

Stockton Unitarians



May brings us the Coronation of King Charles III and a Bank holiday, Pentecost and a Spring Bank Holiday. Also World Laughter Day, World Biscuit Day and Star Wars Day

June brings us Trinity Sunday, Father's Day, the Summer Solstice, Church Membership service and the Church AGM.

Church News

May/June 2023



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

March

Elisha Hutton

May

Hazel Warhurst

June

Jeffery Bowes

Jaynie Dixon-Oliver

Paul Walker

Victor Ball



*Congratulations to Gemma
Hutton and Michael Hall
on their Engagement.
Gemma is the daughter of Jean
Watson*

*Congratulations to Paul and Jennie
Robinson on the birth of their son Erick
Cocidius in March, a brother for Aaron
and Arthur. Grandson for Margaret
Robinson*



You have the right to choose your own path. Remember every day that the world is full of opportunity to make your life what you want it to be.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Josie Jobson who gained first prize in the Cha Cha and Quick Step at a recent Ballroom Dancing competition held in The Whitby Pavilion. All the Jobson and Whitham family are very proud of her.



Dates for your Diary

Knit 'n' Natter Group meet on alternative Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm. Bring along your crafts, knitting, crochet and enjoy a cup of tea and a chat whilst you work.



£1 contribution for the tea/coffee biscuits. **Dates:**
2nd, 16th and 30th May; 13th and 27th June; 11 July 2023.

Coffee Mornings every Saturday 10.00am to 11.30am

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



Uni-sing! A Zoom hymn singing group, on alternate **Saturday** afternoons at **3.00pm**, 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
Sessions: 13th May (Margaret's Whitham and Robinson), 20th May, 3rd June, 17th June 2023 at 3.00pm

Appeasing their gods
Whitby Gazette 23rd March 2023
The Miracle of Spring

As I write this the sun is shining. Today it's warm outside even without a coat on; the days are lengthening and I'm reminded that the old English word for Lent meant precisely that – lengthening: days feel longer; light remains until early evening; spring seems to be seriously on its way.

In the long distant past, and after enduring the darkness of winter, communities feared that the sun would never shine again. They understood little about seasonal cycles and lived with the profoundest of all fears that the unyielding cold and darkness of winter meant that the gods were punishing them. That was a belief that lingered for hundreds of years and so those gods had to be appeased, even by offering them human sacrifices.

But now most of us know enough to believe that the sun will shine again and that life will return to the land: Spring restores our belief in the likelihood, if not the certainty, that we don't live in a wasteland constantly stricken by ill fate though we know natural disaster can still strike and have a devastating effect as we witnessed from the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

The Spring Equinox on 21st March heralded the beginning of spring. In the Christian tradition Christ is reborn at Easter time; in the ancient pagan traditions there are numerous gods of rebirth. In Greek mythology, Persephone embodied Spring when she returned from her 6 months in the underworld and became the symbol for new life, especially the new growth of the grain harvest. The rebirth of Spring feels like miracle enough for many of us: days of light and sunshine and colour: birds in song, trees coming into bud, a warm sense of wellbeing. Rebirth can take many forms but always, always it is the message that life and love are irrepresible.

Margaret Kirk

Review of services 2023

5th March Rev Paul Walker “What is a nation?”

The following hymns were sung 198 HFL The Healing of the Nations, 191 SYF We have a Dream, 128 SYF Our World is One World, 65 HFL O God our help in Ages Past.. If you look at the world from space there are no visible borders between countries, often only rivers or seas. Country borders are not usually straight lines, except in Africa where countries have been broken up.. A congregation of 6 in-person and 2 on Zoom.



12th March Rev Margaret Kirk “Homeland”

Hymns were 16 SYF Captive voices cry for freedom; 254 HFL Let us wander where we will and 226 HFL Song of Peace. With readings from Homelands by Timothy Garton-Ash and By the rivers of Babylon. The question was asked “Where is your homeland?” A congregation of 8 in-person and one on Zoom.

19th March “Mothering Sunday” Worship Group

Margaret Whitham, Jean Watson, Margaret Robinson and Hazel Warhurst

The service opened with words from Kahill Gibran, there was a prayer for women in slavery by Cliff Reed and the Mother’s version of the Lord’s Prayer. The reading were “Why God made Mothers”, Families are for Learning”, a meditation by Richard Gilbert and the hymn Praise God for Mothers. The congregation were invited to light a candle and make contributions about mothers.



