

Service: Help One Another: 20160828 with **Hull Unitarians**
The Rev. Dr. Ralph Catts and Dr. Adrian Worsfold

Welcome

We come together today from many places and many ways of life
Amid our many differences, we join as one
We know that there is strength in our connection
We know that there is comfort in our togetherness
We know that there is hope in our diverse unity
May the flame we kindle today enable us to see beyond disagreement and
strife
Beyond anger and fear
Beyond different belief and understandings
May we learn to see the beauty in each and every person
And free our love to work in the world

[Via the Rev. Andrew Pakula, New Unity Unitarian Church, London.]

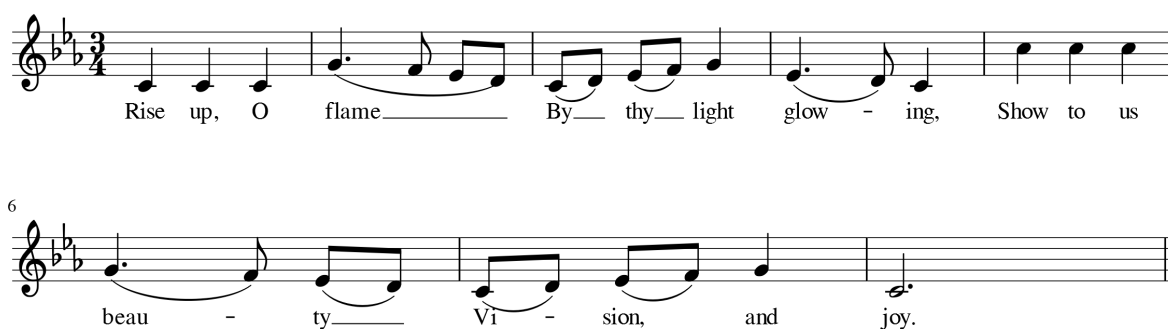
Chalice Lighting

Hymn SF 229 Chalice

SF 229 Chalice

Rise Up O Flame

Christoph Praetorius



Rise up, O flame. By thy light glow - ing, Show to us
beau - ty. Vi - sion, and joy.

Gloria [listen]

Anthem: *Love is the Doctrine*

Love is the Doctrine of this Church

UUA The Quest for Truth After John Ward, Dublin Unitarians

$\text{♩} = 140$

mp
Love is the doctrine of this Church, The quest for truth is its sacrament and

4
ser-vice is its prayer; *mp* To dwell to-gether in peace, *mf* To seek knowledge in free-dom,

7
To serve us all in fel-low-ship to the end that all folk shall grow in har-mo-ny

10
— with the di-vine. — This do we co-ve-nant — witheach oth-er *mp* and with *mf* God.

Time For All Ages: A Helping Hand, modified from a story by Tim Aitkins.

Last Friday afternoon it started to rain very hard, and a little girl just like you was caught in the storm with her mum and her baby sister. “Quick,” said her mum, run to the shops and get under cover. Her mum hurried after her with the baby, but the little girl was a very fast runner - very fast indeed, and her mum could not keep up with her.

Lots of other people were running for cover from the rain, and her mum lost sight of her daughter. The little girl was running so fast that when she got to the shops she could not stop! So she ran past several shops before she stopped to catch her breath. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning and a large Boom -

Can you help me make the noise of the thunder? Let us say 'boom' as loud as we can - ready - 1, 2, 3 Boom. Oh no, it was muucch louder than that - let us all try to say Boom as loud as we can - ready BOOOM! .

The little girl was frightened and ran inside the store. Then there was another clap of thunder. It went Boom! Please help me make a loud boom sound. BOOM

The little girl knew that she would be stuck in that store for quite a while. She started to look out of the shop to see if she could see her mother. The shopkeeper said, "Young woman, can I help you with something?"

The little girl pointed outside, and said, “I am looking for my mother.”

“Ahhh,” said the old shopkeeper, “Did you run in here to escape the rain?”

The little girl nodded slowly as another loud boom [hold hand to ear] of thunder shook the store.

“Well, You could head back outside with this.” The shopkeeper went behind the counter and what do you think she pulled out?

That's right. An umbrella.

“Take this umbrella,” said the shopkeeper. “I don't know why it's raining. But I do know that you can keep dry under this portable sanctuary.”

The little girl beamed, but then stopped in her tracks. “But I don't have any money,” said the little girl.

The shopkeeper waved her off. “No worries, little girl. Just be sure to offer the umbrella to someone else when they need it.”

The little girl accepted the umbrella, headed back outside, opened up her umbrella and went on her way. Soon she saw her mother who had her rain coat and hat.

The little girl was happy and dry and she still had the umbrella the shop keeper had given her.

