



STOCKTON UNITARIANS



*"... and I'll bring a song of love and a rose in the winter time"
Hymn 24 in 'Sing Your Faith' - A Rose in Winter*



CALENDAR WINTER 2021/2022

Obituary - Merla Hopkins

18th September 1940 - 4th January 2022

As this edition of the Calendar was being finalised we were deeply saddened to hear of the sudden and unexpected death of **Merla Hopkins** (née **Jones**) on January 4th. We send our deepest sympathy to Merla's husband, **Brian**, and to Merla and Brian's family and friends who are very much in our thoughts at this difficult time.

The details of Merla's Funeral are as follows:

Funeral Service:

2 pm Thursday 27th January
Stockton Crematorium Maplewood
Junction Road,
Stockton-on-Tees
TS19 9NA

After the Funeral:

Family and Friend Gathering
Billingham Golf Club,
Sandy Lane,
Stockton-on-Tees
TS22 5NA

Rose Funeral Services have agreed to arrange for a video link to the funeral service for people who are unable to attend in person. A six digit code to access this facility will be made available two or three days prior to the date of the funeral. This will be notified to church members and friends as soon as it becomes available, along with any other instructions. The family emphasise that members and friends, who are able, are most welcome to attend in person and this will be much appreciated.

Brian has requested that any donations in memory of Merla be made to **Cancer Research UK**. This can be done via a Tribute page on their website in memory of Merla, which Alan set up, accessed using the following link:

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/in-loving-memory-of-merla-hopkins-nee-jones>

Alternatively, if preferred, donations can be made direct to Cancer Research UK on the website. There will also be a box in the chapel on the day of the funeral.

Flowers should be sent to Rose Funerals, Harrowgate Lane, Stockton TS19 8SL the day before the funeral or to arrive by noon on the day of the funeral at the very latest.

Pat Wilkinson, Merla's sister-in-law, sent this lovely appreciation of her life for the Calendar:

It was with great shock and deep sadness that Alan and I learned from Merla and Brian's daughter Lynne that her mum, Merla, had passed away suddenly and peacefully on the evening of Tuesday 4th January. This sad and unexpected event will leave a huge void in so many people's lives, most of all in that of her husband Brian, brother of myself, Janet and the late Terry, and brother-in-law of Alan and Gert. He and Merla have been a devoted couple throughout their almost 56 years of marriage, living life to the full, much of it in the company of their close friends Jack and Eileen Levison, who will miss her dearly.



There will also be a huge void in the lives of Merla and Brian's family to whom they have always given tremendous love and support and have been much loved in return. On hearing the news, their son Michael and his wife Gail immediately set off from Oulton in Staffordshire, arriving at Brian and Merla's home in the early hours of Wednesday morning to support Brian at this time of need. Together with Lynne and her husband Kenny who live locally, they are helping Brian to make all necessary arrangements and taking care of things with much support from grandson Nathan, granddaughter Jaimie and her partner Matthew.

Younger family members who will also feel the loss of Merla very keenly are granddaughter Millie and great-grandchildren Nieve and Henry who loved to visit, and be visited by, Brian and Merla.

As a couple, Merla and Brian have always played a huge part in the lives of all the close and wider family, past and present, hosting family get-togethers on special occasions for relatives from far and wide or lending a hand whenever one was needed. All members of both Merla's and Brian's sides of the family have fond memories of just such happy occasions and good cause to be grateful to Merla and Brian for their help and support.

Merla's many practical and organisational talents were legendary, be



it cookery, needlework, home decorating etc. Merla could turn her hand to anything, which she frequently did for the benefit of others. In her early adult life she was a Girl Guide's captain, two of her deputies being bridesmaids at her and Brian's wedding along with Janet as flower girl and myself as Matron of Honour, with the remaining guides forming a guard of honour. After a brief spell at ICI doing clerical work, she trained as a teacher, teaching first at Newham Grange School and then at Bishopsgarth where she became a highly respected Head of Year, not only for her teaching ability but also for the pastoral care she gave to so many pupils.

A Methodist herself, Merla was long connected with the Unitarians from the first time she met Brian (at a dance in Redcar on his 25th birthday). She was active in supporting him in his former Unitarian roles. For example, when he was IRF Conference Manager for an over-subscribed international meeting at Wiston Lodge in Lanarkshire, Merla was prevailed upon to use her full range of Girl Guide leadership experience to feed dozens of soggy campers with tasty hot food and drinks from an improvised field kitchen for a week. Such was her success, that many of the lodge residents who were entitled to eat indoors, chose instead to join the campers!

In short, Merla was a kind, capable and popular person who will be dearly missed by all who knew her. The world will be a poorer place without the likes of Merla in it.