There was a congregation of 10 in chapel and 3 people on Zoom.

The Mothering Sunday service ended with this poem.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Happy Mother's Day to everyone:
Mums, Dads, Daughters, Sons.
We're all related to mothers
and there are some special ones.

Some who take on a mothering role
are not related through birth
but love as much as any mother could.
That type of love sustains our earth.

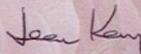
Some men take on a dual role,
as "stay-at-home" Dads they excel,
which gives mothers opportunities
to have an outside career as well.

Adoptive parents are special,
they open their home and heart,
providing a child with a loving bond
and a family in which they are part.

Mothering is tender, loving care,
a strong desire to guide and protect,
to keep their children safe from harm.
Mothers of all kinds deserve respect.

Happy Mother's Day

Jean Kay



26th March Margaret Robinson “Journeys”

We had readings “Song of the Open Road” by Walt Whitman, “Seeking Mercy, Seeking Home by Erika A Hewitt and prayers by Linda Hart and Tess Baumberger.. We sang hymns from the purple book 42 From the light of days remembered, 87 Leave behind your bags and baggage, 186 We are travellers on a journey, One more step along the world and Blue Boat Home.



For many reasons, people depart. They leave home - because of war or natural disasters to seek refuge from danger and uncertainty. The Bible describes many journeys both in the Old and New Testaments. People also go on pilgrimages, both spiritually or to visit places which they find peace or closure. The congregation were asked to make a contribution as to where they might go on a pilgrimage or a place that means a great deal to them. There was a congregation of 6 in-person and 4 on Zoom.

“May the hard road you travel include spaces of rest and security, May you know your inherent worth and dignity every day of your journey.” words by Rev Eric Cherry.

2nd April ”Friendship” Unfortunately Christine Walker was not able to be with us on this morning. As there were only five people present we sang a couple of hymns, discussed friendships and experiences of being welcomed or not when visiting other Unitarian congregations. Leading us to think about how welcoming are we to visitors.

9th April Rev Victor Ball EASTER

We had a congregation of seven (with two visitors) and two on Zoom. Victor talked about resurrection and rebirth. We sang, 75 God of Ages and of Nations, 105 Now in the Tomb is Laid, 46 Breath on Me Breath of God, 109 Life’s Rebirth.



16th April 2023 at 6.00pm Charity service for “Butterfly Giving”.

Jean Watson led the service and presented the cheque, for £550, to Hannah Larkin (founder of the charity). Hannah told us about the charity and how they support Teenage Cancer. Thank you to everyone who helped to raise this money.



To Margaret & everyone at Stockton Unitarian

I just wanted to say thank you so much for choosing Butterfly Giving as your charity of the year. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. Your support will enable us to be there for more young people who are diagnosed with cancer and help to create smiles during a very difficult time for families. I really can't thank you enough for your kindness.

Love from
Hannah
Butterfly Giving x



Photos of card from Hannah, wording above. Jean presenting the cheque to Hannah,

Worship Group next meeting Wednesday 3rd May 2023 at 10.30am at church

Church Council next meet on Saturday 13th May 2023 at 11.00am at church

NUA Committee next meet on Wednesday 28th June 2023 at 7.00pm via Zoom

News of Alan Wilkinson and family

With a borrowed wheelchair Colin and I were able to get Alan out of his room to acquaint himself with his surroundings. Here we are with him on the terrace at Elton Hall Care Home. He also played a few tunes on the piano in the lounge which was dreadfully out of tune and sounded like a honkey tonk piano, but it was music to my ears. Better still, Alan made a much better effort at standing up from the chair in his room to get in the wheelchair and with the aid of the Zimmer frame to manoeuvre himself into it. His blood pressure also seems to have stopped dropping like a stone when sitting upright in a chair. Whereas this used to happen after only half an hour sitting in the chair, he can now sit for several hours with no sign of the symptoms (drowsiness, confusion etc). A positive day which we hope will be replicated - fingers crossed. Helen wasn't able to visit Alan with us today, but she does so regularly and we are very grateful to her for frequently chauffeuring us to Elton Hall Care Home through the major roadworks going on around the A66 Elton interchange.



