



STOCKTON UNITARIANS



CALENDAR
DECEMBER 2019
JANUARY 2020

Sing the Season



at the
Unitarian Church
 Wellington Street, Stockton
 Sunday 15th December 2019

carols
 songs
 stories
 laughter



Come along and sing a song.
 Share the Christmas cheer.
 There'll be coffee and tea
 and hot mince pies.
 Enjoyed by all last year!
 Bring your children.

*We can provide a local
 get you home service.*



News of Members and Friends

Birthday Congratulations to:

Mike Tomlin on December 3rd, **Alexander Slaven** who will be twelve years old on December 19th, **Richard Whitham** on 21st December and, in the New Year, **Susan Scrafton** on January 2nd, **Margaret Robinson** on January 6th, **Neill Warhurst** on January 15th, **Joan Unwin** on January 17th and **Margaret Whitham** on January 20th; and to **Aaron Robinson** who celebrates his 12th birthday on 21st January, **Arthur Whitham** who will be five years old on 23rd January and **William Dixon-Oliver** who will be six years old on 1st February.

. . . . and Mike Tomlin writes:

Thanks to all those who remembered my birthday with cards! We celebrated it with a lunch at Five Houses and then came home to card and present opening. Imagine my surprise to find that some kind souls had made me a year older than I actually was and so had some "90"cards as well. We laughed and laughed at this as you can imagine, and so they have been put away to be brought out and displayed next year!

Mike

Our Chosen Charity for this Year

Home - Bloodrun EVS Emergency Volunteer Service for Cleveland and North Yorkshire

After much discussion it was felt that we should again adopt a charity to sponsor for 2019 - 2020. We decided on the above charity which was suggested by Jean Watson, reminding us that many years ago a former member of the congregation, Ernie Boddy, was a volunteer.

We haven't met as a group for ages so are we up for a sponsored walk or some other activity, possibly intergenerational (any ideas welcome), to raise money for this worthy charity that the NHS couldn't do without?

Thinking caps on.

Yours in fellowship and friendship.

Margaret Whitham

Winter Warmers

NUA AGM Weekend:

Our review begins with the annual Northern Unitarian Association AGM Weekend event in October in Stockton. We were delighted to welcome the President of the General Assembly, Rev Celia Cartwright to the District for the weekend, which began on Saturday 26th October. After the formalities of the AGM and a pleasant lunch break, Celia spoke to us about her lifelong commitment to working for a peaceful world. Proceedings concluded with a short service conducted by Celia on the same theme.



Lunch break during the NUA meeting

On the following day, 27th October, Celia conducted worship at Newcastle Unitarian Church then returned to Teesside to take our evening service at Stockton where her theme was:.

"Unitarians - Who?":

First Celia brought greetings from the General Assembly and from all the many Unitarian communities she had visited on her travels as President—this was her 20th visit.

Celia explored the question "*why do we choose to be a Unitarian?*"

She told us that she has been a Unitarian for most of her life, following in her parents and grandparents footsteps. However she had moved around a lot and had thought deeply about what it means to be a Unitarian. Unhindered by doctrine, the definition we come to is our own.

Freedom is our first tenet but we need to dust it off from time to time. How should we do this? - by getting into discussions with others, sharing our thoughts, being brave about challenges and being prepared to embrace change. All this leads to a far more



rewarding faith. Celia had an uncle who refused to listen to new ideas - some Unitarians are like that. We should remember the brave men and women from history who questioned the doctrines of the orthodox church at great personal risk. They sowed the seeds of non-conformity which blossomed into the Unitarian movement that we hold so dear.

Celia concluded that being a Unitarian is not easy - but nothing worthwhile is ever easy.

Celia at the reading Desk

All Souls and the Season of Remembrance:

Rev Margaret Kirk began her service on November 3rd with a reading by John O'Donoghue *Autumn and the Inner Harvest*, a Frog and Toad story, *Shivers*, and *Remembering* by Rev David Shaw. We then sang hymn 134 from *Sing Your Faith* - written by Rev Andrew Hill - *Praise God for Michael*.

