

# Stockton Unitarians



Photo of the **Well Dressing** at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire in August 2025.

The **200th Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railways** is being celebrated in Stockton on the 26th to the 28th September 2025.

**Fairtrade Fortnight** is also being celebrated in the UK from 22nd September to 5th

## Church News

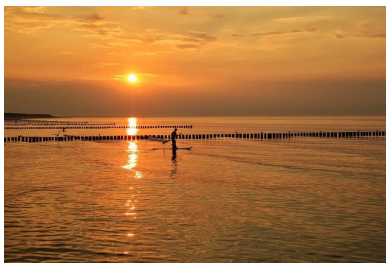
September/October  
2025



## Service held during July and August 2025

**On 6th July 2025 Rev Paul Walker led our worship on the theme of “A quiet pause”**

Paul’s service opened the service with playing Johann Sebastian Bach’s: “Jesu, joy of man’s desiring”.



The service continued without any hymns.

Between the reading of poetry and prose

Paul played Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony No 6. The readings were: Psalm 42 “As the deer pants for the water brooks”; “The Beachcomber” by Mike (George MacKay) Brown, a Scottish poet; “To a Butterfly” by William Wordsworth; From the Rubaiyat by Omar Khayyam “The moving finger writes; and having writ, moves on”; “Leisure” by William Henry Davis “What is this life if, full of care,”; Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest, “Pied Beauty” is a prayer to imperfection “Glory to God, for dappled things” Hopkins was a man who saw God in nature; “Adlestrop”, a poem by Edward Thomas inspired by his railway journey via Adlestrop, a Gloucestershire village in 1914; “Auguries of Innocence” by William Blake, “To see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower,”; “I am the Great Sun” by Charles Causley and closed with “Unhappy Birthday to Me” by Brian Bilston “It’s important to share”.

We had a congregation of eight and two people joined us via Zoom.

**On 13th July 2025 our worship leader was Christine Walker  
Christine’s theme was ‘On this Day’.**

On this day (13th July): James Cook set sail on the second voyage with HMS Resolution in 1772 from Plymouth; Donald Trump survived assassination in 2024; The 1st Football World Cup took place in Uruguay in 1930; The 1st Live Aid Concert happened in 1985 (50 years ago); The Hollywood sign was put up in 1923; Hari Krishna was founded in 1966.

Christine went on to say that we all remember certain historical moments during our lifetime eg the First Moon Landing (20 July 1969), the assassination of JF Kennedy (22 November 1963), the fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November 1989), and special moments of our own families or

community.

Live Aid two-venue benefit concert was held on July 13, 1985 in London and Philadelphia to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia, organised by Bob Geldorf and Midge Ure, this raised over £110 million. Bob wanted to send food to Ethiopia, money was needed for food and trucks (he asked for £1 million).

This concert was inspired by Michael Buerk's BBC report in 1984 on Ethiopia's famine and Dr Clarrie Bertschinger's (an Anglo-Swiss Nurse) work in Ethiopia. The famine affected 7.75 million people or 1/5th of the population of Ethiopia. Claire worked for the Red Cross and still volunteers in the Red Cross shop.



Christine went to this concert at Wembley in 1985, her boyfriend at that time, was helping to organise the concert. The show lasted 16 hours and tickets cost £25. The concert was broadcast worldwide.

In 1984 there was no social media or mobile phones, so people only got to know about the famine from the report on the News on radio and television.

There are still 10 million people still facing famine today in many countries around the world such as Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Palestine (Gaza Strip), Haiti, Yemen, Chad, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Somalia. The underlining causes are conflict, economic shock or climate change.

We had seven people in the chapel and one person joined us on Zoom.

Christine played "Let it be" by Paul McCartney, part of Michael Buerk's Ethiopia News report and "Who's going to take you home".

**On Sunday 20th July 2025 Rev Margaret Kirk led our Worship on the theme of "The Wide Horizon's Grander View"** What is our Unitarian Culture?

We sang "Life that maketh all things new", "We shall be strong and free",

“The secret pulse of freedom throbs” and “When our heart is in a holy place”.

Margaret’s readings were from “The Free Mind” writings of William Ellery Channing and words written 100 years later by James Luther Adams “I call that church free”. Also Margaret read the story “Two Questions” the re-telling of a story by Leo Tolstoy from “One hundred stories from around the world”

We had six people in chapel and one person joined us on Zoom.

**Rev Paul Walker led our worship on Sunday 27th July 2025 on the theme of St Paul — The Founder of Christianity.**

Paul used two readings from Paul’s 2nd letter to the Galatians. Galatia was a huge Roman province in Turkey.

Paul taught that repentance and faith were all that was needed in order to receive God’s forgiveness and the gift of life. But Paul met great opposition from the Jewish teachers, they wanted to keep all the old laws and customs. Paul was a great believer in equality all are equal, men and women, rich and poor, slave and slaver, Greek and Jew etc.

Paul told his followers “Christ has set us free. Stand, then, as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again.”

