



*All God's Children
No one left behind*

The Christian Universalist

Published monthly by the Christian Universalist Association
www.christianuniversalist.org

Universalism “loaded” but “incredibly relevant”

This article is taken from *Deep River*, a blog written by **Anna Snoeyenbos**, a Christian Universalist. Although posted on her blog December 10, 2010, and directed primarily at Unitarian Universalists, the points she makes are still relevant to anyone who calls herself/himself a **Universalist** or a **universalist**. Her blog can be accessed through her website, www.deepriverfaith.com. She can be reached by email at: deepriverfaith@gmail.com

By Anna Snoeyenbos

Why center yourself around Universalism, when most liberal Christians today are walking the walk of universalists already?

Universalism: Loaded Gun or Moot Point?

That's a question that I have asked myself plenty of times, and it's a question that has come up again this week. **Rev. David Malone**, a retired Christian minister who is also one of the founders of the Bolton Street Synagogue in Baltimore (can you say, walking the walk?), sent me these comments last night in response to my blog:

The Unitarians really destroyed the wonderful old Universalist Church in their merger: they 'bought and retired the brand', so to speak.

But, the reason the Universalists were diminished is that their message so resonated in New England that other churches adopted it, essentially displacing the Calvinist view of election that



Anna Snoeyenbos

had led **Hosea Ballou**, **Starr King**, and others to nourish the Universalist movement. [Especially for Ballou, it was a populist movement of the common folk against the cultured elite.]

The formal religion of New England across all Christian lines, Roman Catholic to Evangelical to Mainline, is now congregational and universalist, with small first letters. Essentially, the Universalists were so successful that they were no longer necessary - but it is still too bad to see what happened to them.

I had a couple reactions:
#1 Wow! Rev. Malone knows more

about Universalist history than most Unitarian Universalists do! #2 He is 100% right about all this (see Universalism 101) but for me, claiming the name 'Universalist' is still relevant. Here's why: It all depends on who you want to talk to. The words we use, the titles we choose and the language we speak all define who we will engage with and how.

For liberal Christians, and liberal believers in all faiths, little 'u' universalism has been folded into their theology in a no-big-deal kind of way. It's why we have interfaith councils, groups like *Daughters of Abraham* (thank you Rev. Malone for referring me to them), and radically welcoming churches.

None of this would be possible if there wasn't some baseline understanding that we are all God's beloved children and should treat each other as such.

Universalism just isn't an interesting theology in those circles. It doesn't look all that different from what they already practice.

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The Christian Universalist

The Christian Universalist is a digital newsletter published monthly by The Christian Universalist Association (CUA), with news, information and commentary for anyone interested in Christian Universalism. Editorial reports, letters to the editor and photos are welcome.

Deadline is the 28th of the month preceding the month of publication. Reports and photos may be emailed to the editor **Pat Moauro** at: patmor123@gmail.com

Please send all photos and illustrations as separate JPEGs at high resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Christian Universalist Association.

Contact Us

Email: richkoster.cua@gmail.com
(Rich Koster, Coordinator)

Telephone: 269-352-4457

Postal mailing address:

Christian Universalist Association
117 Barkentine Court
St Simons Island, GA 31522

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Word of mouth

... with Pat Moauro, Editor

Statements of Faith can pose dangers

One of the religious organizations I have been associated with in the past had not one but two Statements of Faith. This particular group views the Bible as the only reliable written authority, reflecting God's directions to humankind and setting out His clear plan for salvation.

At the same time, this group, which originated in the 1800s, also happens to have members who follow two slightly different Statements of Faith (SOF) – one with the word “Amended” in the title and the other with “Unamended”.

I won't go into the tedious (and not very pretty) details of how each statement came to be, other than to say that there were some sharp differences of doctrine and opinion, leading to a fractious splintering of this organization into two major bodies – the “Amended” and the “Unamended”, along with (at last count) upward of 17 much smaller groups – all claiming to follow the “truth” proclaimed by the founder and the “pioneer brethren” during the past 100 plus years.

Ironically, most members of the “Amended” and “Unamended” groups refuse to “break bread” together during worship services, each group claiming that the other is in error.

Individually, members are generally warm and friendly and devout Bible believers, striving to practice the teachings of First Century Christianity. However, each congregation, or “ecclesia”, is independent, not relying on any governing body, council or Pope-like authority to rule on differences in teachings. This can lead to strong opinions and sharp differences as to how their particular SOF is to be interpreted.



Pat Moauro

Eventually, the light went on and I realized that this was not what I had signed up for, especially where I happened to be on my particular spiritual journey at the time. I left the group and went back to Unity, a much more liberal New Thought group that I had associated with earlier for many years. I realized that God, or Infinite Spirit, is far more inclusive, loving and non-judgmental than most of the more conservative and exclusive groups.

Changes in SOF proposed

My journey also led me to the **Christian Universalist Association (CUA)**, a “liberal”, inclusive, non-denominational organization. While it has “Christian” in its name, my understanding has been that the organization welcomes everyone, regardless of their religious/spiritual background, and sexual orientation.

