

Stockton Unitarians



**Stockton Unitarians Knit 'n' Natter Group,
chatting, knitting, crocheting and enjoying a
cuppa May 2025.**

Come and join us on alternative Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm
knit for yourself, friends, family or various charities (prem baby hats
for hospitals or items for the Baby Bank, etc).

Church News
July/August 2025



Whitby Gazette 5th June 2025 Who is my Neighbour?

Following the Prime Minister's remark about 'an island of strangers', the poet Michael Rosen wrote a poem describing his time in hospital when he had covid. He describes the caring of nurses: people to sedate him as he lay in bed, wash and feed him, hold his hand and reassure him, teach him to walk again with a stick and without one. And the poem ends with lines describing his carers as 'all people on this "island of strangers" from China, Jamaica, Brazil, Ireland, India, USA, Nigeria and Greece'.

It brought to mind one of the most powerful stories in the New Testament. The story told by Jesus when he is asked by a lawyer to define who is his neighbour and in reply Jesus tells the story of how a stranger goes to the assistance of a man who'd been badly beaten and robbed as he was travelling. Two men pass by - a priest and a Levite, both holy men of the Israelite community. They leave the traveller lying on the ground, severely injured, without going to his aid.

The stranger who came to his assistance was from the land nearby called Samaria which is now referred to as the West Bank. Samaritans were despised by the Israelites. They were regarded as foreigners with 'unclean' habits because they permitted mixed marriages which were regarded as impure. They were descendants from the tribes of Israel, reviled and rejected because of not adhering to the rules and obligations of strict Jewish codes of behaviour.

But in the story Jesus recognises the Samaritan's humanity and shows it in contrast to the lack of humanity revealed by the other two passers-by. The Samaritan is moved with pity; he bandages his wounds, places him on his own donkey and takes him to an inn where he not only looks after him but pays the innkeeper to do the same until he returns. The story remains an outstanding example of the teaching of compassion in the New Testament and is powerful because Jesus is demonstrating that a member of a tribe or nation that is despised is revealing more love and humanity towards someone different from himself than the two 'pure' Jewish travellers who left him to die.

He asks the lawyer "which of these three was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He replies "the one who showed him mercy.". Jesus said to him "Go and do likewise."

Margaret Kirk

Service held during April to June 2025

On Sunday 27th April 2025 Diana

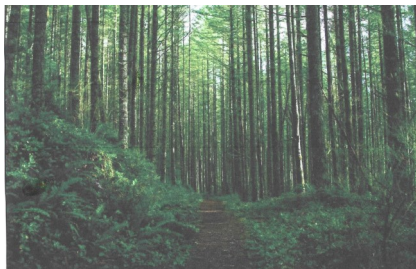
Bebby led our service on **John Muir:**

God's First Temples with Ben reading extracts from John Muir's writings.

Other readings, read by members of the congregation, were "The Trees" by Philip Larkin, "Plant a Tree" by Lucy Larcom. We sang "Think of a World",

"Spirit of Earth", "Wide Green Earth" and "Joyful, Joyful". Dianna led a Meditation "Respighi, Pini di Roma III" and a Forest Bathing with calming music. The service ended with the music of Liszt, Walderauschen (Forest Murmurs). We had a congregation of ten (with two new visitors) and one person joined us on Zoom.

You can read about the life of John Muir 1838-1914 (father of the American National Park) later in this edition of Church News.



On Sunday 11th May our service was led by Rev Victor Ball

We sang "We shall be strong", "All heroic Lives", "Heroes" and "Be Thou My Vision".

The worship leader on Sunday 18th May 2025 was Rev Margaret Kirk who's theme was "Memory and Remembrance"



We had a congregation of six and two people joined us on Zoom. We sang "Bring flowers to our altar", "From the light of days remembered", "When memory fades" and "We sing the faith". Margaret had readings from Blossoms "Folk Songs" by Simon Armitage and "Remembering" by David Shaw

We had a Bring and Share service on Sunday

25th May 2025 on the theme of "Time" The service opened with music "Turn Turn" by Pete Seeger and the musical interlude was "The Minute Waltz" by Chopin. We had a congrega-



tion of eight. We sang “One more step along the world I go”, “We are travellers on a journey”, “Now is the time”, “A little sun, a little rain”, and “Spirit of life”. The prayers were “We come from different homes” and “The clock of time ticks” The readings were “Time is a thing” “Armchair Traveller” and “Time by Joyce Grenfell with further various contributions from members of the congregation.

