

Stockton Unitarians

2024 Harvest
service



Goods collected
for The Mary
Thompson Fund

Church News
November/December
2024



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



October

Gemma Kulton

November

Marcus Slaven

Jeane Watson

December

Elaine Dodds

Alexander Slaven

Richard Whitham



Good King Wenceslas went to an Italian restaurant and ordered a pizza.
The waiter asked, "Do you want your usual? Deep pan, crisp and even?"

Knit 'n' Natter Group meet on alternative
Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm. Bring
along your crafts, knitting, crochet, sewing and
enjoy a cup of tea and a chat whilst you work.
£1 contribution for the tea/coffee biscuits.
**Dates: 29th October, 12th & 26th November
and 10th December 2024.**



**Coffee Mornings every Saturday
10.00am to 11.30am**

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



Fall, Leaves, Fall (1846) by Emily Bronte

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day!
Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.



Autumn Fires by Robert Louis Stevenson

In the other gardens
And all up the vale,
From the autumn bonfires
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over
And all the summer flowers,
The red fire blazes,
The grey smoke towers.



Sing a song of seasons!
Something bright in all!
Flowers in the summer,
Fires in the fall!

November brings us: All Saints' Day, Bonfire Night, Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, St Andrew (Scotland), Pet Diabetes Month, Children in Need Appeal Night, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (Sikh), Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (Sikh), Birth of Bab (Baha'i).

December brings us: World's AIDS Day, Advent, Human Rights Day, Winter Solstice, Shortest Day, Diwali (Hindu), Christmas Day, Boxing Day, St Stephen's Day, Hanukkah 1st day (Jewish), New Year's Eve.

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 2024 Saturdays - 2nd and 16th November, 7th and 21st December at 3.00pm. Open at 2.30pm

Sunday services reviews for September and October 2024

On the 1st September 2024 the Worship leader was Diana Bebb, theme of

“Autumn and Harvest” Diana opened the service with Mikhail Pletnev paying Tschaikovsky’s “September: The Hunt”. We sang “For the fruits of all



creation”, “Gather the Spirit”, “Bring flowers to our altar”, “From the crush of wealth and power” and “Lady of the seasons’ laughter”. Ben read Susan Efrid's poem “The Fruit and Vegetable Stand” and the other readings were poems and talks about various vegetables, during which we each held and looked at different vegetables. There are over 5,000 varieties of potatoes in the world, the original ones coming from the Americas. Squash goes back 11,000 years and there are numerous varieties. Diana read a poem by Marge Piecy “Attack of the squash people”. This poem’s satire is directed at the consumer of modern society which encourages people to buy and consume more than they need. A Spanish poem (in English) about onions (which are easy to grow). During the collection of the goods for The Mary Thompson Fund the music “English Country Garden” was played. We need to care for and nourish the soil, so that good food can be grown. There is enough food grown in the world to feed everyone if we cherish the planet, feed and rest the soil. Other music was Paul Reade’s “Victorian Kitchen Garden” played by Emma on her clarinet and “Into the Unknown”. We had one person on Zoom and five in the congregation.

On the 8th September 2024 the Worship leader was Rev Margaret Kirk, theme “A Tree”

We sang the hymns “Gather the Spirit”; “Spirit of earth, root, stone and tree”; “Wide Green World” and “Spirit of Life”. Margaret's opening and closing words were by Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian polymath. Her readings were “The Laughing Tree” by Kent Nerburn from a book



Small Graces and “The Music of the Maple” by Tahmima Anam. A book commissioned by The Woodland Trust. Margaret spoke about her favourite trees, particularly a Birch tree and asked members of the congregation about their favourite trees.

On the 15th September 2024 the Worship leader was Rev Victor Ball

We sang “The Tides of the Spirit”, “The Spirit Conquers All”, “Look at the Hillside”, and “We limit not the truth of God”.

With 10 in the congregation and one on Zoom

On the 22nd September 2024 the Worship leader was Rev Paul Walker

The theme was “Who am I?”

Reading was “**We wear the Mask**” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while

We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,

We wear the mask!

In Venice they hid behind their masks to
conceal who they were.

Paul played two pieces of music “Take a good look at my face” by Bob Dylan, and “You Ought to Hear Me Cry” by Willie Nelson.