My less than pleasant experiences involving the conservative group with two Statements Of Faith came to mind again last month when **CUA** Board members were exchanging a flurry of e-mails with each other over proposed changes to the association's Statement of Faith.

As well as discussing proposed new wording for the SOF, Board

Continued on page 3

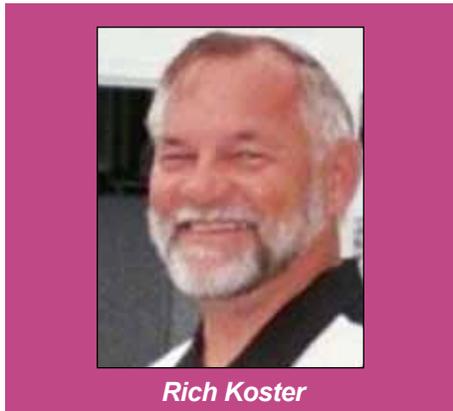
Why you might want to donate \$10 or \$15 to the CUA right now

If you have read the last couple *Christian Universalist* newsletters you know that our Ordination Program is a sweet success in terms of the number and quality of people who have stepped forward and said, "I want to take the course and be ordained a **CUA** minister."

We want you to know that some of these men and women who are now enrolled as ordinands are investing a great deal of time and effort in this course of study, and some are putting precious dollars into the hopper when home and family expenses are stretching them thin to begin with.

As well, many of them are signing on to come to our Ordinand Seminar in September, with quite a few traveling a considerable distance and at a considerable expense.

One ordinand, for instance, is bringing her husband and six children, so they can all take their first vacation trip in several years. One is flying with her husband from Arizona. Others are traveling to the Georgia coast from New Jersey, Texas, Chicago, and Pennsylvania.



Rich Koster

Travel subsidies for ordinands

Look at our Treasurer's Report on page 7 and see how much of our income this year has come from the fees our ordinands have already paid to take the course. We will use some of that money to help subsidize the Seminar trip for those who can use it the most, but we would certainly be glad and grateful if **RIGHT NOW** you would send just \$10 or \$15 so that the **CUA** will have a bigger pot to ensure we can provide travel subsidies.

We ask you to trust us that we are not wasting your donations. Our budget is about \$7,500. I am the only staff person and starting in

July my "salary" is being bumped up from \$250 a month to \$300. Our other budget items are few, with most of the expenses having to do with managing our web site and all our communications.

We would like to assure you that we are the kind of people who are good, honest and worthy of your trust, so check out the photos and brief bios of our Board members on page 6.

This, then, is why you might want to consider donating \$10 or \$15 **RIGHT NOW**. More would be nice! However, please give whatever you can.

You can use the PayPal form on the web site or send a check payable to **CUA** to our Treasurer, **Sharon McCauley**, at her home address of 117 Barkentine Court, Saint Simons Island, Georgia 31522. Help the **CUA** help our wonderful ordinands!

RIGHT NOW!

Thank you! ☺

Rich Koster, Coordinator of the Christian Universalist Association, can be reached at richkoster.cua@gmail.com

Statements Of Faith can pose dangers ... *continued from page 2*

members ventured into the sensitive area of sexual orientation – whether **CUA** members, especially ordinands (candidates) for ordination as **CUA** ministers, should or should not be required to state unequivocally that they "Welcome everyone, including people of every age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender and sexual orientation – affirming that all persons are beloved of God, are of infinite value, and are worthy of everyone treating them with re-

spect."

After calling a time-out in the somewhat heated and impassioned long-distance dialogue, Board Chair **Kalen Fristad** noted that he calculated Board members had sent at least 150 e-mails on the subject. Before publishing his book, *Destined For Salvation*, Kalen asked an editor to review it. The editor gave him "some very good advice", telling him "that there is no end to how many revisions

a person could make in writing any document, but at some point, you need to conclude that it is good enough, and then go ahead and publish it.

"Collectively, I expect that we may have spent hundreds of hours writing, reading, replying, debating, pondering, and refining. At some point, enough is enough. At some point, hopefully soon, we can arrive at an agreement on wording that is 'good enough'".

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Letters to the Editor

Universal reconciliation work in South Africa requested

I am a believer who, for a while now, has been convinced of the 'greater news' of universal reconciliation.

In South Africa, we have a traditional concept called 'Ubuntu.' It is the idea that 'a person is a person through other people' or 'I am because we are.' I believe that this ideology resonates with the beliefs of the CUA in that we are ALL children of God, bonded together by His love for us (and our common identity in Him).

For these and many other reasons I would appeal to you - please consider starting a work in South Africa. There are many, many people who share these convictions but simply haven't found a safe place to express them. Moreover, we need to catch a vision of the truth of spiritual reconciliation as this could help to galvanize social reconciliation.

So again I appeal to the CUA; come and join us in South Africa. God is already doing incredible things over here, but I sense that the message He has given you is still very much needed. Although I am not formally trained in ministry (I am a medical doctor by profession) I will gladly give of my time and energy to this cause.