Then she saw a man wearing a suit, darting toward her trying to keep dry with a newspaper over his head. Just as he reached her the newspaper began to fall apart under the heavy rain. She skipped over to the man in the suit and held the umbrella the shop keeper had given her. “Here,” said the little girl. “Take the umbrella with you; I don't know why it's raining. But I do know that you can keep dry under this portable sanctuary.”

The man smiled in relief. He had been having a really bad day, but he said, “Oh, I couldn't take your umbrella.”

“No! Take it! Just be sure to offer the umbrella to someone else when they need it.”

The little girl put the umbrella into his hands and then ran off with her mum.

The man couldn't believe how nice the little girl was. He knew he had to hurry, though, because it was almost time for a meeting he had to attend. Another boom of thunder caused him to start running. However, he decided to learn a lesson, so whenever it would rain, he would bring not only his own umbrella but also another to give away to someone who was stuck outside in the rain. And every time he gave away an umbrella, he would say, “I don't know why it's raining. But I do know that you can keep dry under this portable sanctuary.”

And soon, everyone in their town had an umbrella that they would take with them. And if the townspeople passed by someone without an umbrella, they would give up their own umbrella and pass on the words, now known by the entire town, “I don't know why it's raining. But I do know that you can keep dry under this portable sanctuary.”

[Atkins, T. (2016), adapted by Catts, R., 'The Umbrella Sanctuary', *Unitarian Universalist Association: Congregational Management - Worship - Words for Worship - Stories*, [Online], Available World Wide Web, URL: <http://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/umbrella-sanctuary>. [Accessed: Friday August 26 2016, 01:00].]

Readings

Reading 1: Extract from *A Unitarian Theology of Helping One Another* by Adrian Worsfold.

...when this Church of ours says, 'help one another', it means more than an option for counselling, but is missional. It is missional because it sets up a place and space among some folk gathered for religious encounter, where we ritualise possibilities for exchange and gift, for spiritual benefit, for a return on little bits of sacrifice (the efforts we make) towards the good of others and ourselves so that, when that final story is told, something was added: something from the gift enhanced us and made us more than we might have been, so that we become.

[Worsfold, A. J. (2016), *A Unitarian Theology of Helping One Another*, Pluralist Website [Online], Available World Wide Web, URL: <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/28120070/Pluralist/learning/rethink/helpingoneanother.html>. [Accessed: Thursday August 25 2016, 20:39].]

Reading 2: from *It is All About Your Search for Truth and Meaning, Not about Your Belief System: A New Perspective for Religious Liberalism* by Hans le Grand and Tina Geels, 2016, 49.

[In a progressive religious community] ...entering into a helping relationship is driven by a very strong interest: it requires a continuous openness to what the other person is and a willingness to empathise with the other. The willingness to accept the other in his (her) otherness is a way of learning itself. To be truly open to others and to yourself is often harder than committing yourself to ethical or religious rules or systems.

[le Grand, H., Geels, T. (2016), *It is All About Your Search for Truth and Meaning, Not about Your Belief System: A New Perspective for Religious Liberalism*, The Netherlands: IARF, 49.]

Hymn SF 036 A Place at the Table

Addresses

Reflections on our affirmation words: *And to help one another*

This service has been prepared in consultation with Adrian Worsfold. He will address you about the problems and opportunities within the Unitarian tradition towards 'helping one another' and even 'solidarity', assisted by selected insights from some other faith traditions. I will then follow with some observations, before you can reflect on what the spiritual or religious dimension of 'helping one another' means for you.

Sermon: written and spoken by ADRIAN

This address is about the difficulties of helping, even finding solidarity, in the context of Unitarianism as a tradition, and what this chain of memory might learn from other faith packages yet consistent with its own tradition.

Does the Trinity have an advantage over a divine Unity when it comes to helping one another? Catherine LaCugna is an American feminist Roman Catholic theologian who asks how we are to live and relate to others so as to be most God-like. In *God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (1993, 1), she claims that the Trinity teaches "a theology of relationship, which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and community within the framework of God's self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit."

So she is talking about relationship being fundamental within the Godhead of three persons in relation; this mutuality for LaCugna is not simply internal to the Godhead but is further expressed in our human response within creation. This is a **communicative Godhead**, within and without, and is reflected today in much social Christian theology.

One reason why many of my liberal religious and online friends still maintain allegiance to the Trinity is because it is a **model of helping one another**.

How in contrast can a God of Unity be social? Is such a Unitarian God just a distant transcendence or something that necessarily collapses into the uncommunicated and inactive?

Let's try for an answer via Islam, with its unified God that is so transcendent, so high and dry, so able to please the Godself itself, that you would think humans are left just to do as they would. But they are not. For

the majesty of such a God is awe-making, under which everyone must be humbled. Within the Islamic 'House of Peace', everyone is the concern of everyone else. It becomes very communal. And one of the five pillars is Zakkat or charity. In the Ulema, or community, the divine demand is to behave well.