Alan went home for a few hours on Easter Sunday - his birthday - for a simple family buffet lunch.

Photo of Helen with Alan on another day at Elton Hall Care Home.



“Rough winds do shake the darling buds of may; and summer’s lease hath all too short a date”. Shakespeare



YUU Summer Gathering
1st July 2023
 At Sewerby Hall and Gardens

YUU
Summer Gathering
1 July 2023
 At Sewerby Hall and Gardens
 Times and more details to follow



Northern Pride
(Newcastle)
22 & 23 July 2023

To find out more info:

<https://www.unitariansinyorkshire.org.uk/events/northern-pride-2223-july->



Building Paradise



Theme Speaker

Stephen Lingwood Author of "Seeking Paradise"



FUSE 2023
2-4 June
2023

To book and find out more info:

<https://www.unitariansinyorkshire.org.uk/events/fuse-2023-2-4-june-2023/>

The following **Emergency Motion on Illegal Migration Bill 284 2022-23** was passed as a Resolution at the 2023 GA Annual Meetings.

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches:

- a. is concerned that the provisions of the Illegal Immigration Bill will remove the rights to protection in the UK for vulnerable adults and children seeking safe haven;
- b. asks our Chief Officer to join with other Church leaders in publicly opposing the Bill as it stands;
- c. calls on Unitarian congregations and individuals to raise these concerns with their MPs before the 3rd Reading of the Bill on 25th April 2023;
- d. call on the British Government to establish safe and accessible routes for all those seeking asylum.

Mary Thompson Fund

supporting people seeking asylum and settled refugees in the tees valley

Dear friends and supporters,

You will have seen the news about the Illegal Immigration Bill and the tweet from Gary Lineker about the government's use of similar language to 1930s Germany; the solidarity action from his co-presenters and pundits; and the cancellation of MOTD (I had to look it up too: Match of the Day). Comedian Mark Steel said "How disgraceful that a BBC employee abused their position by using their platform to show compassion. Lineker should now have to tweet something heartless, such as Pandas should all be water-boarded, to restore balance".

It is really heartening to see so many people with a high media profile being just as passionate about the human rights and respect for people coming here to seek asylum, as we are: people not afraid to speak out and condemn the government's attempt to end all asylum seeking in the UK. As Tanja Buelmann, Prof of Migration and Diaspora History said "As a German I can tell you this: when politicians speak in a language not dissimilar to that used in 1930s Germany, I recognise it. Why? Because I have been taught about it all my life — and that it needs to be called out and rejected. It's a duty to do so, in fact".

Buelmann goes on to say “The language we have heard from this government, no matter how many times they claim otherwise, is not dissimilar in some ways to that used in 1930s Germany. So while we need to be mindful of the specific context of 1930s Germany and should not draw direct parallels with today, when common characteristics, e.g. in the use of not dissimilar language are there, we can, and should say so. If some don’t like that, the answer is that those who push such rhetoric need to stop, not to threaten those who call out the vile dehumanisation of vulnerable people”. It is not illegal to enter a country to claim asylum. The UN Declaration on Human Rights (co-written by the UK government at the time), backed up by the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, states that everyone has the right to claim asylum regardless of the methods and journeys used to do so. The UK government has been a signatory to both conventions from the very beginning. It is a nonsense to talk about ‘illegal asylum seekers’. Either you are an asylum seeker or you are not an asylum seeker. It is a human right - no one is ‘illegal’!

Mary Thompson Fund have joined 322 other groups and organisations throughout the UK to sign a letter condemning the Bill, including the Archbishop of York and many more faith leaders:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/12/migration-bill-is-cruelty-without-purpose-says-archbishop-of-york>

People in positions of power and influence need to be aware that the inappropriate use of language can be very damaging to a cohesive society and can increase community tensions. We need a calm and humanitarian approach towards people in desperate situations and Mary Thompson Fund are calling again for safe legal routes to be opened up for people to come to the UK to make a claim for asylum. One possibility is for a UK immigration centre to be established in Calais with independent oversight, space for independent immigration advisors and a wraparound service provided by Care for Calais. That way claims for asylum can be lodged and a safe legal route to the UK opened up for claimants to continue pursuing their asylum claim, supported in the communities across the UK.

