

ISSN 2633-3600

THE UNITARIAN—WINTER

2019

Unitariansmda.org.uk

WELCOME

A very warm winter welcome to you all. We are now on the 3rd new edition, and we still need your input to make this work. Many thanks to those who have already offered contributions.

As you are all aware, The Unitarian magazine has taken a change of direction. In order for us to survive, we need your assistance. In the past, we have struggled with the lack of content being sent to us, and we would like to invite you all to contribute as little or as much as you would like, or see fit and able.

If you fancy yourself as the new Sandi Toksvig, Giles Coran, or Monty Don, and you would like to have a feature column or page each month, we would be only too delighted. If you are a Minister or Lay preacher, and you would also like to share a compacted sermon, or prayers, then a monthly column or page is ready and waiting for you. The magazine can be as big as you like, so please do send any funny stories, handy tips, reflections, photographs, events etc. .

We would also like to hear from you about what you would like or not like to see featured each month. Please feel free to be as open and honest as you like, as without your feedback and input, we are unable to grow. Would you like a more interactive online magazine? We have lots of ideas, but we would love to hear yours.

Your article can be sent in any text or format, there are no stipulations. I can do the rest from my end. We want to hear about you and your congregations, near and far. This is a national publication, not just for the Manchester district.

Email: infotheunitarian@gmail.com

We very much want The Unitarian to publicise events both inside and outside of our district. One idea is that we could enhance our current website, to include a pdf of your newsletters for people to download. This will benefit your congregations, by getting your news out to more people. I know that many hours are spent by yourselves producing some extremely fantastic newsletters, and we would like to help you in getting as many people as possible, knowing what is happening in your area. In addition to this, I would also like you to send me any articles etc, that you would like to include in The Unitarian itself. We have explored many options on how we can improve what we already have, but we need your assistance. Have you thought about individual district administrators, who can gather the information and send it to us?



I would like to thank each and everyone of you, for your contributions to date, please do keep them coming. "It's the most wonderful time of the year" many have sung over the years, and for me, I have to agree. I am still a big kid at heart, and I love all things Christmas, much to the dismay of my boyfriend, who is already on countdown to when all the trimming can come down, and the house return to normal. To me it is a magical time, where you walk down the streets and admire all the beautifully decorated trees in people's homes and gardens. The change in the weather. I love nothing more than a cold crisp morning, and if we are lucky enough to get some snow, then I am in my element. Yes, I agree that it is awful to drive in, but I always allow extra time, and use the snow as a reason to jump on a bus instead, and just watch the world go by, or even better still, getting wrapped up and walking to my destination. There is something quite breathtakingly serene about seeing everything covered in a blanket of snow.

Christmas, to me is also about family and friends. It's one of the occasions, other than rites of passage, that bring people together no matter how far a distance there is to travel. We do not do this nearly as much as we should, in my opinion. Life is very precious, and I believe, myself included, that we should make more time to come together and enjoy each others company instead of waiting for the one day of the year to do so.

There is of course, the religious side to my enjoyment, and the celebration of advent, and the true meaning behind it.

I have spent many a year frantically stuck with last minute shopping, but this year, I have taken a different approach. All my gifts are purchased, and they even include some hand made items, for that personal touch. They are wrapped under the tree, and ready to go. So from myself and my family, a very happy Christmas to you all.

REFLECTIONS

Sharing My Greatest Advent Discovery - By Rev. Dr. Mark D. Roberts

I didn't discover it in the way an explorer discovers a place no one has been before. Millions upon millions of Christians have observed Advent for centuries upon centuries. (Check this [short history of Advent](#).) I've been a Johnny-come-lately. My discovery of Advent was more like when I find some fantastic natural oasis that's been around for a long time, but, for some reason, I hadn't ever visited.

What I want to write about today isn't my discovery of Advent as an opportunity for growing in my relationship with God, but rather my accidental (providential?) discovery of one way to observe Advent that has made a huge difference in my life.

It came in a most unlikely place . . . standing in line at Costco. Now you need to understand that I am terrible at waiting, especially in long checkout lines. Some time ago, I was rushing to get a couple of items at the market. I picked a short "Ten items or less" line, hoping to buy my stuff and get going. Of course, the person in front of me wanted to use a gift card, but the gift card couldn't be read electronically. The checker knew there was a way to enter the gift card number manually, but he wasn't sure how to do it. So he had to call his manager. Five minutes later, I was still standing in that "short" line, watching other lines moving swiftly. My teeth were grinding and my stomach was churning. Mostly, I was mad at myself for picking the wrong line.