In Him,

Heinrich Cyril Volmink

Johannesburg, South Africa

Singles connection for Christian Universalists suggested

Hello,

I've been learning more and more about Christian Universalism over the past few years and am really excited about sharing my faith with others.

I was divorced a while back, and have recently found myself interested in finding a lovely lady to marry. I certainly lift this up to the Lord in prayer, but, knowing how much disharmony my new beliefs caused in my previous marriage, I'd like to find a lady who embraces a very similar doctrine.

With that said, is there any possibility of starting a singles connection for Christian Universalists on the CUA website? I'm so hungry for fellowship, yet not finding myself able to return to churches that preach or believe in eternal damnation, I've even thought of moving someplace where there is an established fellowship.

Thanks for posting such listings on your website. I may start taking road trips this Summer to explore some of these fellowships.

Peace and Blessings,

Martin Kirstein

San Antonio, Texas

Anna Snoeyenbos on Universalism

continued from page 1

For other groups - universalism is much more polarizing. People coming from an evangelical background, like my new friend **Jonathan Brink**, tell me that universalism is a heavily loaded word.

Universal salvation is not an anti-quoted debate - it's very real and very serious. In fact, universalism is so electric an idea that just breathing the word can bring up so many old ghosts that it will erode meaningful dialogue. This is what he wrote in response to my calling his message universalist yesterday. So much truth in there about the power of words and the nature of dialogue.

Universalism "a polarizing concept"

Similarly, I have found universalism to be a polarizing concept in *Unitarian Universalist* circles. In a religion that has tried so hard to reject its Christian foundation, invoking a theology that hinges on words like "God," "Love," "Salvation," and "Christ" is provoking to say the least.

Universalism is loaded for UUs too. In short, the reason that I am not joining the leagues of natural soft universalists, and am instead writing a blog under the banner "Faith in the Universal Love of God" is because I'm interested in positioning my beliefs in faith dialogues where universalism is still an interesting theology.

I want to engage Unitarian Universalists, a people with whom I am inseparably entwined, with our own Christian theological heritage. I want to engage with the exciting emergent movement going on in Christianity as they grapple with postmodernism, universalism and all the ways that God's grace supports our world. I want to be an example or resource for people who have been taught that universalism is a dirty word - so that they know there are folks out there proudly embracing it.

So while I know that universalism is a moot point to some - I'm more interested in working with the folks for whom it's still a loaded gun. In those circles, universalism is incredibly relevant.

On doing what comes naturally

*This editorial appears in the Spring Issue of **The Universalist Herald**, a magazine. Editor-in-Chief **Rich Koster**, who wrote the editorial, is also Co-ordinator of the **Christian Universalist Association**. He can be reached at richkoster.cua@gmail.com*

In his letter to the Romans, chapter 1, the Apostle Paul rips the local scene in Rome where gay and lesbian relationships are accepted as okay and natural. Paul argues: no, they are not natural, and so they are violations of the plan of God for human sexuality. But is it not natural? What about a transsexual or transgender person?*

The Bible was not “written” by a few saintly men sequestered on a lonely isle. In the first place, there were many people, mostly men, who played a role in the making of the Old and New Testaments – many more than the names you see below the titles. For the most part they were ordinary people like you and me, or, that is to say, as defined by Christian

doctrine, like we “sinners”.

So when Paul wrote that scathing indictment of Roman sexual practices he did so as a sinner, a flawed and imperfect human being who was very much a child of his time and culture. Jewish culture and Jewish law were both molded by the critical need of the people to have children and multiply. “Spilling your seed on the ground”, for instance, was taboo because it wasted the precious substance needed to produce more children; and more children were needed to build the strength of a people who were surrounded by larger, more populous societies. Practicing a gay lifestyle was simply not an acceptable practice when children and more children were desperately needed.

We need to see these words of Paul, not as revealing of the thoughts of God, but as the passionate concern of a Christ-following 1st century Jew. And in the words of **James Russell Lowell’s** marvelous hymn, **Once to Every Man and Nation**, “time makes ancient good uncouth”.

Just as 200 years ago Christians

were wrong in thinking that Africans are less than human, they are wrong today in thinking that gayness is inhuman and unnatural. The Apostle is not the source of truth in this matter, and it’s time that we treat his rant against the Romans the same way we treat Exodus 21:7, where it says when a man sells his daughter as a slave she is “not to be set free as male slaves are.”

We Christians need to put our ugly prejudiced past behind, take the lead from our UU and Unity friends, and start welcoming and affirming our gay brothers and sisters who are simply doing what comes naturally.

See the Spring Issue of **The Universalist Herald, featuring wedding stories by two lesbian couples and a poignantly told life sketch by a transgender woman who was born a baby boy. For copies email the author at richkoster2@aol.com.*

Statements of Faith can pose dangers ... *continued from page 3*

Kalen also told fellow Board members: “If the issue of sexual orientation was the central (or only focus) of our organization, we would surely want to continue debating until we got every word exactly right. But, as important as this issue is, it is not our central focus, so I encourage us to go for ‘good enough’. It’s clear to me from what everyone has said that we don’t want to restrict who can join the **CUA**, that we don’t want to unnecessarily alienate anyone, but we want to be welcoming of everyone...”