The service on 1st June 2025 was led by Hazel and David Warhurst on the theme of “A Celebration of Childhood”

In addition to the lighting of the chalice a candle was also lit for peace. We sang “For everyone born”, “O God, our words cannot express”, “Lord of our growing years”, and “We have a dream”. We had a congregation of nine



plus one person on Zoom. The service started with “The Origin and Purpose of International Children's Day”, then “The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959” and “The Joys if Childhood”. Some wise words on children from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran and Hazel read a Children's Story “The Woozle” from Winnie-the-Pooh by A A Milne. Then a medley of nursery rhymes was played as the musical interlude.

The prayer was by Jenny Jacobs of our York congregation.

The service closed with the benediction words by Dawn Buckle:

As we leave this sanctuary
May the holy music linger in our ears
May the poetry of the spoken words stay in our minds
May our spirits remain uplifted
May our lives be blest
So be it.

With closing music from “The Dolly Suite” by Gabriel Faure.

Rev Victor Ball led our service on Sunday 8th June 2025

We had a congregation of nine and sang “All are welcome here”, “O’er continent and ocean”, “We limit not the truth of God” and “Sing in celebration”

On Sunday 15th June 2025 Rev Margaret Kirk led our service on “Some Summer Reflections”

where we sang “To mercy, pity, peace and love”, “A little sun, a little rain”, “A melody of love” and “The green grass brings the air alive”. We had a congregation of seven and one person joined us on Zoom. Margaret’s readings were



from Small Graces by Kent Nerburn; an Earth Prayer “The garden is rich with diversity” from a Chinook psalter; and a Frog and Toad Together “The Garden”

On Sunday 22nd June 2025 Anne Mills led our worship on the theme of “Words of Wisdom”

We had a congregation of five with two people joining us on Zoom. We sang “From the light of days remembered”, “What does the Lord require?”, “God, you have given power” and “There is a place I call my own”. Ann began her service with words of the Ten Commandments (Exodus: Chapter 20 v 1-17) together with quotes of wisdom from William Shakespeare. The readings were poems “If” by Rudyard Kipling, “The Mountain” by Laura Ding-Edwards, and “It couldn’t be done” by Edgar A Guest. Words of Wisdom come from many sources such as the Bible, for example the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer, from people like Shakespeare or from the poems Ann read.

Quotes from Shakespeare: “Love all, trust few, do wrong to none”, “This above all: to thine own self be true” and “It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.” The Archbishops of Canterbury and York said that at the heart of the prayer Jesus taught “It is simple enough to be memorised by small children and yet profound enough to sustain a whole lifetime of prayer”.

John Muir 1838-1914

John Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland, in 1838, in a building now preserved as a museum. There is John Muir Country Park in Dunbar. He was the third of eight children of Daniel Muir and Ann Gilrye. As a young boy, Muir became fascinated with the East Lothian landscape, and spent a lot of time wandering the local coastline and countryside. It was during this time that he became interested in natural history and the works of Scottish naturalist Alexander Wilson.

Although he spent the majority of his life in America, Muir never forgot his roots in Scotland. He held a strong connection with his birthplace and Scottish identity throughout his life. He greatly admired the works of Thomas Carlyle and poetry of Robert Burns; he was known to carry a collection of poems by Burns during his travels through the American wilderness.

In 1849, Muir's family immigrated to the United States, starting a farm near Portage, Wisconsin, called Fountain Lake Farm. Muir's father found the Church of Scotland insufficiently strict in faith and practice, leading to their immigration and joined a congregation of the Campbellite Restoration Movement, called the Disciples of Christ.