My impatience with slow checkout lines makes me an especially lousy Christmas shopper, because, almost by definition, Christmas shopping requires waiting in line (unless, of course, you are able to do all of your shopping online!) Whether you're at a fine department store or just grabbing some chips from the local mini-mart, chances are you'll be waiting in line during the month of December. And, if you're like me, inevitably you'll end up in the slowest line in the store. This sort of thing can just about ruin the Christmas season for me, because waiting makes me grumpy.

Okay, enough with the confession, now to the discovery.

Then, all of a sudden, it dawned on me. I had one of those moments of grace in which God managed to slip a word into my consciousness. As I stood in that slow-moving line at Costco, I was waiting. *Waiting!* In a way, I was experiencing exactly what Advent is all about. Of course I wasn't waiting for God to save me or anything momentous like that. I was simply waiting to get out of that store so I could go home. But, nevertheless, I was waiting. I was forced to experience something that's at the very heart of Advent.

So I decided, right then and there in the line at Costco, that I was going to use the experience of waiting in line while Christmas shopping as an Advent reminder. In that moment, and in similar moments yet to come, I was going to remember what Advent is all about. I was going to put myself back into the shoes of the Jews who were waiting for the Messiah. And I was going to remember that I too am waiting for Christ to return.

As I decided to let the experience of forced waiting be a moment of Advent reflection rather than a cause for getting an ulcer, I found my anger quickly drain away. Waiting in line at Costco became, not a trial to be endured, but a moment of grace. And get this: I even found myself thanking God for the chance to slow down a bit and wait. This was, indeed, a miracle.

By the time I got to check out, my heart was peaceful, even joyous. I felt as if I had discovered hidden treasure. But I didn't want to keep it hidden. The next Sunday I shared my discovery with my congregation at Irvine Presbyterian Church. In the days that followed, many of my flock told me how much their Advent had been improved by thinking of waiting in line, not as a curse, but as a potential blessing.

Honestly, I can still forget my commitment to use waiting in line as a time for Advent reflection. My gut instinct can take over. I can easily start clenching my fists as I think of how much time I'm losing. But then a gentle breeze from the Spirit will remind me of how waiting can enrich my life, rather than rob me of joy.

Come to think of it, the grace of waiting in line during Advent might also be relevant to one of my other giant pet peeves: heavy traffic! Traffic is often worse during the season of Advent as people are rushing to the malls to shop for gifts. But I wonder if it's possible to allow the hassle of traffic to serve as a reminder of Advent waiting.

In the last few years, what I hate most about the days prior to Christmas – waiting in line – has become a quasi-sacrament, a time to experience God's grace. If you've never tried this, it may sound to you as if I've lost my mind. This sounds even sillier than wearing purple in the weeks before Christmas rather than red and green. But let me encourage you to try it. By experiencing waiting in line not as a punishment, but as a opportunity to wait peacefully, you'll find a bit of grace, hidden and ready to be discovered, much like a little picture behind one of those doors of an Advent calendar.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts>

REFLECTIONS

Laying the foundations of the future; my first UALM.

I suppose I must start with how I became involved in Unitarianism in the first place. I am Robert Dennis Foreman and my x3 Great Grandfather was Eli Whitehead a Master Carpenter and Joiner and

founding member of the Nazareth Unitarian Chapel in Padiham. As I was interested in the history of the Chapel because of its family connection, I started to learn more about the values and thoughts of Unitarianism as a religion and after attending regularly I decided to join.

As I learned more and became more friendly with the congregation I realised that it was much more than just a family connection that drew me to the faith and it started to become a central part of my life and I had something of a continuous spiritual awakening. I found out about the work of the UALM from 2 sources one was the Chairman of the chapel the indomitable Tony Cann and the other was Marta Pacini of the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry. I have run a few services at Padiham and at Rochdale and I am interested in pursuing my calling further so spending a weekend with fellow worship leaders and Lay ministers seemed like an exciting opportunity.

My first impression was what a wonderful and warm welcome I received at The Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, our denomination is one of the most loving and compassionate collection of people I ever meet.

I have experienced this before in my own chapel and any that I visit but also at the GA. That's isn't to say people that I meet I have disagreements on a theology perspective or on our versions of who God is but it is always from a perspective of respect, empathy and compassion which is refreshing in a world which doesn't have these things in abundance.

