it is easy to find yourself lost when the directions are not clear. Whilst I believe it is important to listen to others and have a well rounded spirituality that shows respect for all faith traditions and that learns from them, I believe that it’s a return to trusting and rejoicing in our own heritage that we need most today.

That’s not to say that we have to live in the past. We know we’re moving forward because we’ve “never been this way before”, but let’s trust our heritage to guide us.

### **The Bible: Luke 5:4–7**

*When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.*

Let me tell you about my ongoing quest to get fit. My new year’s resolution this year was to go swimming two or three times a week. You’ll be pleased to know that I have kept to my resolution. Now I started with a determination to go swimming but the only problem is that I am not really a strong swimmer. For the first few weeks I stayed near the shallow end where I could always put a foot on the floor and just splashed around a bit. But as I have got more confident (and a bit

fitter) I can now happily swim in the deep end. It doesn't matter that I can't reach the bottom of the pool anymore because I'm now used to the depth. And because of the work I have put in, I'm feeling more confident in the deeper water.

Our second reading today tells of Jesus getting into a boat and telling those fishermen in it to set out for the deep water. Now the Bible says that these fishermen had worked all night and had caught nothing, but after getting into the deep water with Jesus they brought home a vast catch. "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch".

I look at our Unitarian & Free Christian Movement today and I see people who are working so hard all the time; people who are trying and trying and trying; people who really WANT to see results. Yet by striving to be all things to all people I think it's so easy to lose some of the depth. It would seem to me that the answer is that we need to immerse ourselves deeply in our own tradition – that's where the catch is to be found!

We've worked all night and caught nothing for far too long—and it becomes tiring and depressing. Yet I believe there is a catch just waiting for us if we had the courage to go a bit deeper.

When I started swimming in January I wouldn't have dared go into the deep end. It's only as I've gained my confidence that I will now do so. Maybe as a movement the temptation for us is to stay only where it's safe. Unfortunately, as I've found with swimming, what's safe can often be a little shallow. So let's not be afraid to go deeper in our faith! This, however, would not be a Unitarian sermon unless it came with BUT...and here it is. These words of a poem by Karle Wilson Baker have haunted me over the last few months:

*The Lord said,*

*"Say WE"*

*But I looked upon them, grimy and all awry. Myself in all those twisted shapes? Ah, no!*

*Distastefully I turned my head away, persisting,*

*"They"*

I find myself wondering again and again whenever I hear the "Christian or not" debate within Unitarianism whether I can learn

from those who have a different opinion to my own. Am I doing myself or our movement any good but by looking at something that doesn't resonate with me and insisting that it is "them" not "we"? Experience is teaching me that we have to work with what have and with WHO we have.

I can't afford to isolate myself or I risk closing my ears to the opinions of others and living in an ivory tower; living a life that falls far short of the example set by Jesus. As the poem goes on to say:

*"And I,  
at last,  
richer by a hoard of years and tears,  
looked into their eyes and found the heavy word that bent my neck and  
bowed my head:  
Like a shamed school-boy then I mumbled low,  
"we, Lord"*

I can't be so arrogant to demand that my brothers and sisters in my churches and chapels do everything my way, even though I might secretly want them to! Internal squabbles and fights do nothing to enhance the witness of our movement. Keeping ourselves to ourselves will weaken us. And so, to draw all these things together:

We need a guide! I will continue to listen to those who think we should go a particular way, but I believe that a return to the thing that served us well in the past will guide us into the future. Not a carbon copy of the past since we "have never been this way before" but a Unitarianism that is faithful to its heritage and that is relevant for today.

For this to work it needs depth. Study, prayer and witness. We can only go into the deeper things once we've found some confidence in ourselves. Confidence in being who we are. And once we can show that our faith has some depth to it, we should prepare ourselves for a catch. I don't believe we'll catch anything worth having if we refuse to move beyond the shallow.

And finally, as the Bible declares: "by their fruits shall ye know them" and that needs to be true of us. We can't afford alienate others by creating an air of separatism or elitism. Instead our direction, our confidence and our depth should speak for itself. That will be our witness. It will speak to others in our movement and to the wider

world.

So let us keep on doing what we've never done: taking the glorious heritage of our past and building a future. Let us work to make these things reality.