The issue of sexual orientation should be almost a no-brainer - a

non-issue - in a non-denominational, liberal, universalist organization such as the **CUA**. However, it was clear from the e-mail dialogue that even in a liberal, universalist organization, some members are still uncomfortable with hot-button issues such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

As much as we need to respect, love and accept everyone as a beloved child of God, we don’t have to agree with everyone’s ideas and opinions; however, we do need to be respectful of those individuals whose conscience dictates a view that is different from the

majority in an organization.

Some argue that those members who share most of our universalist ideals but have reservations about homosexual and same-sex lifestyle issues can go to another universalist organization where their views will be more readily accepted.

This type of logic seems to reflect an unusual flavor of intolerance. How much better for an organization such as the **CUA** to truly prove that it is a totally inclusive organization – not one that picks and chooses its favourite issues and dismisses anyone who disagrees with them.

Continued on page 10

Introducing CUA Board members



Kalen Fristad

CUA cofounder and Board Chair; pastor of two Methodist Churches in Iowa; author of *Destined For Salvation*, and a circuit-riding Universalist evangelist.



Eric Stetson

CUA cofounder; former **CUA** Executive Director; author of *Christian Universalism*; ordained **CUA** minister in 2009.



Logan Geen

Chair of the Ordination Committee; a first year law student at the University at Buffalo Law School; member, Spiritus Christi; and Christian Universalist blogger.



Steven Rowe

Retired mental health counselor; church history blogger; Board chair of **The Universalist Herald**.



Susan Smith

Assistant church pastor and assistant director of Exodus Homes Ministry in Hickory, NC; sign language interpreter; ordained **CUA** minister in 2009



Todd Huston

Psychotherapist, motivational speaker, author of **More Than Mountains**; lost a leg early in life but still set a record by climbing to the top peak of all 50 states in 66 plus days.



David Spatz

U.S. Navy veteran sailor; degree in Pastoral Counseling; ordained **CUA** minister, exploring a church plant in mid-east Maryland.



Sharon McCauley

CUA Treasurer; retired insurance manager; volunteer with church and mission programs; street minister.



Marquis Hunt

Founder and director of LifeXchange, musician and recording artist; former church pastor; seminar and conference leader, life coach.



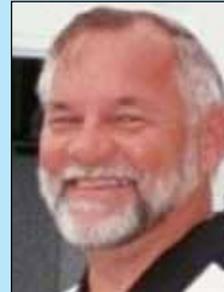
Doug Torkelson

Graduate of Rhema Bible Training Center; software engineer; student of **A Course in Miracles**.



Mary Keller

12-step, addiction, and nursing home ministries; currently in the **CUA** ordination program.



Rich Koster

CUA Coordinator; retired pastor; editor of **The Universalist Herald**; former truck driver, and 5th Grade teacher; meditates.

The Christian Universalist Association is an interdenominational organization connecting churches, ministries, and individuals who believe in Christian Universalism. The CUA is active in evangelism and outreach to the public, spreading the Good News of God's love for all people. We are especially focused on helping people find and participate in developing positive and uplifting communities of faith that share this belief, where they can get involved and grow spiritually through worship, fellowship, and service to God and other people. We hold conferences, publish literature, a monthly newsletter and a magazine. We work to foster church planting, and create new resources to deepen and reform Christianity and help to bring people together from various religious traditions in a shared discovery of truth.

Fred Howard resigns from CUA Board



Fred Howard

Fred Howard has resigned from the **CUA** Board to accept a new and expanding role in *Project Harvest Hope*, a non-profit organization that he has been active in for a few years.

"I just returned from my denomination's General Assembly in Charlotte. I have been asked to assume a new and expanding role in *Project Harvest Hope*, another non-profit that I have been a part of for a few years," he wrote to fellow Board members last month.

"Regretfully, I feel that I need to resign from the board of the **CUA** at this time and to relinquish my responsibilities on the ordination committee.

"My thoughts and prayers go with you all as you continue the work of spreading the Universalist message."

Fred, of Valdosta, Georgia, is a physician, counselor, church pastor, volunteer with Peacemakers and Project Harvest Hope.

Board Chair **Kalen Fristad** wrote to Fred: "Congratulations for your new opportunity. I'll miss working with you on the **CUA** board and ordination committee, but I wish you the very best in your new adventure."

Other Board members also offered their congratulations and wished Fred well in his new position.