Over the course of the weekend we built a service that we delivered in the Old Chapel in Hucklow. The service I am hoping to do a modified version of as it was that good! We had several talks/events which I found incredibly interesting a one to note was the session by Rev. Alex Bradley entitled "Hardy Perennials" and was full of ideas on how to frame and build a service and the session from

Rev. David Shaw about his life as a Lay Minister and Reverend also with the perspective on challenged faced by Lay Ministers and worship leaders. I had not fully appreciated what people within the Lay ministry do and I have rethought about my desire to become a Minister and have decided that perhaps the best place for me now is in Lay Ministry

I must mention at this juncture the food, I am by choice what I have come to term a "Pragmatic Vegan" that is to say I will eat no meat unless there is no other alternative, However there was no need because the catering at the Nightingale centre was very, very good with the notable exception of the Banana loaf which I think was burnt so had a weird taste but it seems almost bitchy to mention such a small issue when the rest of the food was excellent.

I will be back and I think it is encouraging that this event goes on and needs to have a fanfare and more participants as if people get what I got out of the event this will be the future of Lay Ministry/ Preaching and a vital tool for the future of Unitarianism.

Robert Dennis Foreman

BLOG

THE WRITE STUFF By Janet Kelly



NET ASSETS

My great aunt, despite being well over retirement age and a paid-up, committee-sitting member of the "I hate anything with buttons" brigade, has announced that she wants to get connected to the internet.

There was a time I may have been pleased at the thought, relishing email contact rather than the hour-long telephone conversations about cures for bunions and the state of the village green - but now I am not so sure.

The thing is, she knows about as much about computers as my goldfish know about long-term memory preservation - with the inevitable consequence that the hour-long conversations are going to turn into our private version of the Microsoft Helpline (only slower).

While I am more than willing to explain the difference between a hard-drive and block-paving to anyone who knows that a megabyte ram isn't a goat with too many teeth, trying to get mummy dearest beyond "booting up" could be something of a problem.

An impatient woman at the best of times, I fear for her sanity when she finally masters the art of emails - only to discover her screen has jammed and all is lost in the ether. Trying to explain over the phone that you need to press "ctrl", "alt" and "delete" at the same time, using only two hands is going to take some persuasion. It was bad enough with the mobile phone.

Then there's going to be the fun of getting her signed up with an email address. Heaven forbid if she gets to see the content of some of the spam I get on a daily basis. Their sexual nature will be enough to get her writing to her MP, ringing the police and then eventually ringing me to tell me that she is being harassed into an apoplectic state.

Once in such turmoil, she may well sign up for one of the promises of wealth, health and everlasting happiness, which come guaranteed for \$13.99 a month - including a free lucky talisman made of compressed silver foil. Then I will have to deal with the fall-out. (We still haven't got over Reader's Digest.)

But she feels she is missing out and wants to join the internet family whether I like it or not. So, as the doctor said to the man who couldn't pronounce his "F"s, "T"s or "H"s - you can't say fairer than that then!

Janet Kelly's novel, Dear Beneficiary, was published by Cutting Edge Press on March 19th 2015.

RECIPE

Some say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It is the one meal that I personally never skip. These are really delicious, and extremely quick to make. They can be on your plate in 10 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

100g wholemeal self-raising flour (you can use GF self raising flour)

1 tsp ground mixed spice

1 large egg

80g grated carrot

4 tbsp low-fat, lower-sugar plain yoghurt

100ml semi-skimmed milk (you can use lactose free milk)

30g sultanas or raisins

1 tsp vegetable oil

METHOD

Put the flour, mixed spice, egg, grated carrot, yoghurt and milk into a large mixing bowl and use a hand whisk or fork to mix together thoroughly.

Stir in the sultanas or raisins.

Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add 2-3 drops of oil. Cook tablespoonfuls of the batter in batches, turning them over after 1-2 minutes to cook the other side. Make 8 drop scones altogether, adding a further 2-3 drops of oil to the frying pan with each batch.

You can then top with any fruit of your choice and a drizzle of honey or maple syrup, and a large helping of low or fat free natural yoghurt.



Collection for the Homeless

Monday, 2nd Dec, 2019 1:00pm—6:00pm

Two local mums are organising a collection for those less fortunate in the run up to the festive season at Wilmslow Parish Hall from 1pm to 6pm.

People are being asked to drop off food, clothing and toiletries at the Parish Hall for the homeless and deprived living in Wilmslow, Macclesfield, Stockport and Manchester city centre.

