

# Stockton Unitarians



**July** brings us World Population Day, Buddhist Dharma Day, Al-Hiyra (Islamic New Year), Ashura (Islamic) and start of the school Summer holidays.

**August** brings us another Bank Holiday, International Youth Day, World Humanitarian Day, and the Unitarian Music Society Conference "Songs on the Ocean Wave"

## Church News

### July/August 2023



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

*July*

*Colin Partington  
Colin Wilkinson  
Paul W Robinson  
Freda Laverick*

*August*

*Jane Tomlin*



*Congratulations to those couples  
Celebrating their Wedding  
Anniversary*

*In July*

*Jane & Andrew Jobson*

*In August*

*Richard & Caroline Whitham*

*Elaine & Stephen Dodds*



## **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:**  
**11th and 25th July, 8th and 22nd August, 5th September 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.



## Alan Wilkinson

We are sorry to report that Alan Wilkinson sadly died in the early hours of Monday 19th June 2023, surrounded by his family.

Alan's funeral will take place on **Thursday July 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 1pm** at:  
**Stockton-on-Tees Crematorium (Maplewood Chapel)**  
Junction Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 9NA

and afterwards at : **Eaglescliffe Golf Club**, Yarm Road, Eaglescliffe  
Stockton-on-Tees, TS16 0DQ (telephone 01642 780238)

Immediate family flowers only please. Donations in lieu (if desired) can be made to The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) at [www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk)

If you intend to join us at Eaglescliffe Golf Club for refreshments (all are welcome), it would be helpful if you could let us know in advance for catering numbers. Please also advise us if you have any food allergies or other special requirements, which we will pass on to Eaglescliffe Golf Club.

A link to access the webcast of the funeral service which may be watched live or later (for a limited period) will be provided when available.

Thank you from all our family for all the lovely sympathy cards with kind words that people have sent us

Pat and family

**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: Saturday 1st July at 3.00pm; Monday 17th July at 7.00pm; Saturday 5th August at 3.00pm; Monday 21st August at 7.00pm Margaret's W & M; Saturday 2nd September at 3.00pm**

**Deadline for the next edition of Stockton News is Monday 21st August 2023.** Please send your contributions for the **September/October** edition to the Editor Margaret Robinson [margaretrobinson81@gmail.com](mailto:margaretrobinson81@gmail.com)

## Scattering the ashes 13 May 2023

I was not at all sure how I would feel about doing this but it felt right - as if a proper length of time had elapsed since Mike died last August, when everyone was so wonderfully supportive.

With some misgivings about driving so far, I did the 84 miles to Keswick without incident, on a beautiful afternoon in May. Nine members of the family walked two miles up the Mickleden Valley, below the Langdale Pikes towards Bowfell, in the sunshine under a brilliant blue sky. We were surrounded by the fells, in a grassy clearing, littered with rocks, daisies and surrounded by interested sheep. We made a circle and read lines from a meditation by Rev. Cliff Reed called 'Why Remember?'. As we read each of us scattered a handful of the precious ashes on to the grass. 'The pain of remembering is worth it.....they live again in our hearts..... something remains, all is not lost. Remember'

The following day we scattered some more on the completely renovated Railway Path from Keswick to Threlkeld. The footpath and many bridges had been destroyed in the storm in 2015 and we feared that they would never be restored.. We had hoped to take Mike there last year but he was not well enough. A little of him is now there too, with the words from Longfellow

'Life is real and life is earnest  
and the grave is not its goal.'

*'Dust thou art to dust returnest'*

was not written of the Soul'

We know that Mike is truly at peace now in a place he loved so well.

Jane Tomlin



## WHAT CAN I DO?

What can I do to help save the earth,  
The planet I've lived on from my birth?  
I'm only one person. What can I do?  
Not an awful lot that's certainly true.  
But I suppose at my own slow pace,  
I can make this world a better place.  
Not by doing anything enormous or grand,  
Or by taking some big political stand,  
Just by doing small everyday things  
Like saving power and recycling things.