This set the scene for Margaret's address. *All Souls* is the season of remembrance, not just for war remembrance. As the days darken it is traditionally the time to turn inwards to thoughts of family and friends that we don't see very often, or who have died. We remembered Michael Servetus, sentence to death for questioning the doctrine of the Trinity and burnt at the stake in 1553.

Margaret said that *All Souls* commemorates **all** people. There is a long tradition going back to pagan times which holds that the spirits of all who have died return to visit the living at Hallowe'en. Simon Jenkins, writing in *The Guardian*, says that Hallowe'en is the classic example of Christianity adopting a pagan ritual that it could not eradicate.

In conclusion Margaret said that *All Souls* is not just about sadness. It is time to remember with joy the family and friends which mean so much to us in our lives.

Remembrance:

On Remembrance Sunday Rev Victor Ball led our worship, which followed on well from Margaret Kirk's service on the previous Sunday. Victor included several well known poems and readings, such as *In Flanders Field* written by Canadian physician Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae during the First World War.

Victor reminded us of the story behind the adoption of the Poppy as the enduring symbol of Remembrance. He took us through a meditation *Honouring our Ancestors*, reflecting upon the mystery of our origins and our ancestors.

In his address Victor argued that there is much more that we can learn from the folly of the great wars than simple remembrance would imply. It is easy to forget that civilian casualties far outnumbered those in the military in the second World War and many subsequent conflicts. It is also too easy to forget the massive devastation caused to animals, plants and trees. In the first World War a pilot in 1916 described the front line from the air as *a sinister brown belt, a strip of murdered nature, everything wiped out*. This was where the poppies began to grow.

It is easy to forget that eight to ten million horses perished in that conflict - this is just beginning to be recognised, highlighted by the work of the author Michael Morpurgo.

The environment is just as much a victim of war, particularly as weapons, including chemicals, become ever more destructive. Victor argued that this kind of damage should be treated as war crimes-ecocide.

This was altogether a thought provoking and moving service.

What beacons do we light?

On 17th November it was good welcome back Rev Jeffrey Bowes to take our service.

'We move in faith to unseen goals..... to some great realm of love and light' (*Hymns for Living* number 39) - this is the dark time of the year when we welcome the light from our chalice, as well as light from the bonfires of 5th November, even though we are uneasy about the religious intolerance in the Guy Fawkes story. In the past it was the season of garden bonfires, clearing and cleaning up the debris. Some of the old pagan festivals of midwinter used fire at their centre - creating a gathering point for the community and an

opportunity for burnt offerings to be made to the gods. Beacons lit on the hill tops were used to spread news quickly before the days of instant communications.

Where there is a reluctance to the practice of cremation, is this associated with the fires of Hell? And why are we deeply troubled at the burning of books - seen as a final attempt to destroy challenging ideas - as a way of control.

As the hymnwriter (*Hymns for Living* number 194) says '*What purpose burns within our hearts?*' and Jeff interpreted that as '*What beacons do we light?*'

Jane Tomlin

Change:

We welcomed back Professor Paul Harvey again on Sunday 24th November. His theme was *Change*. As always we were given a scholarly and challenging service, sending us away with much to think about.

Paul began his address by referring to the frequent demands we hear of these days for the removal of statues of colonialists of the past, coming from people with the best of intentions. But, in the words of Omar Khayyám

*"The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it."*

This is terrifying but true - nothing can undo the past. What we see as sinful was not always seen that way in the past. In the case of colonialism, whilst there is no doubt that the ruling countries



benefitted hugely from the resources of their colonies, there was a genuine desire in the Colonial Services to bring the benefits of civilisation to the colonies - be it infrastructure, law and order, education and health services, for example.