Christian Universalist Association

117 Barkentine Court
St Simons Island, GA 31522

Treasurer's Report for the first six months of 2011

Beginning Balance January 1, 2011 \$ 2,694.58

	<i>Income from Ordination Fees</i>	<i>Other Donations</i>	<i>Expenses</i>
January	\$ 300.00	\$ 223.00	\$ 216.18
February	\$ 600.00	\$ 166.93	\$ 1,313.03
March	\$ 365.00	\$ 920.00	\$ 452.31
April	\$ 315.00	\$ 555.00	\$ 378.70
May	\$ 465.00	\$ 547.10	\$ 652.88
June	\$ 465.00	\$ 685.00	\$ 356.57

Year to Date

Totals: \$ 2,510.00 \$ 3,097.03 \$ 3,369.67

Bank of America Balance as of June 30, 2011 \$ 5,071.75

Sharon McCauley
Treasurer

God Loves Everyone

*God loves everyone
Like a mother loves her son
No strings at all
Unconditional
Never one to judge
Would never hold a grudge
'Bout what's been done
God loves everyone*

*There are no gates in heaven
Everyone gets in
Queer or straight
Souls of every faith
Hell is in our minds
Hell is in this life
But when it's gone
God takes everyone*

*Its love is like a womb
It's like the air from room to room*

*It surrounds us all
The living and the dead
May we never lose the thread
That bound us all*

*The killer in his cell
The atheist as well
The pure of heart
And the wild at heart
Are all worthy of its grace
It's written in the face
Of everyone
God loves everyone*

*There's no need to be saved
No need to be afraid
Cause when it's done
God takes everyone
God loves everyone*

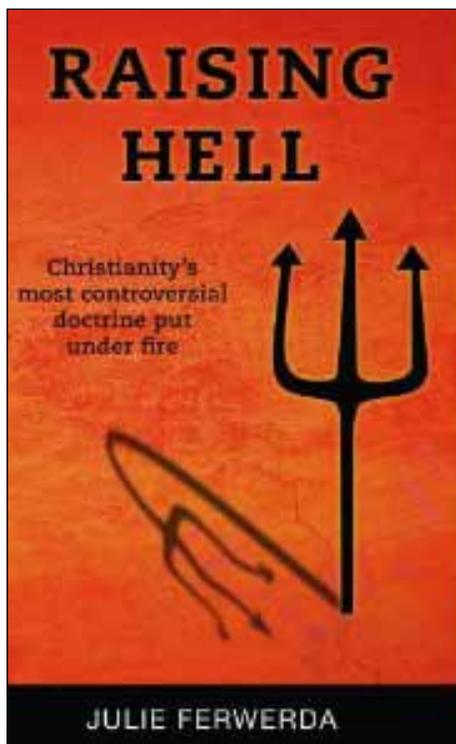
Lyrics from the song by Ron Sexsmith

“I think it’s time for all **HELL** to break loose”



Julie Ferwerda

Author of new book on Hell



Raising Hell: Christianity's most controversial doctrine put under fire [Paperback]

Price: \$9.95 for the Paperback version, scheduled for release on Amazon July 15, 2011. The Kindle version is now available on Amazon for .99 cents. For more information go to: RaisingHellBook.com

By Julie Ferwerda

One man’s truth is another man’s heresy. In fact, for many of us, many of our truths of yesterday are our heresies of today. Let me elaborate from my own life examples.

When I was a little kid - about 4 years old - I believed in the Boogie Monster. It didn’t help matters that my older brother (8 years older), who was put in charge of my sister and me when our parents went out for the evening, would stage an attack just outside the house after dark, complete with horrible screams, and pounding on the walls and windows. He’d even go to the trouble of smearing ketchup on his face and tearing his shirt. When he burst through the door, he’d look all wild and freaked out. I just wanted to hide under the bed till Mom and Dad returned home.

As I grew older and shed my fear of the Boogie Monster, something far more foreboding replaced it.

I grew up in a major hell-fire-and-brimstone preaching church. We had revivals at least twice a year where they showed the terror-inducing, horrible movie, “A Thief in the Night,” in order to demonstrate what would happen to every person who didn’t say the sinner’s prayer before the rapture. In addition, this particular church taught that any known unconfessed sin put you back in the “unbeliever” category. This meant that if Jesus came back tonight, while you were sleeping, and you had lied that day and not told Jesus you were sorry—well, so long for eternity to a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, sucker! I often confessed even my unknown sins, just in case.

As I grew even older, I realized the complete fallacy that I could “lose my salvation” over any unconfessed sin. In fact, in college, God promised me that I was legally adopted as His child and that nothing I could ever do would make Him go back on that commitment. Well, for me, that settled the matter and I never worried about being “left behind” again (sorry, Jerry). Not only that, as I began to study the whole rapture doctrine, I realized that was just another big, scary lie that started in the 1800s.

As I moved through early and middle adulthood, so many of my earlier “theologies” changed, such that I am hardly the same person anymore. All that started me thinking about how we have this thing we call “orthodox truth,” as if there is this one way of thinking that we all agree is the only true way to think, yet even within ourselves we change and grow and adjust to the new truths presented before us that make the old truths not ring so true anymore.

As you can see from my newest book due out this month, leaping out at you from the sidebar on my homepage, (*Raising Hell: Christianity’s Most Controversial Doctrine Put Under Fire*) my “truths of yesterday” have evolved dramatically. Some people may think I’ve gone off the deep end. But I believe there are others of you who realize that your questions have outgrown your teachers, and that some things just don’t add up—it is you who just may end up in the deep end with me. And that is okay. Ask any diver—it’s in the deep waters where the exciting things take place and people are transformed.