Required items include fresh fruit and veg, all tinned food, jars of pasta sauce, hot dogs, tea and coffee, hot chocolate, biscuits, crisps, sleeping bags, tents and camping equipment as well as all men and women's winter clothing including coats, jeans, t-shirts, hats, scarves, gloves, socks and closed toe shoes.

Additionally toiletries such as deodorants, soaps, toothbrushes, toothpaste and washing powder are needed.

The Christmas collection will be supporting Manchester Homeless Group, The Wellspring Stockport, Riverside, Food Friend and Macclesfield Hostel.

There will also be drop of point in the evening on Friday 29th of November at Mailboxes on Water Lane between 6pm and 8pm.

LIFESTYLE

Presents with purpose: Gift ideas that make an impact. Here is just one idea of a special gift that will keep on giving.

This holiday season, what if you could give loved ones a present that makes a meaningful impact on the world? Nothing evokes the holiday spirit more than giving gifts that help others in a direct, effective way. Both you and the gift recipient will know you're making a difference in the lives of people who really need it.

Here are a few ways you can give a gift this year that truly makes someone's life better:

Feed a family - and nourish a community

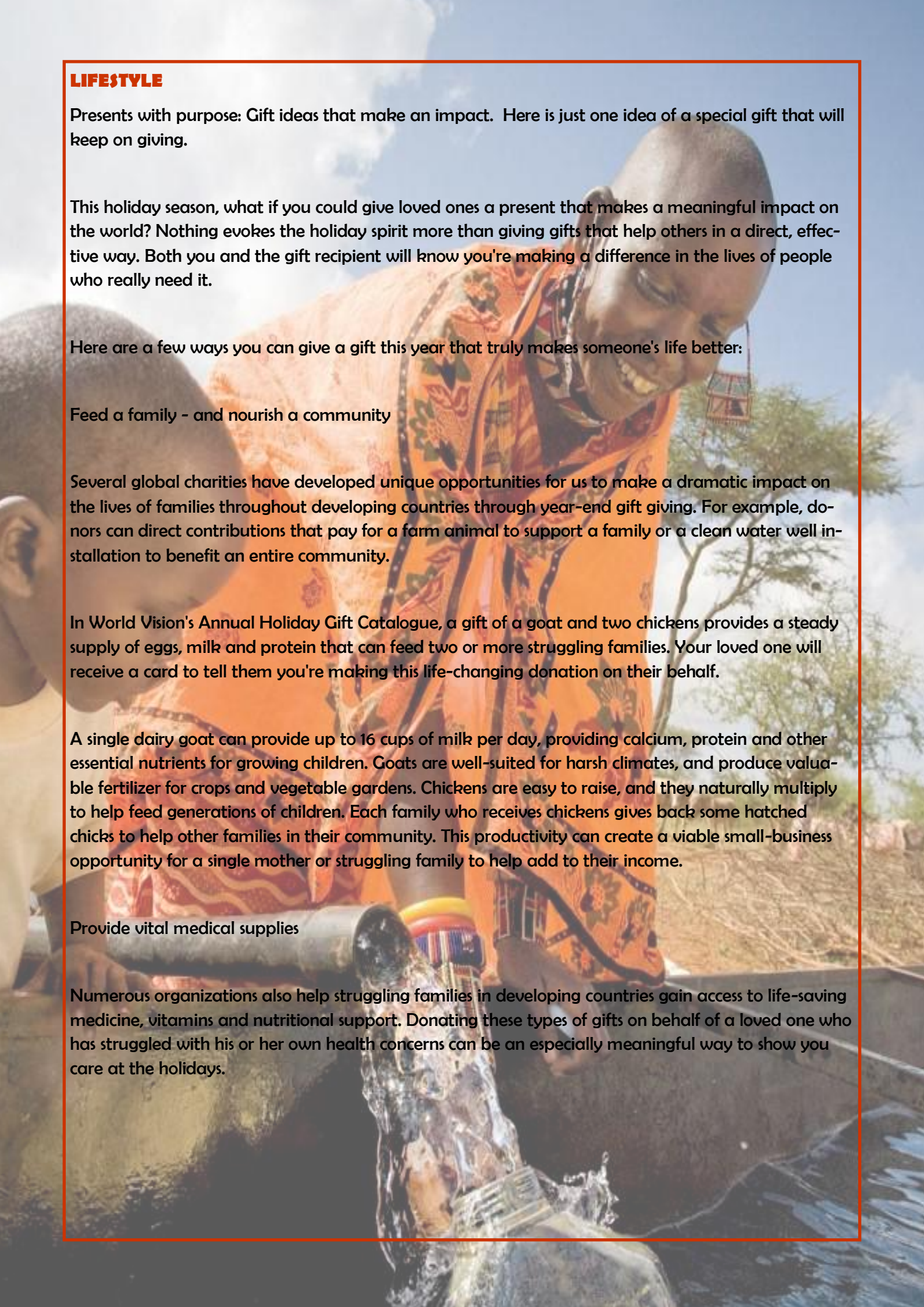
Several global charities have developed unique opportunities for us to make a dramatic impact on the lives of families throughout developing countries through year-end gift giving. For example, donors can direct contributions that pay for a farm animal to support a family or a clean water well installation to benefit an entire community.