Paul

Slavery is an abomination but people genuinely viewed it as delivering people from paganism, regarding the health and salvation of the immortal soul as more important than bodily health. Similarly in previous centuries, the burning of heretics at the stake could be seen as kind and merciful because heretics would suffer in hell. I must admit that I found these very difficult concepts to get my mind around - considering the cruel and brutal treatment suffered by many slaves and heretics.

Paul's central point was that often what was seen as right and estimable in one generation is seen as wrong in the future. The outlawing of homosexuality and the caning of schoolboys are relatively recent examples. The challenging question posed by Paul is "*What are we doing today that people will be apologising for in the future . . . ?*" Could it be climate change, the treatment of animals or something else that we have not even thought of?

Tree Dressing Service - Love:



Love was the golden thread which ran through this year's Tree Dressing Service, devised by the church Worship Group. As usual this was very much a family occasion and the Worship Room was almost full. Carols were sung, the tree was decorated, stories were read and people placed their shoe boxes for seafarers under the tree.

As the service proceeded candles were lit, by the young people present, for joy, communicating (especially at Christmas time), for caring and giving, for the future of our planet, and for love. Hazel told us how Christmas cards originated in 1843 when the Post Office was first established. A civil servant, Sir Henry Cole, had the idea because he wanted to encourage people to use the new *Penny Post* - and the rest is history, as they say..



Aaron showing the Christmas Card he had made while Arthur looks on!

Everyone had been invited to share special Christmas Cards that they had received made and/or sent. Some lovely examples were presented. We listened to a reading of the beautiful poem *Love*, by Jean MacMaster, which appeared in a recent issue of ***The Inquirer***.



Afterwards a delicious tea was shared and much enjoyed by everyone, putting us firmly in the mood for the Christmas festivities.

Enjoying a lovely tea after the Tree Dressing Service



A retiring collection was made for *The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund*. Our treasurer, Mike Tomlin reports as follows:

*I am pleased to say that as a result of the collection at our tree dressing service we raised **£110**. Thank you everyone for your generosity. Also I have received **£105** from a friend of the congregation towards our charity appeal this year. Thank you very much.*

SUNDAY JANUARY 19th 2020:-

Material for the February/March Calendar to be in the hands of the Editor, David Warhurst, please. My email address is:

hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk

Regular Events at Stockton Unitarian Church

Knit 'n' Natter



Why don't you bring along your knitting, sewing and other handicrafts, and your lunch, and enjoy a couple of hours chatting over a cup of tea. Men are welcome. We meet fortnightly on Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm on the following dates:

10th December, 7th and 21st January, 11th and 25th February, 10th and 24th March

- see you there!

Children's Group

The Children's Group, parents and grandparents meet periodically for stories, crafts, special events, other activities and outings to places of interest. All families with links to the church are welcome to join us.

Watch these pages and look out for announcements in church for further details.

Amnesty Teesside Local Group

This meets monthly, when possible, on the second Wednesday, from 7.15pm to 8.45pm, with refreshments at 7.00pm. If you are interested in **human rights** the world over this is the group for you.



We discuss campaigns, write letters and send emails to support Amnesty's worldwide campaigns to **STOP TORTURE**, free prisoners of conscience and end human rights abuses in countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, India, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iran, USA, China, Venezuela, Philippines, Greece and anywhere else where they are found to occur - even sometimes in the UK.

Please check with the church secretary (contact details on page 23) before setting out in case of late changes in arrangements.

Coffee Mornings



These are normally held every Saturday from 10.00am to 11.30am. Come and join us for the least expensive cup of coffee or tea in town - **only 50p** including biscuits.

More Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 12th December from 7.00am to 10.00pm - The British **General Election** takes place, for which the church will be used as a Polling Station.

Monday 13th January 2020 at 7.15pm - Church Council meeting.

Wednesday 4th March 2020 at 7.00pm - The Northern Unitarian Association (NUA) Committee meets at Stockton Unitarian Church.