Part of the reason I think truth can be so elusive is that it is dynamic and living—on the move—as you would expect from a living, breathing person. Jesus said, “I am the truth.” Truth is a Person, not a statue, a doctrine, or a list of 10 things we believe from now until Kingdom come. To follow and encounter truth, you have to be on the move.

Don’t stop learning, listening, and growing. A lot of information is becoming available to people like you and me (regular Joes) that has never before been easily accessible. Not only is there a lot to learn, but there is also a lot to unlearn. A lot can happen in 2,000 years. A lot did happen. Take a journey with me and discover how great change can be!

This article by Julie Ferwerda is taken from her website, www.julieferwerda.com

Julie Ferwerda raises **HELL** with orthodoxy

By Lisa (Sisterlisa) Bertolini

Yes, a startling title for a very grave book (pun intended). I have been reading Julie's blog this year and conversing with her on Facebook. She is a lovely, confident woman who is bold in speaking out about discrepancies and discoveries she has noticed in her spiritual journey.

If she lived in **Anne Hutchinson's** time she would have been tried for heresy and possibly burned at the stake. What does Julie have to say that is so beautifully dangerous to mainstream Christianity? How could a pregnant home keeper like **Anne Hutchinson**, cause such a stir that it brings men to the front lines with full throttle hostility toward her and imprison her?

Grace

Anne Hutchinson taught grace. Oh yes, the clergy had a slew of other issues with her beliefs, but the bottom line was grace. She simply spoke up about another preacher that she felt taught more on grace than the others. So now we have **Julie Ferwerda** in the 21st Century and I believe **Anne Hutchinson** would be standing shoulder to shoulder with her if she could be here today.

Julie has dared to go against the grain to proclaim that the Gospel is actually better than we thought. Julie picks up where **Rob Bell** left off. Don't get me wrong, I like Rob Bell's book '**Love Wins**', but I think Julie's new book, '**Raising Hell**' knocks '**Love Wins**' out of the ballpark.

If you thought Rob's book was controversial you haven't seen anything until you've read '**Raising Hell**'.

Julie Ferwerda raises hell with Orthodoxy and by golly she ought to! If you are a KJV (King James Version) proponent and think all other versions of the bible are mistranslations then you need to read this hot topic book filled with in-depth research into the Hebrew and Greek languages and just how many mistranslations there really



Sisterlisa

are. Mistranslations that have altered and hidden the Good News under an English blanket of fear mongering fiery threats. Mistranslations that have side stepped a very serious and grave understanding about Judgment that we **MUST** understand if we think we're going to live a "good Christian life" that is "well pleasing to God".

Julie not only dices through the popular topic of hell, she brings to the forefront of our minds and hearts that there is a reckoning day and if you choose to "go out and do whatever you want" you will have "hell to pay", so to speak, but it won't be anything like what you once thought. In fact, I think it's worse than hell.

Keep in mind that I have read Julie's book with my own filters, as anyone else will. But from what I get out of 'Raising Hell' is that there is a consequence and process to our life, and the after life, that is much worse than the traditional hell doctrine. How dare those who force 'Orthodoxy' not tell us about this! How dare they! How dare they keep something **THIS** important away from us!

What could be worse than hell, but brings out how great the Gospel really is?

Startling wake up call

Julie Ferwerda is presenting, what I believe, is a well balanced view of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. She does not candy coat the Judgment in the least bit. In fact, I view her perspec-

tive on the Judgment as a very startling wake up call for all of Christianity. She addresses the popular doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism that will shake their followers to the core.

Without her mentioning it, I think she also raises awareness of the "once saved always saved" doctrine as well as the "you can lose your salvation" doctrine. Being rejected and thrown into hell forever and ever is the easy way out. What Julie presents is much harder to deal with. We face God and we have no escape. (How could that be an uncomfortable thing? Read the book!)

I do believe that the bigger Story is much larger than we can imagine and I feel that Julie has done an excellent job at trying to bring that larger Story to us and I believe with all my heart that this perspective is a must read.

Glimpse into bigger picture

Let's just say that Julie is onto something worthy of our attention (which I believe she has). What has she done? She has given us a glimpse into part of the bigger picture. She has not revealed anything new, she isn't pulling doctrines out of a hat nor is she diminishing the Gospel. In fact, she is highlighting some things that demand our fullest attention! She has journeyed to the very center of the original 'Orthodoxy'.

It's called accountability.

Surely grace has them covered and no matter how much thieving some clergy have done, no matter how many deacon pedophiles they have allowed to walk free, no matter how many folks they have gotten to recite the sinner's prayer, not exactly ... they will answer for themselves.

You might be thinking, "Has Julie cheapened grace?" Oh heavens no! She has brought to our attention how incredibly valuable this grace really is.

Has Julie made the consequences and sentence of hell easier? I don't think so, not in the least bit.

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“Revelation” about universal salvation “answered many questions”

By Jerry L. Dixon

I grew up in the Assembly of God Church, which is one of those “Holy Roller” denominations. When I was six years old, my mother took me up to the altar call one Sunday, and told me what to pray, for God to save my soul.