## REVIEW: THE LARGER VIEW

Bob Pounder reviews the Revd Vernon Marshall's new book  
*The Larger View – Unitarians and World Religions*  
and finds that Liberal Christianity becomes a casualty

**T***he Larger View: Unitarians and World Religions amongst other things*, is a compact publication, a capsule history of Unitarian thought and development, presenting notables such as Theophilus Lindsey and James Martineau through to Unitarian Pagans and the American Unitarian Universalist Margot Adler a 'prominent witch' and author of 'Drawing Down the Moon' (1979), the most celebrated book on American neo-paganism.

The Reverend Dr Marshall writes: 'The challenge of the British Unitarian movement is to decide where it now stands in terms of its theological position.' It seems that this may be easier said than done given that what he describes as: 'an avowedly Christian denomination that has become a home for individuals who seek their inspiration from whatever religious tradition speaks to their theological condition.'

Vernon's own journey of faith began in the late 1970's and early 1980's from a position of wishing to retain the Unitarian Christian heritage. However, his experiences of inter-religious activities, his embracing of feminist theology and his studies of Comparative Religion for a Master of Philosophy degree has brought about fundamental change in his perspective. He now sees himself a part of British Unitarianism's shifting theological focus.

The origins of Unitarian thought, its rejection of the Nicene Creed and thus The Trinity, its interpretations of the scriptures and its ability to throw up new generations of radical thinkers, has meant that Unitarian theology would always be in flux; more so than in any other denomination.

James Martineau, for example, the most significant Unitarian

thinker of the nineteenth-century placed an emphasis on reason and freethinking that led to the view that the underlying truths of the Bible were hidden by 'dogmatic concepts'. Nevertheless, Martineau remained a committed follower of Jesus and thus saw himself as a Christian. Martineau died in 1900 but his views prevailed. By the beginning of the twentieth-century Unitarians were starting to see the identification with Christianity as cultural rather than doctrinal.

In *The Larger View* Vernon produces in such a short space, an impressive chronology of Unitarian scholars who at various times and for different theoretical reasons immersed themselves in the studies of other religions. For example, in 1860 a Unitarian minister, William Rounsville Alger had published, 'A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life'. Essentially, Alger believed in a 'universal religious experience. In the same period, Joseph Estlin Carpenter a Unitarian minister and former Principal of Manchester College Oxford shared this view. Carpenter believed that each religion represented a different stage of evolutionary process. He further believed that Unitarianism represented the most advanced stage of the time. It was felt that the ultimate outcome would be a religion that would encompass or unite all of the world's religions.

But the ideals and optimism of continual human progress and the convergence of the world's religions were scotched by the experience of the World War One and its attendant slaughter. It was an irreversible blow. The matter of convergence from then on became sidelined in favour of dealing with issues of ethical and social justice. From today's perspective Marshall writes, 'There are certainly no signs of a growing organic merger of the religions.'

This is not to say that exposure to the ideas of other religions had ceased to impact on Unitarianism, far from it. In 1959 a minister and soon to be general secretary of the Unitarian General Assembly warned: 'We must be aware of attempts at devising a synthetic religion made up of elements of the great faiths.'

From the 1960's change gathered apace as the secular virtues of civil liberty and religious tolerance were replacing religious beliefs. Or were they? By the 1980's a new group, the Unitarian Renewal Group (URG) were laying stress on theological diversity, breaking with the belief that Unitarians 'were members of the historic Christian

church.’ More radically the emergence of the Unitarian Neo-Pagan Network affirmed a Pagan spiritual perspective as being, ‘fully compatible with the human quest for self-knowledge and ultimate meaning.’

In *The Wider View* the Liberal Christian position is seen as ‘historic’ rather than contemporary, evidenced by survey and a research questionnaire that is an integral part of Dr Marshall’s work. For example, only twenty-five out of eighty responses to his questionnaire from ministers and lay leaders, considered themselves to be Liberal Christians. Further, reference is also made to a separate survey, in 2001, involving more than a thousand Unitarian women. Only forty percent considered themselves to be Christian-based.

Decades if not at least two centuries of enquiry and searching have left British Unitarianism exposed to a myriad of influences. It seems therefore that the purpose of *The Wider View* is not simply to inform or to reflect on the past and the present. Rather, Vernon clearly seems to be seeking a consolidation, taking all he has said in the round, of a new position in which to face the future and move forward.

He appears to wish to retain the advantage of religious status in creating a movement, a new religion that could become a spiritual a centre-point for all faiths and perhaps none. At the same time he envisages that this new religion could have a distinct and ‘thereby equal distance’ from all other religions. It would be a new religion that would be ‘creative’ without the baggage of the past and without the ‘negative connotations associated with the other religions.’ The author declares that there would be a price to pay for this reformulation.