There are seven ages of man, and the most honest are infant and the last. We get children to wear a mask by teaching them how to behave. Then they rebel against adult rules in adolescence, but paradoxically conforming with their peers. We hide our problems, so do not show the real us. We have hidden strengths that no one else knows about.



On 29th September the Worship leader was Vince McCully (President of the General Assembly 2023-2024)

The theme was “Does Unitarianism have a future?”

We sang “We sing now together”, “Now thank we all our God”, “O worship the King”, “Immortal Invisible” and “Lord as we part”.

One prayer was: “An American Indian Prayer” by Lakota Chief Yellow Lark.

Vince read a story, (from Harmony, A treasury of Chinese wisdom), with the help of his friends, about a small kingdom called Chu where the King and his court frittered away their time and money; but did not see how the kingdom’s people suffered. Zhuan Zin,

one of the ministers, eventually got the King to learn from his mistakes, saved the kingdom which once again grew prosperous and stable.

Vince had two readings “Freedom” from the prophet by Khalil Gibran, and “Kalama Sutta” The Buddha’s Charter for free Inquiry.

NB If anyone would like to read the full service, I have a copy available.



On the 6th October 2024 Christine Walker led our worship, which involved a meditation observing our surroundings from where we were sitting. We sang “Core of silence” and “Name unnamed”.

On the 13th October 2024 the Worship leader was Rev Victor Ball

We sang “Gather Us In”, “Prayer for Strength”, “Life of Ages, Richly Poured”, “Break not the Circle” and “Song of Peace”. With seven in the congregation

On the 20th October 2024 the Worship leader was Rev Paul Walker
Theme “Luke’s little summer”

We had a congregation in chapel of 8 and 4 people on Zoom

Any spell of quiet, dry weather starting on this day (around 18th October) has its origins in folk lore based on the Feast of St Luke.

Although he is the patron saint of physicians, surgeons, artists and butchers, his name has traditionally been linked to St Luke’s little summer.

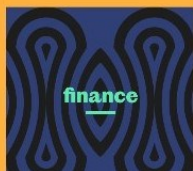
For centuries farmers must have noticed a period of better weather at the autumn harvest, but the term Indian Summer is recent and refers to Native Americans gathering their harvest (corn on the cob) later than in Britain.

We sang “The ceaseless flow of endless time”, “Look to the hillside”, “How wonderful this world of thine”, and “Earth is a gift of God’s creation”.



This church exists to:

- Promote a free and inquiring Religion through worship and celebration
- Serve God and humanity in deeds of love and justice
- Honour the Liberal Christian tradition and remember the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth
- Affirm our living heritage, learning from the insights of all humanity
- Respect and cherish the living earth and the universe of which we are part
- Uphold the right of civil and religious liberty worldwide
- Encourage liberal religious people to come together without the constraints of creeds and dogmas, to share their experiences and to express their faith in their chosen way.



Congregational Support Toolkit is Live

On 9 September 2024, Unitarians from across the UK gathered online, to view the new Congregational Support Toolkit. Hosted by Simon Bland, Liz Slade and Lizzie Kingston-Harrison, the Toolkit replaces the old and much-loved 'Help is at Hand' guidebook for Unitarian Administrators. Covering everything from employment policies for ministers, and staff, to charity law and copyright issues, it's a necessary guide for those of us who run our congregations, as our resources have often diminished, whilst at the same time the complexity of charity law and other issues facing us has increased.

Those present discussed the Toolkit, offered feedback on its layout, and suggested content we wanted to see. As ever, we had a wide-ranging discussion about issues we face. One topic, perhaps beyond the scope of the Toolkit, but very important, was the need for exploring what 'Ministry without Ministers' looks like, given that many of our congregations do not, and cannot have, a minister. How do we minister to each other and our communities? Perhaps that is our next challenge! Thanks to all those involved in creating the Toolkit, it looks set to be a valuable resource.

Update - from Lizzie: "The Congregational Support Toolkit" is now live! <https://toolkit.unitarian.org.uk/>. This ever-growing resource is where you will find many tools to support your congregation, from document templates to "best practices" to current stipend rates for ministers. We hope you will find this toolkit useful. If you have any suggestions for new content, please get in touch: info@unitarian.org.uk".