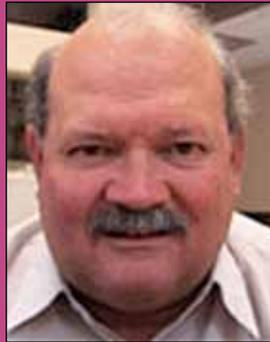
She figured that I was at the age of accountability, and if she waited too long, and I died, then I would go to hell, since I had not yet been born again. That’s what the church taught her. I went to church regularly for the next ten years, then refused to go anymore. The problem was, even though I had been “saved”, it was in effect only if I died without any unforgiven sins on my record.

I was constantly having to pray for God to forgive my sins, individually, and if I forgot about one, I risked going to hell for it. That’s what the church taught me. I figured that was a standard that I could not likely meet. With my luck, I would die just after committing a sin, or forget some, and not get around to asking forgiveness, and end up going to hell for it, so why even try?

So I quit going to church, and quit praying, except of course, when I really needed something! I hoped that a general overall “please forgive me for all my sins” would be acceptable, but I wasn’t sure.

About four years later, I started going to church again, at the urging of my relatives, making me feel guilty. One said that Christ would intervene, to make sure that all my sins were forgiven. I asked that if Christ died for my sins, and my sins were forgiven, as they say, then why do I have to ask forgiveness for them anyway? I never really received a good answer to that question.

For about a year, I attended a “Church of Christ”, where I was baptized, as I learned there that you are not saved until you are baptized. The AG church rarely did baptisms, and did not encourage them. How could they have missed that detail?



Jerry L. Dixon

So all those years, I wasn’t really saved? Ouch! I still attended the AG on and off until age 30, then quit them for good. The problem this time was that when I questioned their principles concerning sinning and salvation, they avoided discussing it with me. They didn’t like me rocking the boat.

I then went to various churches and settled on the “Christian Church”, which is a sister association to the Church of Christ, but does not encourage baptism. Their big thing is that they do not believe in denominationalism, and considered their church to be a restoration of the church established by Christ’s disciples. I liked that and they were willing to discuss with me any topic that I wanted to, and didn’t have a problem with members interpreting

the Bible in different ways.

About age 40, I felt that I had learned everything about the Bible that I needed to, and had no real need for the church anymore, as if I “graduated”, so I stopped going to church for good. Even now, I feel more comfortable spending my Sunday mornings with politics rather than religion; however, I never changed my religious beliefs.

At age 55, I saw **Rev. Carlton Pearson** on *60 Minutes* and two other TV shows, explaining his revelation from God about universal salvation. This hit me hard, and I felt that I was receiving the same kind of revelation. It answered so many questions, and allowed me to feel much more love for God. Beforehand, I had more of a love/hate relationship with God.

Just this year, at age 60, I discovered the **CUA** (Christian Universalist Association), which has revitalized my interest in church, or at least a Bible study group, if I could find one that is Christian Universalist centered.

I even feel a calling to spread the “Good News” that really is good news!

Jerry L. Dixon is a Certified Public Accountant in Santee, California. He can be reached by email at: Jerry@DixonEnt.com

Statements of Faith ... continued from page 5

Our God is big enough for all of us – not just some of us!

Here is what I found uncomfortable and, eventually, untenable in the conservative organization of which I was formerly a member: Trying to cover every conceivable doctrine and moral area in a set of written statements. It’s an impossible task, no matter how well thought out, how well crafted, how apparently comprehensive and inclusive any religious statement or set of statements are they can soon be out of date and even an obstacle to

advancing truth. Of course, absolute Truth doesn’t change. However, our understanding of “the Truth” changes – sometimes frequently and sometimes not so quickly.

What happens when someone’s new or advancing understanding of “the Truth” changes and she/he is out of step with what an organization’s hallowed Statement of Faith says in black and white? The danger is obvious: dogmatic individuals (particularly those in authority)

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Let's take time to rest awhile in the Lord to avoid burnout

By David Spatz

John 12:32 - "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." - Jesus

Matt 11:28 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Everyone loves the Matthew passage! Not everyone, of course, accepts the John passage. But isn't that glorious? Eventually, all people come to Jesus and (perhaps after some celestial spankings are administered, but they will come, every knee will bow!

Check out *Philippians 2* - all people will find rest for their souls. God is good, all the time! I believe it!

Somehow when we used to sing the hymn, **God is Good, All the Time**, in my former church I would look around and see people who were strong believers in the hideous doctrine of eternal torment singing this song so joyfully.

I was thinking, how in the world can they sing and believe these words if God is going to torment some of their friends and loved ones - forever! It's just stupefying, really. I realize they probably were singing that hymn, thinking God is good by saving THEM and really believed that eternal torment for unbelievers is just, simply because they think God says it is.

But he doesn't, and it isn't! God gave us our brains, and common sense should be enough to tell us that eternal, everlasting retributive punishment is no justice for any crime. The injustice of such a punishment is comparable to administering the death penalty for a person doing 58 miles an hour in a 55-mph zone, really, but much, much worse if someone really thinks about it.