Pat Wilkinson

News of Members and Friends

From Margaret Whitham:

I had cause to contact **Glenis Beech** (née **Phillips**) who now lives on The Isle of Man and was sorry to hear that she has had a bad year health wise. We hope the New Year sees her in better health. We send our good wishes for Christmas and the New Year to **Billy** and **Glenis**.

From Paul Sickling:

Hello, David, Hazel

Apologies for the time it's taken to get back to you.

Thank you for the pictures, press release and copy of the church Calendar with Dad's obituary in.

Including your kind donation a total of £125 was raised for Heart Foundation.

Kind regards,

Paul

Covid-19:

In recent weeks we are aware that several members and friends, or their family members, have been infected by the virus. Thankfully and probably thanks to the vaccination programme, as far as we know no one has been seriously ill. However the isolation requirements have caused serious disruption to family gatherings for special birthdays and the festive season. We extend our warm sympathy to anyone who has been affected in this way.

Civic Recognition for Flowergate Old Chapel



The Blue plaque which was placed beside the entrance to the Unitarian chapel in Whitby in a special ceremony last autumn

News from Newcastle Unitarians

Update on our future, the future of our building, and services over the winter

Here's an update for everyone on what's happening.

Firstly, we are not closing! We will remain as Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians for now and the future – and we have plans for that future.

Secondly, as many of you know, we are selling the building. The reasons for this are essentially that it needs repairing, the repairs would cost more money than we actually have, and more importantly, it doesn't really suit our needs as a congregation any more. It's a wonderful building, but it was built for a different era, and it needs refurbishing so that it can return to having a central role in the life of Newcastle upon Tyne.

We are in the process of selling it to Tyneside Group Limited. You may have seen their offices by the side of the church, near the Tower Door. The owner is Robbie Kalbraier, and his intention is to turn it into a combined space for small businesses and performing arts organisations. We will put out a display of Tyneside Group's designs for what the building might look like in future in the Durant Hall.

Tyneside Group have what is called an 'option to purchase' with us, wherein we have signed an agreement with them meaning that at any point between now and April 2022, they can exercise this option, and purchase the building from us, with a certain amount of notice. They are currently waiting for Newcastle City Council's planning department to arrange a site visit so that their application for planning permission can be assessed. They are confident that they will get approval, but the pandemic has caused a large backlog of applications for planning permission, and the sale has taken longer than expected.

We are working with them and with our solicitors to set our having a long-term tenancy of the Turner Hall, following its refurbishment. In other words, we hope that in future we will be back here again for worship! At this stage we cannot be specific about the timings, as much depends on the speed of the sale.

So, where will we be over the winter? We are going to go back to having services on Zoom from 17th October onwards until Spring next year – date to be confirmed. The central heating in the building no longer works, and we cannot use fan heaters to heat the worship

space, as we have in the past, due to issues around air circulation and spreading coronavirus and other winter illnesses. In the past we have moved into the Turner Hall, but its small size makes social distancing impossible. It is not possible for us to keep worshipping in person in the building over the winter.

However – we know that many members of the congregation prefer to worship in person, and prefer not to use Zoom. So we are looking at arranging somewhere in the city centre for people who don't do Zoom to meet over the winter, and we will set up a large screen so that people who want to can join the Zoom services by attending there. This is still a work in progress as we are trying to find a suitable venue. We cannot at this stage 100% guarantee that we can do this, but we will try very hard to make it a possibility. If it is not possible, we will do what we did during the pandemic, and keep in touch with everyone by phone calls and letters. I will keep everyone informed about what's happening.

It's a challenging time for us, but it's also a time of great possibility and hope. We hope that by handing our building over to people with the resources to refurbish it and have it play a role in the life of our city, we can move forwards and reach out to others in Newcastle who could join our spiritual community. We hope that in future, both our building and our congregation can play more of a role in the life of Newcastle upon Tyne.

If anyone wants to talk to me about this, you're welcome to do in person, by email at: louise.reeve@newcastleunitarians.org.uk, or call: 07506 255 731.

Thank you for continuing to be part of our community.

Louise Reeve

Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

Editor's Note:

Hazel and I were privileged to be present at the 'Moving On' service on October 3rd. It was a delightful occasion. There was full and appropriate recognition of the wonderful history of Newcastle Unitarians but, most of all, it was full of optimism for the future. The service can be viewed on YouTube on this link:

<https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/the-sermons/moving-on-3-october-2021/>

Stockton Unitarians and the NUA will be watching developments with great interest and offering our full support in any way that we can to our good 'friends in the North'.