Louise Reeve

Unitarian Administrators Meeting

On 12 September 2024, Unitarian Administrators from across the UK gathered for our second 'Unitarian Administrators' meeting, although our WhatsApp group has been busy in between this and the first meeting in August. Whilst this might not sound like the most riveting title, in truth it is something that many of us have wanted for some time, particularly those in more remote or isolated congregations without a large district or other Unitarian congregations nearby to share discussions and good practice with. The group aims to support and learn from how each of us runs our congregations, and has covered topics including how to sell or rent out your building, whether charities can donate to other charities, and how to set up a Zoom livestream without having the video quality make everyone involved look like a zombie (fluorescent lighting flatters no-one!). It's a much appreciated new initiative, and hopefully part of a much-needed realignment of our movement towards the needs of the modern era, not those of previous generations. Thanks to all involved. Louise Reeve

Belated greetings for the autumn equinox

I have spent the weekend with the Unitarians at Belper. This is the prayer I wrote for the service:

In our prayer let us be aware of the balance in nature and in our lives. The autumn equinox is upon us, a time of equal daylight and equal darkness. The energy of the summers growth is in decline. The leaves are starting to turn, the grain harvest is being gathered in. Those who worship will be celebrating their harvest festivals, giving thanks for the abundance of the earth. Moods are turning towards autumn and a time for reflection, remembering the highlights of the summer, the highs and lows of sun and rain. Reflecting on the prospect of autumn and the coming winter, how we will face the challenges of dark evenings, picking up hobbies, learning new things in classes, planning the year beyond.

We acknowledge the changes in the cycle of the natural year. Let us reflect too on our own life journeys. We too have summers of growth and fulfilments and we too have times of change, times of transition from activity to planning for reflection and rest. The cycle is annual and the cycle is also life long. Let us rejoice in life. Rejoice in its times of growth and harvest, rejoice in the times of transition from growth to harvest to rest. Reflect within our own beings. We are not machines in perpetual motion. We are spiritual beings also governed by the energy of the sun and nature. We have highs and lows, times of action, times of rest and times of reflection. Reflect too that within each of us is the spiritual soul that's loves this world with its seasons and its changes, and how we have within us the passion to make it all beautiful and balanced.

Tony McNeile

The Gardeners Hymn

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.

But what we never mention, though gardeners know it's true,
Is when He made the goodies, He made the baddies too.

Chorus: All things spray and swatable, disasters great and small,
All things paraquatable, The Lord God made them all -

The green fly on the roses, the maggots in the peas,
Manure that fills our noses, He also gave us these. **Chorus**

The fungus on the goose0gogs, the club root on the greens,
The slugs that eat the lettuce and chew the aubergines. **Chorus**

The drought that kills the fuchsias, the frost that nips the buds,
The rain that drowns the seedlings, the blight that hits the spuds. **Chorus**

The midges and the mosquitoes, the nettles and the weeds,
The pigeons in the green stuff, the sparrows on the seeds. **Chorus**

The fly that gets the carrots, the wasp that eats the plums,
How black the gardener's outlook, though green may be his thumbs.
Chorus

But still we gardeners labour midst vegetables and flowers,
And pray what hits our neighbours' will somehow bypass ours'. **Chorus**

Contributed by Joan Partington



Handing over the Silverware – 5 September 2024

One of Newcastle Unitarians' more interesting – and valuable – inheritances from our forebears is a set of silverware, which we think was used for Communion:

- 2 silver cups
- 2 silver salvers
- 1 silver jug

The items belonged to Rev. George Harris, one of the most prominent leaders of our congregation and our minister during the years 1845 – 1859. He was responsible for our formal name, the Church of the Divine Unity.



We also inherited silver 'coins of the realm', dating from 1852, which were located under the old New Bridge Street church's foundation stones during building works in the 1950s – most likely during construction of the City Library (the building prior to the glass building which stands there now).