Best wishes,

Mary Thompson Fund



Day by Day the Unitarian Transformers facebook page offers inspiring quotes accompanied by some beautiful imagery [unitariantransformers](#)
Instagram [unitariantransformers](#)
YouTube [unitariantransformers7359](#) and Twitter

Connections gatherings with Unitarian Transformers —
online Each Wednesday at 7.00pm - Connections gatherings: a place for both Unitarians and those outside Unitarianism to experience it from a particular direction such as Hinduism, Unitarianism, Spiritual not Religious and Eco-Spirituality.

1st Wednesday 7pm Hindu Connections

2nd Wednesday 7pm Unitarian Connections

3rd Wednesday 7pm Spiritual not religious Connections

4th Wednesday 7.00pm Eco-Spirituality Connections

If you are interested in an online gathering, then contact info@unitariantransformers.org.uk

Findhorn Unitarian Network (FUN) offers Monthly Online Meditation Sessions A rich varied programme of monthly, daytime online meditations, open to everyone, experienced meditators and newcomers alike. The sessions are based on varied meditation techniques, brought to you by a range of facilitators. Contact funtomeditate@gmail.com for more information, zoom link and to join the mailing list.

Unitarian Penal & Social Affairs Panel (PSAP)

What they do . . .

- They keep Unitarians abreast of criminal justice issues
- They issue papers summarising different aspects
- They respond to government consultations
- They meet together three or four times a year in London
- They help keep alive social responsibility in the Unitarian community
- They organise a quality lecture at the general Assembly Meetings and provide speakers to the movement
- They need to recruit new members to ensure their future viability.
- If you can help, or want more information contact:

Bruce Chilton, bruce.ge.chilton@gmail.com

From Stockton Unitarian Centre Notice Board

There has been a non-conformist religious witness in Stockton-on-Tees since 1688. The first congregation worshipped in a room in Bolton House Yard, off Thistle Green. Later, a chapel was built in the High Street, paving the way for other Non-Conformist places of worship to be established in the town. In 1873 the congregation built a church on this site. It was demolished in 2006. The present building opened in 2007.

In 1969, Middlesbrough Unitarian Church joined with Stockton Church.

Here we affirm the unity of the human family, regardless of race, colour, creed, class or gender. We believe that peace, compassion and justice should be the hallmarks of a spiritual society, pursued in a spirit of freedom, reason and tolerance.

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 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.

Sunday Services for 2023



Date	Time	Worship Leader
30th April	6.00pm	Diana Bebbly
7th May	10.30am	David and Hazel Warhurst
14th May	6.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
21st May	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
28th May	6.00pm	tbd
4th June	10.30am	Rev Margaret Kirk
11th June	6.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
18th June	6.00pm	tbd
25th June	6.00pm	Membership service and Church AGM
2nd July	10.30am	Christine Walker
9th July	6.00pm	Flower service

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

Flowers for 2023

7th May	Mrs Joan Unwin
14th May	Mrs Josie Squires
21st May	Mrs Margaret Whitham
28th May	Rev Victor Ball
4th June	Mrs Jane Tomlin
11th June	Flower Fund
18th June	Margaret Robinson
25th June	Mrs Powley
2nd July	Mrs Jobson
9th July	Mrs Smith and 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 instructions for Zoom will be sent out through email by the Church Secretary - Zoom: **6680459646**

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Address: Stockton Unitarian Church, Wellington Street,
Stockton-on-Tees, **TS18 1RF**

Telephone: 01642 671115 **email:** mail@stocktonunitarians.org.uk

website: www.stocktonunitarians.org.uk

facebook: Unitarians in and around Stockton-on-Tees

Twitter: Stockton Unitarian Centre

Chairperson and Flower Secretary: Jean Watson - 01642 658376

Margaret Robinson - Secretary and Church News Editor
telephone: 01642 782219 email: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

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

Worship Committee Co-ordinator: Margaret Whitham 01429 298641



**Inter Weekend
(11-14 yr olds)
30 June to 2 July 2023
at
The Barn, Flagg
Derbyshire**

To book and find out more info:
[https://www.unitarian.org.uk/event/
inter-weekend-11-14-yr-olds/](https://www.unitarian.org.uk/event/inter-weekend-11-14-yr-olds/)

**Deadline for the next edition of Stockton Church News is
Monday 26th June 2023.** Please send your contributions for
the **July/August** edition to the Editor Margaret Robinson
margaretrobinson81@gmail.com