Ultimately, *The Larger View* is a cogently written positional document inferring a sense of the inevitable. In Vernon’s scenario, however, it is the Liberal Christian tradition that becomes the casualty. This is the price that would have to be paid. But, if according to him, the non-Christian based section of the movement has no coherent tenet to hold them together, we might reasonably ask if it really is a price worth paying? Only time will tell.

*The Larger View – Unitarians and World Religions* by Vernon Marshall is published by The Lindsey Press (ISBN 978-0085319-0745-5) at £8.99

## DIARY DATES & NEWS

### UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

#### Notice for the 2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Unitarian Christian Association will be held at Norcliffe Chapel, Styal, on Saturday 1st March 2008 starting at 2 pm.

Nominations are invited for the following Officer Group positions:

POSITION	CURRENT OFFICE HOLDER	REMARKS
Moderator	Rev Chris Wilson MA	Rev Chris Wilson <u>MUST</u> stand down at the 2008 AGM. The Officer Group intends to nominate Rev Alex Bradley to serve as Moderator from the 2008 AGM.
Clerk	Ken Howard	
Chaplain	Rev Alex Bradley	Can not stand as Chaplain as it is assumed he will become moderator.
<i>Herald</i> Editor	Rev Andrew Brown	
Treasurer	Sandra Wilson	
Membership Secretary	Rev Andrew Parker	
Membership Dev Officer	Cathy Fozard	
Retreats Officer	Rev Jean McNeile	
Publicity Officer	Rev Jeff Gould	

**Nominations for any position must be sent to the Clerk of Synod (contact details on the back page of the *Herald*).**

## NEW UCA PRAYER-BOOK

The new UCA prayer-book is now available. It is called *Daybreak and Eventide, A Little Book of Prayers and Worship for Individuals, Small Groups and House Churches* by Andrew J. Brown and John C. Morgan.

You may obtain it by sending a crossed cheque for £9.99 (RRP £14.99) + P&P £1 made payable to the *Unitarian Christian Association* to Sandra Wilson, 1 Fairview Grove, Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire, CB25 0LB.



## CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

### GREAT BRITAIN

**Bolton**, Halliwell Road Free Church, Halliwell Road, Bolton, Lancs.  
10.30 am & 6.30 pm. [www.halliwell-unitarians-bolton.org.uk](http://www.halliwell-unitarians-bolton.org.uk)

**Cambridge**, The Memorial Church, Emmanuel Road, Cambridge  
CB1 1JW 10.30 am & 6.30 pm (Four communion services per year,  
Christmas Eve, Good Friday, Whitsunday and during Harvest)  
[www.cambridgeunitarian.org](http://www.cambridgeunitarian.org)

**Dean Row (Wilmslow)**, Dean Row Chapel, Dean Row, Wilmslow,  
Cheshire. 11.15 am

**Dundee**, Williamson Memorial Unitarian Christian Church, Dudhope  
Street, Dundee. DD1 1JT. 11 am.  
[www.dundee-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.dundee-unitarians.org.uk)

**Failsworth**, Dob Lane Chapel, Oldham Road, Failsworth, Manchester.  
9.30 am

**Great Yarmouth**, Old Meeting (Unitarian), Greyfriars Way, Great  
Yarmouth, NR30 2SW 3 pm (1st & 3rd Sundays each month).  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/eu/gtyarmouth](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/eu/gtyarmouth)

**Hale Barns**, Hale Chapel, 60 Chapel Lane, Hale Barns, Altrincham,  
Cheshire. WA15 0HT. 9.30 am. [www.halechapel.org](http://www.halechapel.org)

**Hyde**, Flowery Field Church, Newton Street, Hyde, Cheshire. SK14  
4NP. 2.30 pm (Communion 1st Sunday each month)  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/ecu/FloweryField](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/ecu/FloweryField)

**Hyde**, Hyde Chapel, Knott Lane, Gee Cross, Hyde, Cheshire. SK14  
5SQ. 11 am (Communion 1st Sunday each month)  
[www.unitarian.org.uk./ecu/hydechapel](http://www.unitarian.org.uk./ecu/hydechapel)

**Knutsford**, Brook Street Chapel, Adams Hill, Knutsford. WA16 5DY.  
11 am.

**Leeds, Mill Hill Chapel**, City Square, Leeds. LS1 5EB. 10.45 am  
[www.millhillchapel.org.uk](http://www.millhillchapel.org.uk)