The way to really help conservation,  
Is with patience and careful observation,  
Encouraging others to be like you,  
To do the little things that you do, too,  
Like riding a bike instead of using a car  
For journeys which really are not very far.  
This saves petrol and is good exercise,  
It's time to look to the truth and throw out the lies,  
There isn't that much that I can do, I know,  
But remember, big oaks from little acorns grow.

Heather Ellis

## Recycle



## Welcome to our new GA President

At our Annual Meetings, we were delighted to welcome Vince McCully as this year's President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

[Click here to find out more about Vince and the President's role.](#)



## Review of Sunday services at Stockton during 2023

### 23rd April - Blossom and Blossoming led by Rev Margaret Kirk

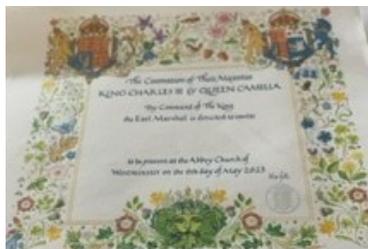
Margaret told us about the National Trust and that they are planting Plum Trees in many towns and opening the NT properties, especially during Cherry Blossom time. We sang "Life's Yearly Triumph", "Colour and Fragrance" and "Touch the Earth Lightly". Margaret used Cliff Reed's prayer "Spirit of Unbounded Life" and read Simon Armitage's (Poet Laureate) poem "Plum Tree Among the Skyscrapers".



Jane A (on Zoom) read a Garden Prayer by David M Horst, Hazel told us about her visit to Alnwick Gardens, with her daughter, to see the Cherry trees in Blossom and shared her photographs. Jane T told us of the Blossom trees in her road and Margaret W remembered a road lined with blossom in Leicester.

### Sunday 30th April led by Diana Bebb

Diana led a service looking briefly at the Coronation of King Charles III, but especially at his views on the environment. Reading the speech for our Planet by Prince Charles from 2019 and "Voices of Earth" by Archibald Lampman. We sang "For the fruits of all creation", "Where are the voices for the earth?", "Wide Green World" and "Spirit of Earth".



### 7th May Hazel & David Warhurst "Peace Pole at Hucklow

We sang the following hymns "Song of Peace", "Die Gedanken Sind Frei", "Each seeking faith is seeking light", "The Spirit lives to set us free" and "Go now in peace". The inspiration for Hazel and David's service came from a moving ceremony in the grounds of The Old Unitarian Chapel at Great Hucklow for the Inauguration and Blessing of the Chapel's Peace Pole .

After witnessing the devastation caused by World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a Japanese man called Masahisa Goi dedicated himself in service to humanity and the attainment of global peace and harmony. His great inspiration was the simple message, **May Peace Prevail On Earth.**



This was just the beginning which led to a genuine worldwide peace movement to spread the message, **May Peace Prevail On Earth.** Masahisa Goi encouraged creative ways in order to carry the message to public view. In 1976, the idea of placing the Peace Message and Prayer on poles began to gain popularity. This led to the beginnings of the Peace Pole Project.

Hazel and David used the words of the readings, prayers and Blessing used in the Peace Pole Ceremony: Fighting for Peace; Prayer for Peace by Rev Fearghus O'Connor; Words of Peace; The Blessing and a letter from The Ukraine Embassy.

**14th May led by Rev Victor Ball, Theme “Hymns”** we sang “Where’er thy people meet”, “It sounds along the ages”, “The Voice of God”, “Come Down, O Love Divine” and “Lord as we part”.

**21st May led by Rev Paul Walker, Theme “God out there”** We sang “Bring many names”, “I am that great and fiery force”, “Name unnamed” and “Out of the depths I call to you!”. Paul compared the Trinity to what some people know about a person, what close family and friends know about a person and the real person who only that individual knows.

**28th May led by Jean Watson and Margaret Robinson. A Bring and Share service on the Theme “Holidays”**

We lit the chalice in celebration of holidays or holy days. Days of fun, friendship and relaxation, enjoying time together and the world around us. We sang “A little sun, a little rain”, “Wide Green World”, “There is a place I call my own”, “God speaks to us in bird and song” and “Spirit of Life”



We had two Meditations by Richard Gilbert from his The Holy Quiet book.