David Warhurst

Cross section showing the plan for redeveloping building, reproduced by kind permission





mawsonkerr

Mawson Kerr Architects Ltd, 1 Charlotte Square,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4XF

Round Up of Services and Events

September 12th: Rev Margaret Kirk - **Resilience at a Time of Crisis.**

September 19th: Arek Malecki - **No matter where I roam, I will find my way back home**

September 26th: Rev Victor Ball - **Harvest Service**

October 3rd: Rev Jeffrey Bowes - **Where were you when . . . ?**



Produce donated at the Harvest



Sue, left, speaking at the NUA AGM event

October 9th: Northern Unitarian Association Annual Meeting event. Rev Sue Woolley (Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly) gave greetings from the General Assembly and led us in an exploration of the roots of our individual faith by drawing our *Religious World Trees*.



Tea break!



Sue showing the crocheted blanket she made, to be auctioned for the Nightingale Centre Fighting Fund

October 10th: Rev Sue Woolley (Vice-President of the Unitarian General Assembly) - **The Tree of Life**. This service was held jointly with Newcastle Unitarians via Zoom.

October 17th: Rev Paul Walker.

October 24th: Rev Victor Ball - **Family History**

October 31st: Arek Malecki - **Remembrance of people who have died.**

November 7th: Rev Michael Unwin - **The search for peace and understanding.**

November 14th: The Worship Group - **Remembrance.**

November 21st: Jean Watson and Margaret Whitham - **Life's Greatest Gifts.**

November 28th: Arek Malecki - **The first Sunday of Advent.**

December 5th: Margaret Whitham and Margaret Robinson - **Human Rights and One World.**

December 12th: The Worship Group - **Tree Dressing and Gift Service.**

December 19th: The Worship Group - **Christmas Carol Service.**

December 24th: The Worship Group - **Christmas Eve Service, Miscellany.**

January 2nd 2022: 'Bring and Share' service - **Looking back, looking forward.**

January 9th: Margaret Robinson - **Unitarian Women**



Shoeboxes for the Mission to Seamen, under the Christmas Tree

From the Editor's Desk . . .



Regular readers of the Calendar will notice some changes from the previous format, which was introduced in September 2007, coinciding with the dedication of our new building. It has been decided to minimise content that provides personal details of individuals which, it is felt, could be exploited on social media by those disreputable

people that we hear so much about these days. This means that most of the contact details have been removed from the Church Directory inside the back page. Also personal details such as birthdays and ages, particularly of our young people, will no longer be given. Another significant change is that photographs featuring individual people will no longer be included unless specific permission has been given in each case. The general disclaimer which I have included from time to time (see page 15) is not considered to be sufficient.

This arises from discussions at the Church Council meeting on 10th November, with particular regard to issues of safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Concerns were raised that all previous Calendars can be accessed from the church website and are distributed via email. People with public-facing occupations, such as teachers, can be subjected to the most hateful abuse on social media like Tiktok, Facebook and the like, to the extent that many of them stay off these platforms. Therefore it's most important that the Calendar, which is always going to be 'in the public domain', doesn't provide content which could be exploited by the unscrupulous.

For me, as Editor, it feels as though I am being pulled in the opposite direction to the way I want to go with the Calendar, by these new constraints. I have always tried to make it as varied and interesting as possible with news and photographs of our people, in the belief that they enjoy reading about themselves and our activities. I see it as our 'shop window' to the outside world to be made as widely available as possible. I hope I have been able to exercise appropriate discretion in any personal matters and, in truth, I am not aware of any instances of Calendar content being misused by someone intent on causing trouble. I suspect that such people have bigger 'fish to fry' than trawling through our Calendars.

After nearly 15 years and 102 editions I have decided that it is now time for me to bow out of editing the Calendar. To be honest I have found it increasingly difficult in recent times to find the inspiration needed to maintain the high standard that I have always aspired to. Advancing age also makes the late hours that creation of the Calendar has always entailed (for me) more problematical alongside other commitments.

I will do my best to help and advise anyone taking over the role of Editor. I am willing to continue printing the paper copies if the Church Council so decides.

David Warhurst

Forthcoming Services

(at 3pm in January and February, then at 6pm from March onwards, unless otherwise stated)

January 2nd:	Bring and Share	Flowers:	Mrs Coates
January 9th:	Margaret Robinson	Flowers:	Mrs Squires
January 16th:	Rev Paul Walker	Flowers:	Flower Fund
January 23rd:	Rev Margaret Kirk	Flowers:	Mr J Lees
January 30th:	H and D Warhurst	Flowers:	Mrs Smith
February 6th:	Rev Paul Walker	Flowers:	Mrs Watson
February 13th:	Diana Bebbly	Flowers:	Mrs Whitham
February 20th:	To be announced	Flowers:	Mrs Squires
February 27th:	Rev Margaret Kirk	Flowers:	Mrs Powley
March 6th:	Rev Paul Walker	Flowers:	Flower Fund
* at 11.00am *			
March 13th:	Rev Victor Ball	Flowers:	Margaret Kirk
* at 6.00pm *			
March 20th:	To be announced	Flowers:	H & D Warhurst
March 27th:	Rev Margaret Kirk	Flowers:	Mrs Squires
April 3rd:	Christine Walker	Flowers:	Mrs Tomlin
April 10th:	To be announced	Flowers:	Mrs Coates
April 17th:	Rev Victor Ball	Flowers:	H & D Warhurst
April 24th:	Rev Margaret Kirk	Flowers:	Margaret Kirk

Please Note:

All services will be held in the church building, Covid-19 permitting. Some services will also be transmitted simultaneously by Zoom in which case joining instructions will be sent by email by the church Secretary. In the event that Covid-19 issues rule out meeting in the church, members and friends will be notified of the alternative arrangements.