Muir investigated the plant life of the Yosemite area and made field studies along the western flank of the Sierra on the distribution and ecology of isolated groves of Giant Sequoia. He made many trips to Alaska, as far as Unalaska and Barrow.

His countrymen owe him gratitude as the pioneer of their system of national parks. Muir valued nature for its spiritual and transcendental qualities. In one essay about the National Parks, he referred to them as "places for rest, inspiration, and prayers." He often encouraged city dwellers to experience nature for its spiritual nourishment.

In 1878, Muir's friends introduced him to Louisa Strentzel, daughter of a prominent physician and horticulturist with a 2,600-acre fruit orchard in Martinez, California. In 1880 Muir and Strentzel married. John Muir went into partnership with his father-in-law John and for ten years directed most of his energy into managing this large fruit farm. The house and part of the ranch are now the John Muir National Historic Site.

"As a dreamer and activist, his eloquent words changed the way Americans saw their mountains, forests, seashores, and deserts", said writer Gretel Ehrlich. He not only led the efforts to protect forest areas and have some designated as national parks, but his writings presented "human culture and wild nature as one of humility and respect for all life".

During his lifetime John Muir published over 300 articles and 12 books. Muir has been called the "patron saint of the American wilderness" and its

"archetypal free spirit". "

Muir believed that to discover truth, he must turn to what he believed were the most accurate sources. In his book, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (1913), he writes that during his childhood, his father made him read the Bible every day. Muir was able to study the plants and animals in an environment that he believed "came straight from the hand of God, uncorrupted by civilization and domestication". He came to believe that God was always active in the creation of life and thereby kept the natural order of the world."

Mountain Days, a 2000 musical by Craig Bohmier and Mary Bracken Phillips, celebrates Muir's life. The play *Thank God for John Muir*, by Andrew Dallmeyer is based on his life. California celebrates John Muir Day on April

*Congratulations and Happy Birthday
to those Celebrating their Birthday in*

July

Colin Partington

Colin Wilkinson

Andrew Watson

Paul William Robinson

Freda Laverick



August

Simon Watson

Jane Tomlin



KENDAL UNITARIAN CHAPEL

FUND RAISING APPEAL

AUTUMN 2022

THE SUDDEN COLLAPSE OF OUR SCHOOLROOM CEILING!



Please help us to restore the ceiling & roof
of this much loved historic Schoolroom Hall,
once a regular venue for so many people, clubs
and groups in the Kendal community.



KENDAL UNITARIAN CHAPEL

To find out more, and to make a donation,
please go to Kendal Unitarian Chapel website:
www.kendalunitarians.com
or scan the QR code.

If you can help, we thank you for your donation.

Restoring Unitarian heritage & serving the community at the heart of Kendal

Kendal

You may be aware that Kendal Unitarian Chapel was struck with disaster when the ceiling of their Schoolroom collapsed on 6th November 2022. This Schoolroom dates from 1882 and is listed as Grade II. They have struggled for over two years for permission to restore it by re-roofing the building and rebuilding the beautiful ceiling. They then discovered that the end gable wall was leaning over the adjacent flat-roofed building (which is not theirs), causing more problems. They intended to install solar panels and restore the ceiling glass.

They estimate that they may need £500,000 to complete the project. The Schoolroom is the only large open room in the Chapel complex and is important as a meeting place for their growing congregation. It is also a vital hub in the heart of the town centre open to the whole community, a place where many local groups meet: yoga classes, the U3A, charity fundraising events, wedding receptions, concerts and gigs; and it is a worship space for several faiths.

They have collected £11,200 in individual donations and from their home-made cakes and coffee mornings. They have other projects in the pipeline. They have received £21,000 in grants so far. They are continuing to apply to national trusts and foundations, to the local council and businesses. The Chapel Trust has allocated considerable funds. They are asking Unitarian Churches and chapels for help whether from the congregation or from individuals.