David Spatz

Please think about it and let's do our part in spreading the glorious news that God really is good, all the time, punishments will be truly just, and he will indeed draw all men (all people, that is), to himself. His mercy knows no bounds. It lasts forever!

I thank God so much for that, for being the truly merciful and kind God he is. And as I see the truly good news of (ultimately) universal restoration of all things, which includes all people, of course, it fills me with a great joy. No wonder Paul could spontaneously erupt into praises to God. I think Paul knew or received the revelation and although (as Peter probably tells us in his disputed second epistle - disputed or not, the

statement is true!). Although sometimes he is difficult to understand, one can definitely see that there is tremendous, overwhelming support for this good news that it just makes me want to go out and serve him with all my might! After a short nap, that is ... I'm a little lazy sometimes, at least in my own mind - I'll admit it.

Sleep is a really wonderful gift from God; there is nothing wrong with a nice snooze. Sometimes we need to slow down, rest, and just realize that all is well and all will be well. We are overworked and need to rest. I can see why God made a Sabbath day.

Never mind the literature the *Seventh Day Adventists* drop on my front porch when I run my weed-eater on a Saturday! The point is, we need to take some time and just rest in the Lord every week or we are going to burn out.

God bless,

David

David Spatz is a Christian Universalist minister, CUA Board member and blogger. He can be reached at daspatz@gmail.com.

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may find change extremely difficult. They may be convinced that everyone must now accept and follow a particular sacrosanct Statement of Faith and can, and often do, dictate just how members of the organization are to believe and behave. In effect, "it's our way or the highway."

I trust that a progressive, universalist organization such as the **CUA** would not fall into that kind of intolerant trap.

Almost all religious and spiritual organizations have some sort of statement of belief, a

mission or vision statement that sets out their basic views and objectives.

If we must have a Statement of Faith, let's make sure we don't end up with two or more, or even one that is carved in stone. Let's make it short, to the point and definitely one that is flexible and open to continued, reasoned change as the Spirit of Truth continues to "speak" to us gently on our spiritual path. cu

Pat Moauro can be reached at patmor123@gmail.com

Bloopers in church bulletins give messages new meaning!

These sentences (with all the bloopers) actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services:

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.

Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say 'Hell' to someone who doesn't care much about you.

Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Irving Benson and **Jessie Carter** were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 p.m. - prayer and medication to follow.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 p.m. Please use the back door.

Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 a.m. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the BS is done.

Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

The reluctant convert

Little Johnny, copying what he had observed in church, always fancied himself as a preacher. He often preached sermons to his pet cat, Jonah.

One day, Johnny decided it was time for Jonah to be baptized. So, he proceeded to dunk Jonah in the family bath tub. But Jonah would have nothing to do with it, screeching and protesting loudly. Jonah shook his soaked fur vigorously and tried to escape the water-filled tub. Johnny's mother heard the cat's loud screeches and came to the "baptismal" scene.

"Johnny, why are you dunking the cat in the bath tub?"

"Mom, you know I've preached to Jonah now for a long time, so it's time that he was baptized."

"But," she pointed out, "Jonah obviously doesn't want to get baptized."

"Well," replied the little preacher, "He should have thought of that before he joined my church!"

Julie Ferwerda raises hell with orthodoxy ... from page 9

Is Julie hiding the all inclusive love that Universalists hope for? No, in fact I believe she presents a very good understanding of the reconciliation of all things in Christ, coupled beautifully with appropriate personal accountability.

For those deeply wounded and taken advantage of by "Born Again Pastors" who claim they are covered by grace ... no need to worry that you are not avenged by the Savior. He hasn't missed a thing they have done to you. They won't get off "scott free".

I believe this book will grab you by the shoulders and shout "Snap out of it!" Or at the very least, I hope it will.

Julie Ferwerda's book, '**Raising Hell**' should be an incredible eye opener for all denominations of Christianity. Not only them, but I believe Atheists and Pagans will read this book in amazement. Is this a view of Christ that even they have recognized? Could it be that

many Atheists and Pagans have been believers all along and many Christians have been "unbelievers"?

So what could be worse than hell, but better than grace? How could an all-inclusive Gospel still include the Judgment and appropriate consequences for those needing them?

How has the "orthodox" doctrines of hell and judgment caused us to drift so far off course that we desperately need this wake up call?

Lisa (Sisterlisa) Bertolini lives in Chico, California and has been actively ministering with her husband, Scott, for more than a decade. They assist families in transitions of life through MinistryLiving.org and counsel victims of spiritual abuse. Lisa blogs at SoulLibertyFaith.com You can follow her on Twitter @TheSisterlisa and at <http://facebook.com/SoulLibertyFaith>

Hymn No. 365

A minister was completing a temperance sermon. With great emphasis he said, "If I had all the beer in the world, I'd take it and pour it into the river."

With even greater emphasis he said, "And if I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and pour it into the river."

And then finally, shaking his fist in the air, he said, "And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I'd take it and pour it into the river."

Sermon complete, he sat down.

The hymn-leader stood very cautiously and announced with a smile, nearly laughing, "For our closing hymn, let us sing Hymn No. 365, **Shall We Gather at the River.**"