Dates for your Diary

Knit 'n' Natter:

Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm on the following dates:

4th and 18th January
1st and 15th February
1st, 15th and 29th March
5th and 19th April

Friday 7th to Sunday 9th January 2022 - First Winter Walking Weekend at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, for families with younger children.

Friday 14th to Sunday 16th January 2022 - Second Winter Walking Weekend at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, for families.

Wednesday January 19th at 11.00am - Church Council meeting at church.

Wednesday 2nd February at 7.30pm - The Northern Unitarian Association (NUA) Committee meets on Zoom.

Saturday 19th to Sunday 20th February - Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) takes place online, theme *The Pilgrimage of Life, Journeys of Spiritual Unfolding*. Bookings can be made via the LDPA website - LDPAunitarians.org/fuse2022.

Tuesday 19th to Thursday 21st April - Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel.

Friday 29th April to Monday 2nd May - Foy Society Annual Conference at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, study subject *'In search of Truth and Justice - can we make the British penal system less racist?'*.

Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd October - Unitarian Women's Group Conference at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, subject: *Wo(me)n and White Supremacy*. For information contact Margaret Robinson - margaretrobinson81@gmail.com.

Church Directory

Church Address: Wellington Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1QQ

Church Telephone Number: 01642 671115

Church email address: mail@stocktonunitarians.org.uk

Church Website: www.stocktonunitarians.org.uk

Church Facebook Page: Unitarians in and around Stockton-on-Tees

**Calendar
Editor:**

David Warhurst
☎01609 882442

"Greenlee Lough"
18 Priory Way
Ingleby Arncliffe
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 3LR

Secretary:

Margaret Robinson
☎ 01642 782219

3, Castle Dyke Wynd
Minerva Mews
Yarm
TS15 9DE

Important Notice about Photographs

From time to time we take photographs of church events which may be reproduced in the Calendar. We do this carefully in order to add interest to the Calendar for our readers.

However if you do not want photographs of you to appear in print you have the right to refuse permission. If this is the case please contact the Editor to make your wishes known.

These will be respected and treated in confidence.

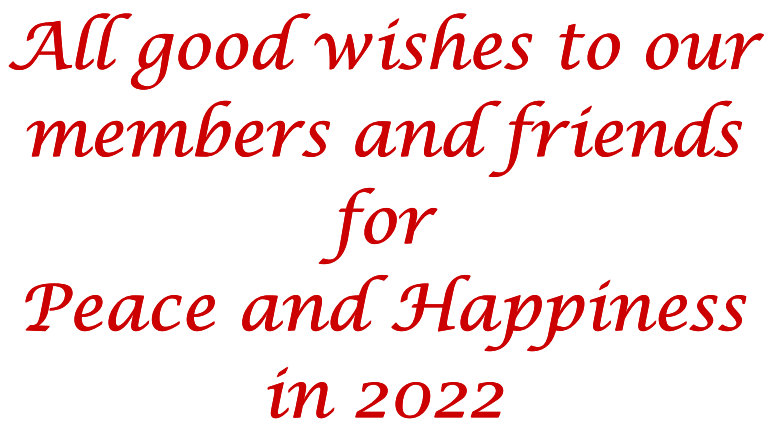
The Editor

Photo Credits for this Edition:

Hazel Warhurst - front page, page 10 (top two) and page 11.

Wilkinson family - pages 3 and 4.

Louise Reeve - page 10 (bottom two)



*All good wishes to our
members and friends
for
Peace and Happiness
in 2022*

Unitarians believe that religion is a deeply personal matter. Our core belief is that every person must be free to form his or her own religious ideas. We have no set creeds. Instead we offer encouragement and help in the individual search for the true meaning and purpose of life.

We are always pleased to assist with the celebration of special occasions such as naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals and dedications. You do not need to be a member.

Our modern building provides a warm, comfortable space for small groups requiring a meeting place.

For further information please contact: -

*The Secretary, telephone (01642) 782219
email: mail@stocktonunitarians.org.uk
or look at www.stocktonunitarians.org.uk
or Facebook:*

Unitarians in and around Stockton-on-Tees