By cheque payable to Kendal Unitarian Chapel or direct to Cumberland Building Society A/c Kendal Unitarian Chapel Trust; sort code 16 52 21; A/c No 53287084,

Future of the Inquirer, 11 June 2025

It's hard to imagine British Unitarianism without *The Inquirer* magazine, but like literally every other British organisation these days, the prevailing economy it has to survive in isn't exactly kind and forgiving. It was therefore quite exciting to be invited to a 'Future of *The Inquirer*' online event, and reassuring for those of us who have hoped for some updates on what's happening.



There will be a full write-up in the July edition of *The Inquirer*, but here's some headlines for now, courtesy of Laura Autumn Cox and Kieren Mardle-Moss:

Finances: Kieren presented the good news that *The Inquirer* is in a healthy financial position, and donations are increasing.

Content: Laura stated that current editorial policy is to focus on accessibility, variety, and a diverse spread of authors and article topics. A style guide has been created for contributors to use.

Contributors: All budding writers are invited to contribute to *The Inquirer* and they don't have to be Unitarian; the editorial board is keen to welcome other views and build connections beyond the movement.

A surprise! *The Inquirer* has launched a brand-new creative competition! Details are in the June edition, and on the new Instagram page: [@theinquirer_mag](https://www.instagram.com/theinquirer_mag).

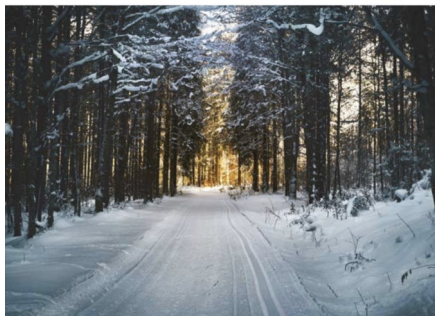
The discussions afterwards covered the range of topics in the magazine, details of the style guide, and the need to create an AI policy, which the editorial board plans to move forward with, much to the delight of yours truly, since it was me who brought it up.

I'm not opposed to AI, but I am firmly in favour of its careful and responsible use, and, above all, transparency about when it is used and how. If something is presented as the work of a human being, we need to be sure that it is – or, if not, how much of it is of AI origin. Indeed, in 2024 our national movement resolved that, among other parts of Resolution 1, our "[Unitarian] individuals and congregations to study AI, algorithms and their societal impact ... Unitarian bodies to host and / or facilitate wider societal and philosophical conversations".

Watch this space for more details, and for now, all seems promising!

Louise Reeve

(Written without the aid of any AI whatsoever. All mistakes entirely my own fault.)



In this issue...

The gifts of a year
The Better World Book Club
The Highways Centre and its
move to C/O status

www.inquirer.org.uk

**Seeing the wood
for the trees**

A journey into the great unknown comes
with its challenges...

The Inquirer is sponsoring
a creative competition and wants
your submissions!

Theme: Spirituality

What is spirituality to you?
What inspires your spiritual path?
How does spirituality show up in
your everyday life?

The Inquirer invites creatives
within the spiritual community to
develop prose, poetry, and artwork
on the theme of 'spirituality' across
three competition categories:

Prose – 1,500 words maximum.

Poetry – 500 words maximum.

Artwork – sent in a publishable PDF or .jpeg format.

Deadline: 1st September 2025

Stockton Unitarians Coffee Mornings

Saturday from 10.00am till 11.30am

Come and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits,
good conversation with a friendly welcoming group.



**"The noblest worship is to make yourself as good and as
just as you can." Socrates**

**Deadline for the next edition of Church News is the
Wednesday 27th August 2025**

Please send your contributions for the September/October 2025
edition to the Editor: Margaret Robinson

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

UniYouth Weekend "Going Underground"

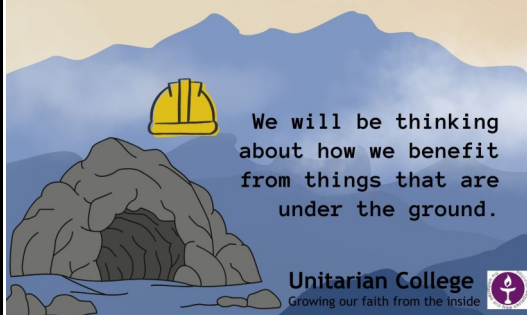
3rd-5th October 2025

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

Our new event called "UniYouth" welcomes children of all ages 7-14yo. They will share The Nightingale Centre with meals, excursions and worship, but will have separate programmes for two age groups: 7-11yo's with their parents/carers and unaccompanied 11-14yo's housed separately.