We sang “As we sing”, “Praise the great and famous”, and “Conscience guide our footsteps”. We had seven people in chapel and one person on Zoom.



**Sunday 3rd August 2025** The annual Whitby Trip took place on a sunny Sunday 3rd August 2025, when Unitarians from Whitby, York, Stockton, Scarborough and Newcastle gathered to hear Claire Lee's afternoon service on 'Looking for Truth Behind the Words' in the atmospheric Flowergate Chapel in Whitby. The chapel looks a little different with the back screen removed and the floor levelled, it's more accessible and much easier for visitors to get around inside. Claire led a thought-provoking service on truth and wisdom, with music from the wonderful Whitby Community Group. We followed up with home-made cookies and coffee. It was wonderful to see everyone again!



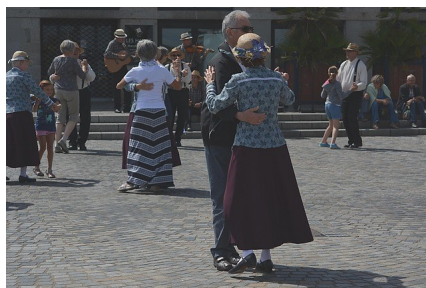
Louise Reeve

**Sunday 10th August 2025** NO service was held

**Sunday 17th August 2025 Rev Jeffrey Bowes led our service**

Jeffrey spoke about dancing, Strickley Come Dancing, ballroom dancing, dancing in the bible etc.

Jeffrey read from Exodus Chapter 15, about Moses leading the people out of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea.



The meaning of the Hebrew word translated Red Sea is 'sea of reeds' In the story of the exodus it refers to the area of lakes and marshes between the head of the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea (the Suez Canal area),

"but Israel had passes through the sea on dry ground. And Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took up her tambourine, and all followed her, dancing to the sound of tambourines; and Miriam sang.

Jeffrey also read the Joyce Grenfell poem/song "Old Tyme Dancing", about her neighbour Mrs Fanshaw and going dancing together "stately as two galleons, we sail across the floor"

We sang "Sovereign and transforming Grace", "Faith of the larger liberty", "Mysterious presence, source of all" and "We would be one".



I received this letter from Ann Spencer (nee Poultney) who regularly receives the Church News by post.

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TS103RU

3/7/25

Dear Margaret,

I was very interested in an article in the church magazine. The photo sent in by Fred Jordan brought back a lot of memories of Rev McCormack. He conducted my marriage ceremony in March 1968 and my son's christening in March 1969, both at Middlesbrough Unitarian church. I believe he left to go back to Ireland in 1970 and was sadly missed by the congregations. I too recognise Jack Sharp, Mr Lees and Mike Tomlin. In the far left corner it could be Dorothy Walters from the Middlesbrough church and her sister Mrs Bestford possibly on the right hand side next to Mrs McCormack -

yours truly  
Ann Spencer  
nee Poultney

Photos from Pixabay, Louise Reeve and Margaret Robinson

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

***September***

*Jessica Eva Dodds*

***October***

*Melody Dixon Oliver*

*Gemma Hutton (Watson)*

*Michael Unwin*

*David Warhurst*

*Rhys Hutton*

*Josie Squires*



**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.



**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](mailto:louise.rogers256@gmail.com)

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

**Sessions: Saturdays 3.00pm (open 2.30pm)**

**6th & 20th September, 4th, 18th October and 1st November 2025**

**Deadline for the next edition of Church News is the  
Wednesday 29th October 2025**

Please send your contributions for the November /December 2025  
edition to the Editor: Margaret Robinson

[margaretrobinson81@gmail.com](mailto:margaretrobinson81@gmail.com)

## The Future of GA Zette – July 2025

The GA Zette, which has been covering the General Assembly Annual Meetings since the 1960s, is facing some challenges with its traditional printed format. Louise Reeve and David Warhurst carried out a survey, then held a discussion at the Annual Meetings in April 2025 to see how people feel about it, whether there was a desire to retain it, and explore future formats that could be more sustainable.

### What the future holds

Both the survey and the meeting agreed that our focus should be on going digital while retaining the option of paper copies in order to keep it accessible. Given that reporting on the Annual Meetings was the main thing that respondents said they valued, we will look to prioritise this in future. Everyone at the meeting agreed on the need to maintain good editorial quality, and we hope that involving the *Inquirer* more in producing the *Zette* could help with this.

### What we learned from the survey

**People know the GA Zette:** 87% of respondents are familiar with it, with 81% having attended past meetings and 66% attending the 2025 meetings.

**Meeting coverage is important:** 80% of people value catching up on missed meetings and workshops, and 69% appreciate reports on Annual Meeting events and decisions. The 2025 'Roving Reporter' live blog was well received, helping attendees and absentees stay informed.

**Digital is the way to go:** 62% prefer daily summaries mostly online, accessible via smartphones or tablets, with print editions available on request for accessibility.