**London (Brixton)**, Effra Road Chapel, 63 Effra Road, Brixton,  
London. SW2 1BZ. 10.30 am.  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/ldpa/brixton](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/ldpa/brixton)

**London (Hampstead)**, Rosslyn Hill Chapel, 3 Pilgrim's Place,  
Hampstead. NW3 7NG. 11 am & 7 pm. [www.rosslynhillchapel.com](http://www.rosslynhillchapel.com)

**Oxford**, Manchester College Chapel Society, Harris Manchester  
College, Mansfield Rd, Oxford, OX1 3TD. 11 am.  
[www.oxfordunitarians.org.uk](http://www.oxfordunitarians.org.uk)

**Padiham**, Nazareth Chapel, Knight Hill, Church Street, Padiham. BB12  
8JH. 10.30 am.  
[www.padiham-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.padiham-unitarians.org.uk)

**Stalybridge**, Stalybridge Unitarian Church, Forester Drive,  
Stalybridge, Cheshire. 11 am.  
[www.stalybridgeunitarians.org.uk](http://www.stalybridgeunitarians.org.uk)

#### THE NON-SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND



[www.nspresbyterian.org](http://www.nspresbyterian.org)

#### PRESBYTERY OF ANTRIM

**Antrim**, First (Old) Presbyterian Congregation. Services, as arranged.

**Ballyclare**, Old Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Ballyclare.  
10.15am.

**Ballymoney**, NSP Congregation. Services, as arranged.

**Belfast**, All Souls, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast. 11.30am.

**Belfast**, First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast. 10.30am.

**Cairncastle**, Old Presbyterian Church, Cairncastle. 12.15pm.

**Crumlin**, Old Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Crumlin. 3pm.

**Downpatrick**, First Presbyterian Church, Stream Street, Downpatrick.  
11.15am.

**Dunmurry**, First Presbyterian Church, Glebe Road, Dunmurry.  
11.30am.

**Glenarm**, Old Presbyterian Church, Ballymena Road, Glenarm. 11am.  
**Greyabbey**, First (NS) Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Greyabbey.  
10.30am.  
**Holywood**, First (NS) Presbyterian Church, High Street, Holywood.  
12 noon.  
**Newtownards**, NS Presbyterian Church, Victoria Avenue,  
Newtownards. 12 noon.  
**Templepatrick**, Old Presbyterian Church, Main Road, Templepatrick.  
11am.

#### **PRESBYTERY OF BANGOR**

**Ballee**, NS Presbyterian Church, Ballee, Downpatrick. 9.45am.  
**Ballyhemlin**, Meeting House, Ballyhalbert. 3pm, 1st & 3rd Sundays.  
**Banbridge**, First Presbyterian Church, Downshire Road, Banbridge.  
10am.  
**Belfast**, Mountpottinger NS Presbyterian Church, Belfast. 10.30am.  
**Clough**, NS Presbyterian Church, Castlewellan Road, Clough. 9.45am  
(2nd & 4th) & 11.15am. (1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays)  
**Comber**, NS Presbyterian Church, Windmill Hill, Comber. 12 noon.  
**Dromore**, First Presbyterian Church, Rampart Street, Dromore.  
11.30am.  
**Killinchy**, NS Presbyterian Church, Comber Road, Killinchy.  
11.30am.  
**Moira**, First (NS) Presbyterian Church, Meeting Street, Moira.  
11.30am, 2nd & last Sundays.  
**Moneyreagh**, NS Presbyterian Church, Church Road, Moneyreagh.  
12 noon.  
**Newry**, First (NS) Presbyterian, Needham Place, Newry. 11.30am.  
**Rademon**, First Kilmore Church, Kilmore, Crossgar. 10am.  
**Ravara**, NS Presbyterian Church, Saintfield Road, Ballygowan. 3.30pm  
last Sunday.  
**Warrenpoint**, First Presbyterian Church, Burren Road, Warrenpoint.  
3pm, 1st & 3rd Sundays.

#### **SYNOD OF MUNSTER**

**Cork**, Unitarian Church, Prince's Street, Cork. 11am.  
**Dublin**, Unitarian Church, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. 11am



The Revd Nigel Playfair (left), Clerk of the NSPCI delivers the *Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture* at Stalybridge during July. Our own Clerk, Ken Howard (right) looks on. Photo © Ian M. Bradbury



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