No lesser document than the Church of England's 1987 Doctrine Commission book, *We Believe in God*, points out that in Islam the 'Amr' descends at creation, directing the created universe, and mandating the prophets towards the common good, driving the straight path through history within humanity (see 1987, 134).

[Pause]

And another struggle for many Unitarians is that the whole thrust towards individual conscience in belief is often used as an excuse for a '**look after my own salvation**' approach: indeed as a licence just to believe and do whatever you want.

A unity God plus individualism equals something atomistic and only about helping yourself...

[Shorter pause]

Of course, Unitarians have helped others. But it has been paternalistic, not solidarity. This history of ours matters: that the Presbyterian-Unitarian line was never fully part of those industrial collective movements towards social justice. Unitarian churches were built by employers and the well-off middle class: architecturally they were merchant house boxes and later grand gothic piles, and turned-around boxes. In fact the secular collective Labour movement exposed the denominations as middle class: reaching out is not quite mutual enough. The Labour movement represented solidarity.

[Pause]

Let's get some assistance from an individualist faith: Buddhism. Your spiritual practice trains your own mind towards coping, so to become detached from the over-attractions of this suffering world. Critics say that far from being selfless, this is selfish. Plus all that about karma and rebirth is fear and magical thinking about a bad past life and hardly mutual help.

But the counter-claim is that by becoming detached from such material obsessions, and by becoming more skilful regarding being self-less, we

therefore are naturally more able to negotiate suffering and reduce it. The world does not cease to be social, does not cease to have relationships. In other words, a person spiritually trained will acquire a condition of responding to the other in need. And the focus on karma should be into the future and the merit of your behaviour now towards others. So the lesson is: **good spiritual practice helps the other in need.**

[Slight pause]

We can also learn from the Sikhs, because having identity as a group needs **external defence and internal nurturing.**

With both Hindu and Muslim as sometimes hostile neighbours, the validity of maintaining any Sikh self-defence has demanded the highest ethical behaviour. To then prosper as a group required some very important foundation-laying: **meeting the needs of the people.** One of the most basic needs is being fed, and so comes the social and communal provision of the community kitchen or *langar*. In every *gurdwara* (temple) is the langar and the activity of eating. This is solidarity and is free food for all. Yet the ethical stance means that food is vegetarian offered to Sikh and non-Sikh alike without specific set rituals. Furthermore, sharing the tasks of preparation, cooking, serving and cleaning shows *sewa*, the selfless service to: the *sadhsangat* or community, the *gurdwara*, and the world beyond.

Participating together in either ritualised or actual eating and drinking is like cooking: we are to be transformed. This is precisely the anthropology of the gift-exchange: one that is consistent with the transformative 'religio' effect of bonding with one another as a spiritual gift. If we bond together, we must be helping one another.

For me, Unitarianism is like a religious anthropology laid bare. The spiritual gift is from the bond, is from the caring. The Jewish theologian Martin Buber called this the **I-Thou relationship**: a profound relationship, that with a personalist God - the close God of depth - but also person with person anthropologically.

[Pause]

So what may we conclude? Perhaps with a personalist divine, we can be as under Islam: to function collectively, driven towards our purposes, along with *zakkat*. Then we are individuals, like Buddhists: to do a spiritual practice towards a selflessness that assists the other. And then we can be like the Sikhs: to get the basics right, to share, and so bond in fellowship,

to receive its spiritual gift. But note: we can be like those in Islam, in Buddhism, in Sikhism, yet it is as much ours, in the critically assessed Presbyterian-Unitarian line, recognising historical shortcomings.

And seen this way, the Presbyterian-Unitarian **history in memory is missional**, that is: our evaluation of where we have been and how we arrived and what we now do is something to pass on. We hope to achieve a profound relationship, a solidarity: embedded in an institutional culture that we have developed, it should be recommended to others.

[LaCugna, Catherine (1993), *God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life*, HarperCollins.]

[The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England [1981-1985] (1987), *We Believe in God*, London: Church House Publishing]

Sermon: written and spoken by RALPH

In approaching the topic of helping, we need to start with a recognition that many people help one another - it seems to be a basic human intuitive behaviour. Our Story for All Ages suggests that when we do offer help, we add to the quality of our community experience. That is a reason for choosing to offer a helping hand. Of course, we can instead exploit each other, or cheat each other, but we can choose to help one another. What does it mean to help as a spiritual practice?

In our hymn we sang that 'God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy', and I note that in both the Old and New Testaments prophets talk of justice for the poor, not charity as a so called virtue - but justice.