Saturday 7th March 2020 from 10.30am to 4.00pm - Yorkshire Unitarian Union (YUU) Spring Gathering at Bradford Unitarian Chapel.

Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd February 2020 - Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) at the Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing.

Tuesday 7th to Thursday 9th April 2020 - Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel.

Friday 1st to Monday 4th May 2020 - Foy Society Annual Conference at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, study subject '*Plants and Us*'.

Friday 5th to Sunday 7th June 2020 - **UNIFEST: play, create, explore, believe** - a weekend of Unitarian family fun at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow.

Saturday 20nd June 2020 from 10.30am to 4.00pm - Yorkshire Unitarian Union (YUU) Summer Gathering at Scarborough Unitarian Chapel.

Friday 14th to Monday 17th August 2020 - Unitarian Music Society Conference at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow.

Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th October 2020 - Unitarian Women's Group Conference at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire, *subject A feminist perspective on the Climate Emergency* .

Important Note:

The Northern Unitarian Association (NUA) offers grants towards the cost of attending appropriate conferences and courses - apply to the Secretary, Hazel Warhurst, at hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk.

Forthcoming Services

December 1st	3.00 pm:	Tree Dressing and Gift Service
December 8th	6.00 pm:	Human Rights Service Amnesty Teesside Group
December 15th	3.00 pm:	'Sing the Season'
December 22nd	6.00 pm:	Carol Service Mike and Jane Tomlin
December 29th	6.00 pm:	New Year 'Bring and Share' Looking Back and Forward
January 5th	6.00 pm:	Margaret Robinson - Food
January 12th	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
January 19th	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
January 26th	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
February 2nd	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
February 9th	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
February 16th	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed
February 23rd	6.00 pm:	To be confirmed

Children's Group Events:

The Children's Group meets periodically for celebrations, special events and organised visits. Watch these pages and look out for announcements in church for further details.

Organists

Welcome Rota

December 1st:	Margaret Whitham	Hazel Warhurst
December 8th:	Jane Tomlin	Mike Tomlin
December 15th:	Joan Unwin	Margaret Robinson
December 22nd:	Margaret Robinson	Joan Unwin
December 29th:	Margaret Whitham	Jean Watson
January 5th:	Margaret Whitham	Hazel Warhurst
January 12th:	Jane Tomlin	Mike Tomlin
January 19th:	Joan Unwin	Margaret Robinson
January 26th:	Margaret Robinson	Margaret Whitham
February 2nd:	Margaret Whitham	Jean Watson
February 9th:	Jane Tomlin	Hazel Warhurst
February 16th:	Joan Unwin	Mike Tomlin
February 23rd:	Margaret Robinson	Margaret Whitham

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

Chair:	Jean Watson ☎ 01642 658376	10 Albany Road Norton Stockton-On-Tees TS20 2QX
Secretary:	Margaret Robinson ☎ 01642 782219	3, Castle Dyke Wynd Minerva Mews Yarm TS15 9DE
Treasurer:	Mike Tomlin ☎ 01642 592145	1 The Oval Brookfield Middlesbrough TS5 8ET
Lettings Secretary and Women's League:	Edna Anderson ☎ 01642 643179	315 Surbiton Road Stockton-on-Tees TS19 7SA
Worship Committee Co-ordinator:	Margaret Whitham ☎ 01429 298641	2 Burn Valley Road Hartlepool TS26 9BS
Flower Secretary:	Jean Watson ☎ 01642 658376	10 Albany Road Norton Stockton-On-Tees TS20 2QX
Calendar Editor:	David Warhurst ☎ 01609 882442	"Greenlee Lough" 18 Priory Way Ingleby Arncliffe Northallerton North Yorkshire DL6 3LR

Email: hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk



*All good wishes for the
Festive Season
and for
Peace and Happiness
in 2020*

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