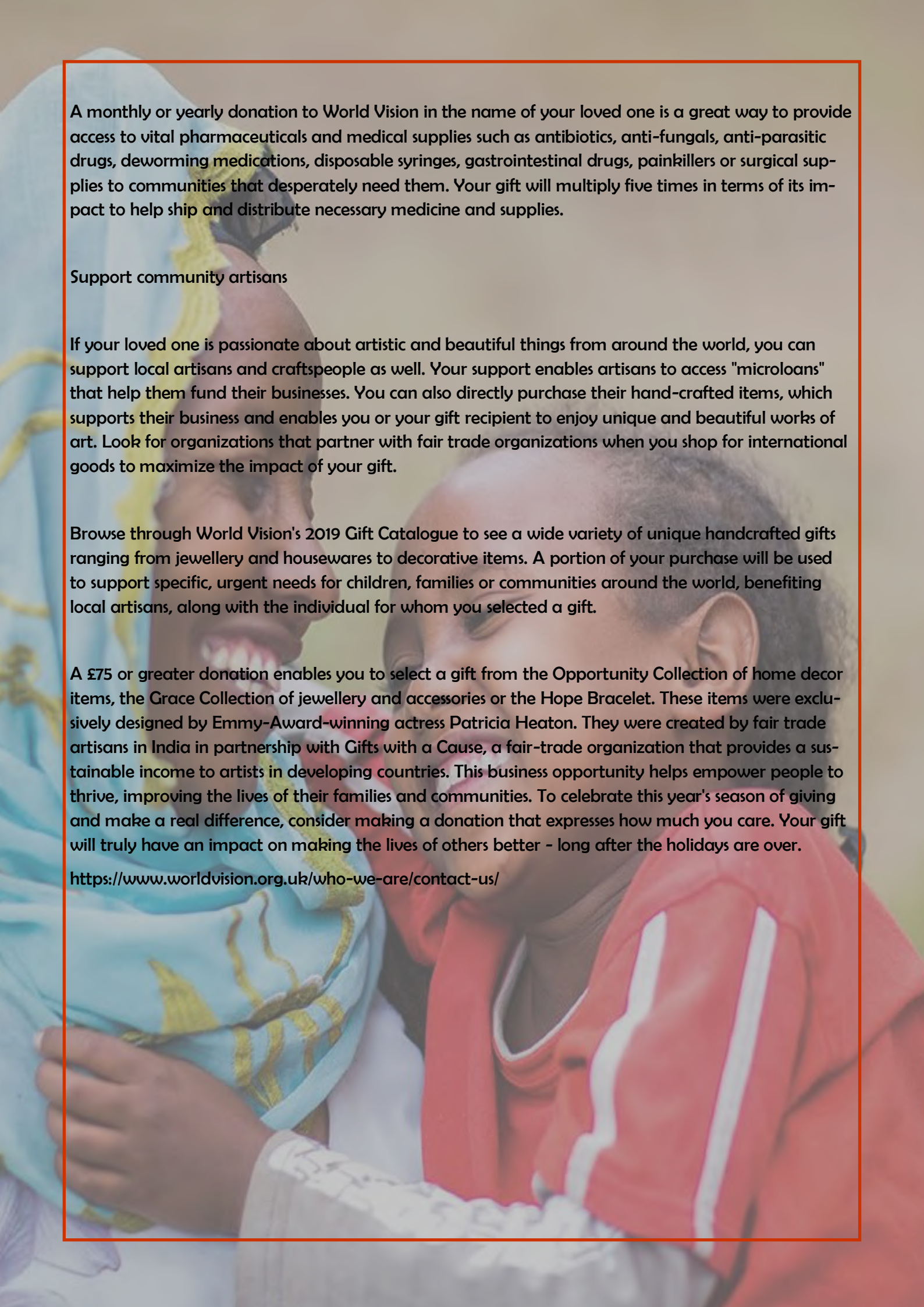
In World Vision's Annual Holiday Gift Catalogue, a gift of a goat and two chickens provides a steady supply of eggs, milk and protein that can feed two or more struggling families. Your loved one will receive a card to tell them you're making this life-changing donation on their behalf.