Adrian does us a great service by identifying how the principle of approaching compassion and charity from the perspective of respect and equality can be identified in many spiritual traditions. Helping one another seems to be integral to the spiritual practice of many faith communities.

My thinking, when I asked Adrian to share this service with me, was to demonstrate at a practical level 'helping one another' in our spiritual journeys. To put this service together we had to listen to each other and find a shared path that accommodated our differences.

Is the phrase 'to help one another' part of the spiritual purpose of this religious community, as it seems to be for Buddhists, Sikhs, and Muslims?

If it is part of our spiritual practice as a community, should we make this more explicit? Should we make our affirmation more pro-active, rather than implying that it is a ritual?

Adrian made a critical claim about Unitarians when he said that the whole thrust towards individual conscience in belief is often used as an excuse for individualism in a sort of 'look after my own salvation' approach: indeed a licence just to believe and do whatever you want to do yourself regardless of the consequences. A Unity God plus individualism equals something atomistic and only about helping yourself...

This claim does not represent the current position of Hull Unitarians. It seems to be more of an historic middle class view that was evident in years past among most western middle class communities concerned with alleviating poverty. Richard Sennett in his book, titled 'Respect' points to this self-serving approach being that adopted by Catholic Nuns in Chicago in the early twentieth century, when they applied their principle of Caritas to their approach to social work. They saw their charitable actions as necessary for their own salvation. We do however need to be mindful of this heritage as we approach the tercentenary of Leonard Chamberlain, a member of the then Bowl Alley Lane Chapel from which this Unitarian church developed. Being a man of his time, his Will set out to offer charity to the poor of Hull, as well as support for the ministry of this church. The trustees today have the task of interpreting his wishes in the very different context of our 21st century values.

So, the question for you to contemplate, is whether and if so, how does our spiritual awareness find expression in our commitment to help one another?

Let us reflect on our commitment to help one another, and ponder how we might do so with as a community a spiritual awareness, and a commitment to equality and mutual respect.

[Musical Interlude Incredible String Band: *Beyond the Sea*](#)

[Discussion](#)

[Prayer: Sung: *The Spirit Who's Manifest* \[Optional\]](#)

[Prayer](#)

Let us be compassionate toward ourselves, humbly acknowledging our failings, and grant ourselves both forgiveness, and the courage to learn from our short-comings.

May we exercise compassion with grace and humility

Let our compassion for others be based on equality for all and without judgement of others who may be in need.

May we exercise compassion with grace and humility

Let us commit our community to act selflessly as we strive to address in justice in our community, recognising that in our selflessness we are living our faith and demonstrating the principles of our sacred community.

May we exercise compassion with grace and humility. Amen.

Hymn: SF 178 *St. Fulbert* choir

Notices and Offertory for the work of the church.

Closing Verse: SF 102 *A Blessing* choir (Please sing 'in the hollow of Love's hands' in the last line.)

Closing words: SF 250. (all invited to say)

Postlude: *Alice in Wonderland 'Imagination'* (Please remain seated.)

The Spirit Who's Manifest

(Derived from the Lord's Prayer)

JosephLees

Adrian Worsfold

♩ = 100

The Spi - rit who's ma - ni - fest, Named be - yond all names,

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-7. The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The lyrics are: "The Spi - rit who's ma - ni - fest, Named be - yond all names,"

In - flu - ence give, On all who live, Be - com - ing with diff - 'rence

Musical notation for the second system, measures 8-13. The key signature has four flats and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The lyrics are: "In - flu - ence give, On all who live, Be - com - ing with diff - 'rence"

made. Sus - tain all life, To han - dle strife, To for - give un - con -

Musical notation for the third system, measures 14-20. The key signature has four flats and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The lyrics are: "made. Sus - tain all life, To han - dle strife, To for - give un - con -"

dit' - nal - ly, As we strive on to build up our ful - fill - ing lives.

Musical notation for the fourth system, measures 21-27. The key signature has four flats and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is in the right hand, and the accompaniment is in the left hand. The lyrics are: "dit' - nal - ly, As we strive on to build up our ful - fill - ing lives."

28

And av - oid those ways to - wards des - truc - tion, By just coun - ter -

This system contains measures 28 through 33. The music is in a key with four flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. The vocal line consists of quarter and half notes. The piano accompaniment features block chords and moving bass lines.

34

act - ing ev - il, And foc - us our prac - tice, Then nur - ture

This system contains measures 34 through 39. The vocal line continues with quarter and half notes. The piano accompaniment includes some chords with a fermata over the final measure of the system.

42

one an - oth - er, To build the Com - mu - ni - ty So it

This system contains measures 42 through 47. The vocal line includes a half note and a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features block chords and moving bass lines.

51

grows. A men.

This system contains measures 51 through 56. The vocal line has a long rest in the first measure, followed by a half note and a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features block chords and moving bass lines.