ALL UNDER 18'S ARE FREE OF CHARGE FOR FULL BOARD!

Accompanying parents/carers Full Board cost is £220.



UniYouth Weekend

A fun, residential, Unitarian experience for young people aged 7-14 years old at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow.

We will be walking, dancing, playing games, telling stories, planning and leading worship.

We will be thinking about how we benefit from things that are under ground.

We will run two separate programmes for two age groups. 7-11s with their parents/carers, and unaccompanied 11-14s. Meals, excursion and worship will be shared.

All young people will be accommodated in same-sex rooms with 11-14as housed separately from younger children.

SAFEGUARDING

7-11s must be accompanied by a responsible adult (parent, church member, etc) The chosen adult can bring up to 4 children. Adults must know all children in their care. All adults attending the weekend will have a current enhanced DBS check which has been sourced by the Unitarian College—specific to the event.

COSTS: Under 18s Full Board—FREE (Cost generously met by The Nightingale Centre) {aren't/Carer Full Board £220 Please ask your congregation or District to help with the cost.

To join us, book your place at Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

www.unitarian-college.org.uk

Dibble's Bridge 50th Anniversary

As one of the last survivors I attended The Dibbles Bridge 50th Anniversary Memorial Service at St Paul's Church, Thornaby-on-Tees, North Yorkshire, on Tuesday 27th 2025. The service was led by Fr John Swinhoe SSC and the sermon was read by The Rt Reverend Barry Hill, The Bishop of Whitby.

The service was to remember all those who had died in this terrible road accident and the names of the 33 women and 1 man whose lives were lost in the disaster were read out by the Mayor of Thornaby-on-Tees Glenn Eastrick. This was followed by a minute silence.

Following the service a brief blessing of the memorial tree and plaque donated by Thornaby Town Council, was held by the Bishop of Whitby inside the grounds of the St Paul's Church grounds before Mayor Glenn Eastick unveiled the memorial plaque at the base of the tree.

The plaque says "This tree was planted in 2025 by Councillor Glenn Eastrick the Mayor of Thornaby-on-Tees, on behalf of the people of our close knit community in affectionate memory of 32 ladies and coach driver, who perished at the Dibbles's Bridge in Yorkshire, in a road traffic accident on 27th May 1975. We also fondly remember those traumatised and injured survivors. Some of whom have since passed and are now resting in peace in the arms of God."

Then ,some people went on to lay floral tributes at the Dibbles bridge memorial stone, which is outside of Thornaby Town Hall in Mandale Road, Thornaby-on-

Tees.

Margaret Robinson

Photos of Margaret with Mayor, plaque and memorial stone are by Derek Smith



Church AGM

Stockton Unitarian Church Members please note that the Stockton Unitarians Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 6th July 2025, following the evening service



Photo
by Pixabay

Summer Solstice

On Saturday 21st June 2025, at about 03.48, the sun will rise and we will celebrate the Summer Solstice. I hope you may be able to go and witness the event and give thanks for the life and warmth that the sun brings to us. The sun feels close to us as we enjoy its heat. The skies are blue. Our spirits are lifted. Of course there is a lurking danger that the world is becoming too hot - while some websites say this is a precursor to a new ice age. Let us enjoy the sunshine but may it also be a reminder to live responsibly on this fickle planet of ours - which is made more fickle because of humankind's carelessness with its gifts. with best wishes tony mcneile



Uni-sing! A Zoom hymn singing group, with break out groups for a chat in the middle. For more information email Louise Rogers louise.rogers256@gmail.com

see [facebook.co/groups/ 687366168770017](https://facebook.co/groups/687366168770017)

Sessions: Saturdays 3.00pm (open 2.30pm) 5th and 19th July (No Uni-sing! 2nd and 16th August) 2025

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Our denomination is led by an Executive Committee (EC), elected by our congregation members across the country. The newly elected Executive Committee held their first meeting together from 31st May to 2nd June at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire - Sarah Benfield, John Bates, Zac Baker, Rev Stephanie Bisby and Rev Arek Malecki.