A single dairy goat can provide up to 16 cups of milk per day, providing calcium, protein and other essential nutrients for growing children. Goats are well-suited for harsh climates, and produce valuable fertilizer for crops and vegetable gardens. Chickens are easy to raise, and they naturally multiply to help feed generations of children. Each family who receives chickens gives back some hatched chicks to help other families in their community. This productivity can create a viable small-business opportunity for a single mother or struggling family to help add to their income.

Provide vital medical supplies

Numerous organizations also help struggling families in developing countries gain access to life-saving medicine, vitamins and nutritional support. Donating these types of gifts on behalf of a loved one who has struggled with his or her own health concerns can be an especially meaningful way to show you care at the holidays.





A monthly or yearly donation to World Vision in the name of your loved one is a great way to provide access to vital pharmaceuticals and medical supplies such as antibiotics, anti-fungals, anti-parasitic drugs, deworming medications, disposable syringes, gastrointestinal drugs, painkillers or surgical supplies to communities that desperately need them. Your gift will multiply five times in terms of its impact to help ship and distribute necessary medicine and supplies.

Support community artisans

If your loved one is passionate about artistic and beautiful things from around the world, you can support local artisans and craftspeople as well. Your support enables artisans to access "microloans" that help them fund their businesses. You can also directly purchase their hand-crafted items, which supports their business and enables you or your gift recipient to enjoy unique and beautiful works of art. Look for organizations that partner with fair trade organizations when you shop for international goods to maximize the impact of your gift.

Browse through World Vision's 2019 Gift Catalogue to see a wide variety of unique handcrafted gifts ranging from jewellery and housewares to decorative items. A portion of your purchase will be used to support specific, urgent needs for children, families or communities around the world, benefiting local artisans, along with the individual for whom you selected a gift.

A £75 or greater donation enables you to select a gift from the Opportunity Collection of home decor items, the Grace Collection of jewellery and accessories or the Hope Bracelet. These items were exclusively designed by Emmy-Award-winning actress Patricia Heaton. They were created by fair trade artisans in India in partnership with Gifts with a Cause, a fair-trade organization that provides a sustainable income to artists in developing countries. This business opportunity helps empower people to thrive, improving the lives of their families and communities. To celebrate this year's season of giving and make a real difference, consider making a donation that expresses how much you care. Your gift will truly have an impact on making the lives of others better - long after the holidays are over.

<https://www.worldvision.org.uk/who-we-are/contact-us/>

INTERESTING FACTS

1. If you somehow found a way to extract all of the gold from the bubbling core of our lovely little planet, you would be able to cover all of the land in a layer of gold up to your knees.
2. McDonalds calls frequent buyers of their food “heavy users.”
3. The average person spends 6 months of their lifetime waiting on a red light to turn green.
4. The largest recorded snowflake was in Keogh, MT during year 1887, and was 15 inches wide.
5. You burn more calories sleeping than you do watching television.
6. There are more lifeforms living on your skin than there are people on the planet.
7. Southern sea otters have flaps of skin under their forelegs that act as pockets. When diving, they use these pouches to store rocks and food.
8. In 1386 a pig in France was executed by public hanging for the murder of a child.
9. One in every five adults believe that aliens are hiding in our planet disguised as humans.
10. If you believe that you're truly one in a million, there are still approximately 7,184 more people out there just like you.
11. The world's oldest piece of chewing gum is over 9,000 years old!
12. A coyote can hear a mouse moving underneath a foot of snow.
13. Bolts of lightning can shoot out of an erupting volcano.
13. New York drifts about one inch farther away from London each year.
14. A U.S. dollar bill can be folded approximately 4,000 times in the same place before it will tear.
15. A sneeze travels about 100 miles per hour.
16. Earth has travelled more than 5,000 miles in the past 5 minutes.