As we no longer have anywhere to display them, the trustees pondered what to do, and decided we would like to gift them to Newcastle City Council, as a mark of the long-standing relationship between the Council and the Unitarian congregation. The connection between Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians and Newcastle City Council goes back to our very earliest days as a congregation. Our historical records state that:

"...in August 1669, the town sergeant [of Newcastle upon Tyne] broke up a meeting at Rev. Richard Gilpin's house (near where the Hanover Square Chapel later stood). The information laid before the town magistrates named Richard Gilpin, William Durant, Henry Leaver and Richard Pringle as the preachers. Also present were four past sheriffs, four ex-mayors, one future mayor, some of the aldermen, the town's physician, the town surveyor, and about thirty other well-to-do burgesses, with, in some cases, their wives. (No wonder the magistrates had been reluctant to enforce the law!)"

At this time, the Act of Uniformity in 1662 prescribed by law the Protestant

faith as practised by the Church of England as the only lawful form of worship. Any clergy who had not sworn an oath that they would only conduct worship in the manner prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer could not legally lead a congregation; they became known as 'Nonconformist' and some of them, including our founders, later became known as Unitarian. In 1672, King Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgences which suspended the laws against nonconformists, and allowed some of them to obtain licences to preach.

Sometime later, a prominent member of the congregation, James Losh Senior, was appointed as the Honorary Recorder of Newcastle (the most senior Civil and Criminal Judge) in 1828. Another member of our congregation in the 1880s, Councillor Joseph B. Ellis, was the Mayor of the city, and would later become the first Lord Mayor of the city. More recently, one of our trustees, Eleanor Broad, was the Deputy Lady Mayor in 1960.

Newcastle City Council already has an impressive collection of silverware in the city's '[Silver Gallery](#)', and the Lord Mayor's office was happy to accept the gift. On 5 September 2024, three trustees – Louise, Brian, and David – visited the Lord Mayor, Cllr Rob Higgins to hand over the items. Over coffee and cake, we discussed the items' history, the long history of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the future of our congregation. The Lord Mayor suggested the items might go on display at the Mansion House – the former home of Newcastle's Lord Mayors, now used for civic functions – as the Silver Gallery is running out of room! We agreed we were happy about this, and that we hope that there can be a future ceremony to unveil them when a display space is found. We will keep everyone posted!

Louise Reeve



If you want to know how to change the world with your purse, come along to the Unitarian Women's Group Conference in September 2025. Dorothy Haughton will be sharing her thoughts on how to shop ethically.

Unitarian Women's Group Conference

Friday 5th to Sunday 7nd SEPTEMBER 2025

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow



Changing the world with your purse
shop ethically shop green shop fair shop right

Women of all ages are welcome to this weekend of friendship

We will explore the theme through workshops and discussion.

The conference will be facilitated by **Dorothy Haughton**.

Talk Think Listen Laugh

To book contact Margaret at margaretrobinson81@gmail.com or
01642 782219 or 07799 896452

Remember everyone – book early to ensure a place



If you enjoy singing or playing an instrument in a small ensemble this

Unitarian Music Society

Summer Conference

8th -11th August 2025

Nightingale Centre
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire



Folk Songs Forever!



Contact - Margaret Robinson - UMS Secretary - margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

CHURCH DIRECTORY

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

Church email: mail@stocktonunitarians.org.uk

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 07799896452

email: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

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

Worship Committee Co-ordinator: Margaret Whitham 01429 298641

Weather the storms in your life, for calm will inevitably follow.

There is light in every situation; open your eyes and let it pull you out of even the darkest places.

Try something new every day, and everyday your world will get bigger and bigger.

A bad judgement should not stop you in your tracks; it is merely an obstacle on the path to your goal. Step around it and keep going forward.

**Deadline for the next edition of Church News is the
Saturday 28th December 2024.**

Please send your contributions for the January/February 2025
edition to the Editor: Margaret

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

Sunday Services for 2024

Zoom link: 6680459646



Date	Time	Worship Leader
3rd November	3.00pm	Hazel & David Warhurst
10th November	3.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
17th November	3.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
24th November	3.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
1st December	3.00pm	Tree Dressing & Gift service
8th December	3.00pm	Human Rights service
15th December	3.00pm	Carol service Rev Victor Ball
22nd December	3.00pm	Sing the Season
29th December	No service	
5th January 2025	3.00pm	Bring and Share 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

27th October	Gail Moore
3rd November	Margaret Kirk
10th November	Hazel & David Warhurst
17th November	Jean Watson
24th November	Flower Fund
1st December	Pat Wilkinson
8th December	Mrs Smith & Mrs Fish



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