**Community vibes:** Participants love the Zette's role in fostering community, especially for newcomers, and want to keep this connection.

**Relevance concerns:** Some feel the Zette's shorter meeting coverage reduces depth, risking a shift from engaging commentary to formal reporting.

**Print model is unsustainable:** Overnight production of printed copies is not feasible; moving to online with print options and multiple 'roving reporters' is recommended.)

**Editorial oversight needed:** Future formats require editors to ensure content quality and consistency, with plans to recruit multiple editors and engage contributors for live summaries.

We'll pick this up in early 2026, and look to recruit more reporters and set up an online home for the Zette. We would love to hear from anyone interested in getting involved in this, as a reporter, an editor, or in any other role

Louise Reeve

Note: The author used Microsoft Co-Pilot to assist in summarising the survey findings.



## Northern Pride, 19 July 2025

A highlight of the city's calendar, Northern Pride 2025 took place over Saturday 19th - Sunday 20th July. As in previous years, it was a slightly damp affair, although unlike in previous years, the location was Newcastle City Centre rather than the Town Moor and Exhibition Park. Also unlike previous years, we were marching down John Dobson Street due to the rather large holes littering Northumberland Street. Before all that, though, it was time for the traditional Pride Prayer Service led by Rev. Kai Millar at St James' URC church, for which we were happy to be joined by Rev. Tom McCready and Brigitte McCready from Doncaster Unitarians. Jane Simpson from our congregation was among the readers during a powerful and uplifting service, ending with a Glitter Blessing and some excellent singing! And followed by some cake and buns.



After that, it was time to start the march! Unfortunately, it was also time to start the downpour, but no-one let that put them off. Having collected the flag and flagpole, I headed over to the Civic Centre to join the Pride march gathering on Ceremonial Way. Whilst there are no official sections in the march, it's not uncommon for similar organisations to gather together, so I joined St James URC, Northern Lights MCC, and various other inclusive-minded churches to wave our banners and wait for the start. Finally, we were off, possibly to the relief of the person behind me; our flag is over a metre long, and whilst the flag pole is 3m long, if you're not careful with the angle you can end up with the person behind you, inadvertently wearing the flag!

*Louise Reeve*

### TEESSIDE PLACES (Anagrams)

1. LORD OF BIKE
2. NORTH PUNE
3. ROMANT
4. NON ROT
5. THURBARN
6. STONE
7. FRIED FAIL
8. NORTH PILE
9. ALMACK
10. WARD CHIK
11. SCOT TONK
12. WENT NOW
13. CART PORK
14. ROYBEMS
15. NORTH ACRE
16. RAY WYND
17. NIL HOT
18. LET ON
19. INTO STAN
20. NOT NORTH
21. LEMON THING
22. DESIRE SEAT
23. BOXER DIG
24. BEST LOLY
25. DRIVE SIRE
26. GROT WARH

Answers in November/December issue

Prize for most correct answers

**September** brings us: Autumn, Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Jeans for Genes Week, Epilepsy Action National Doodle Day, Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning, International Literacy Day, International Day of Peace, World Alzheimer's Day, Fairtrade Fortnight

**October** brings us: British Summer Time ends, Hallowe'en, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, SANDS Baby Loss Awareness Week, National Braille Week, World Teachers' Day, World Mental Health Day, World Sight Day, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Navratri (Hindu), Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement),

### Fairtrade Fortnight 22nd September to 5th October 2025

Once again the UK will be celebrating the difference we can make when we choose Fairtrade and campaign as part of the global Fairtrade movement.

Fairtrade works with farming co-operatives, businesses and to make trade fairer. A world in which trade is based on fairness so that producers earn secure and sustainable livelihoods.



Fred is correct in saying that it was taken when Mr McCormack was leaving Stockton to take up ministry in Ireland.

People left to right

Margaret Whitham, Mrs Cook (Freda's mum), Christine Canning (McLaren), Rev Hugh McCormack, Mike Tomlin, Mrs McCormack, Fred Phillips, Mrs Lees, Jimmy Lees, Jack Sharp, and Mr Lees.

The only person I would put a question mark to is Fred Phillips not sure when he died.

Margaret Whitham

### ***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 September and October 2025

**Zoom link: 6680459646**



Date	Time	Worship Leader
7th September	6.00pm	Margaret Whitham "The Sea"
14th September	6.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
21st September	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
28th September	6.00pm	Diana Bebbby
5th October	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
12th October	6.00pm	Geoff Levermore GA President (NUA w/e)
19th October	6.00pm	Barry Thomas
26th October	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
2nd November	3.00pm	Membership service

**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 September and October 2025

7th September	Margaret Kirk
14th September	Mrs Powley
21st September	Mrs Josie Squires
28th September	Paul Walker
5th October	Mrs Smith & Mrs Fish
12th October	Mrs Jean Watson
19th October	Mrs Jane Tomlin
26th October	Gail Moore
2nd November	Hazel & David Warhurst



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](mailto:margaretrobinson81@gmail.com)**