People are invited to join the first of the 'EC Update' Zoom meetings on Tuesday 15th July at 6.00pm, to hear from the EC and have a chance to be in conversation and ask any questions. [Zoom link](#) **Meeting ID 896 5273 3177** **Passcode 991041**

Key messages from this meeting are: Sarah Benfield was appointed as Convenor. We noted feedback that some people felt they had not had sufficient engagement on the process of the GA moving to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), and we take seriously the need for good communications between the GA and the wider movement. Following the membership passing the resolutions to move forward, the work to move to a CIO is now in execution phase. We expect the CIO to be established by the end of the year.

John Bates, Honorary Treasurer, gave an orientation to the new members on the GA's financial position, and the long-standing importance of legacy giving to support the health of the movement.

Sarah Benfield and Zac Baker remain as the GA's trustees, responsible for safeguarding, working with Gavin Howell, the GA's Safeguarding Officer. We are glad to hear that over 50 Unitarian bodies are now members of 31:8, and that there has been good uptake of the safeguarding training for trustees, as well as increasing participation in the GA's Safeguarding Network online meetings.

Nick Butler-Watts, the GA's Programme Manager joined by Zoom to give an update on the Innovation Fund. There have now been eight expressions of interest received, and a strong independent assessment panel has been recruited (made up of a mix of Unitarians and others) who will review the full applications that come in.

We conducted a skills audit of our current members, and reviewed the strengths and skill gaps, as well as a geographical assessment to inform our approach to co-opting new EC members. We will be approaching some candidates but also welcome applications (sending a CV and covering letter) from anyone who feels that they may wish to serve on the EC.



Photo from Fred Jordan who says it is a presentation to Mr McCormack. It is from around 1970/1 and I think it must be on him leaving Stockton Church. I recognize Mr Lees, Jack Sharp, Jimmy Lees, and Mike Tomlin making the presentation. It could be a very young Margaret Whitham (or was it still McArthur then) hiding on the left hand side. Do you know the other people?

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Address: Stockton Unitarian Centre, Vane Street,
Stockton-on-Tees, **TS18 1RF**

Church website: <http://stocktonunitarians.co.uk>

Church facebook: Unitarians in and around Stockton-on-Tees

Twitter now X: Stockton Unitarian Centre

Chairperson and Flower Secretary: Jean Watson - 01642 658376

Margaret Robinson - Secretary and Church News Editor
telephone: 01642 782219 mobile 07799 896452

email: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

3 Castle Dyke Wynd, Minerva Mews, Yarm, TS15 9DE

Worship Committee Co-ordinator: Margaret Whitham 01429 298641

Sunday Services for July and August 2025

Zoom link: 6680459646



Date	Time	Worship Leader
6th July	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
13th July	6.00pm	Christine Waler
20th July	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
27th July	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
3rd August	6.00pm	tba
10th August	6.00pm	tba
17th August	6.00pm	Rev Jeffrey Bowes
24th August	6.00pm	tba
31 August	6.00pm	tba
12 October	6.00pm	Geoff Levermore GA President (NUA w/e)

Offers to lead worship would be appreciated, please contact Margaret Whitham 01429 298641

If you would like to contribute to the flower fund or buy flowers in memory of a loved one and have your name added to the flower list please let Jean Watson know. 01642 658376

Flower Rota for July and August 2025

6th July	Flower fund
13th July	Mrs Smith & Mrs Fish
20th July	Gail Moore
27th July	Flower fund
3rd August	Margaret Whitham
10th August	Jeffrey Bowes
17th August	Josie Squires
24th August	Freda Laverick
31 August	Victor Ball
7th September	Margaret Kirk



Please note all services will be held in the church building.

Most services will also be transmitted via **Zoom**, in a hybrid service. Joining information for Zoom will be sent out through email by the Church Secretary

- Zoom: **6680459646**

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com