And the following readings “Picnic” from Patience Strong Treasury and “Thank you for the big blue ocean” by M E Swann.

Members of the congregation related stories of holidays they had enjoyed or remembered from childhood.

#### **4th June led by Rev Margaret Kirk Theme “Being**

**Connected - a Miscellany”** We sang “Come and find a quiet centre”, “The Human Touch” and “Blessed spirit of my life” Margaret read “Delight in a Secret” from This Savage and Beautiful Country by Alan MacGlashan, “Sound and Silence” by David Dawson from With Heart and Mind and a story by Sally Vickers “Why Willows Weep”. Then Margaret asked for responses to the question “When did you feel connected?”

#### **11th June led by Louise Reeve from Newcastle, Theme**

**“Welcoming the Stranger”** We sang “Ours is a Town for Everyone”, “Out of the Depths I Call To You”, “Our World is One World” and “We’ll Build a Land”. The opening words and chalice lighting was “A Light in Dark Places” by Cliff Reed and also his words were used for the prayer “It is easy to cry peace” and the closing words “The Coming Days”. Louise read “Home” by Warsan Shire, “Send The Home” by Claire Lee and “The Milk and the Jasmine Flower” The musical interlude was the song “The Blanket of Night” by the group Elbow, lyrics by Guy Garvey. Louise in her talk posed the question “Are we welcoming to people coming to this country as refugees and asylum seekers?”

#### **18th June Theme “Light”** Rev Victor Ball

was due to lead this service, but was ill, so Margaret Robinson led the service with Jean Watson, Margaret Whitham and Jane Tomlin read the following from Genesis 1-2 “And God said, let there be light, and there was light”; Hymn to the Sun by Akhaten and “The Stars Look Down” by Victor Vratil (all from the whole service which Victor supplied). Emerson said “When it is darkest, men see the stars”. Almost all religions around the world use light in their beliefs including Hindu, Sikh and Zoroastrian. In 1 John Jesus said “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have community one with another”.



During this service we had two short power cuts, which put the lights out and we had to sing the last hymn in the dark and unaccompanied (electric piano)

## **25th June Membership service led by Jean Watson**

The service opened with the reading “This is my church”, we sang “Come Together in Love”, “A New Community”, “Here we have gathered” and “Go now in peace”. We had two responsive prayers “A Fellowship of Free Souls” by Cliff Reed and “Welcome” by Roger Courtney. The readings were “A person is a puzzle” and “Our Longing for Community” by John O’Donoghue.

We stood to remember the lives of those who had died during the last year - Brian Hopkins, Joe Evis, Mike Tomlin and Alan Wilkinson.

We remained standing to say together our **Church Affirmation:**

I value the fellowship of this Church and seek to enrich it

I value my giving to this Church and seek to give

I value my receiving from this Church and seek to receive

I value my yearnings within this Church and seek to be satisfied

I value my faith embodied here and seek to develop it

I value my worship with this Church and seek to heighten it

I value my membership of this church and seek to declare it.

Jean ended her short talk by reading the following from Cambridge Unitarian Church: By becoming a member of the Church, you are making a commitment to contribute to Church life by taking part in worship services and other Church events; to offer your skills, abilities, knowledge and time to help ensure that the Church can flourish; to contribute financially according to your means to the work of the church and the upkeep of its building and the support of its ministry.

Church membership keeps us accountable. When we join a church we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected and served. Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love.

## **Collection during Sunday service**

As many of our members pay by Bank transfer, cheque, Direct Debit, or the envelope scheme we do not pass around the collection place during our Sunday services. We do have envelopes available for visitors and others for those wishing to make a contribution to church funds. We thank all those who are able to give regularly, as this helps to keep everything continuing for the benefit of everyone.

## Riddles

1. What has many ears but cannot hear?
2. I am stronger than steel , but cower from the sun. What am I?
3. What is noisy and disrupting and stays where it is when it goes off?
4. Your mother and father have a child. It is not your brother and it's not your sister, who is it?
5. The more of these you take the more you leave behind.
6. I am a see with three letters in my name. Take away the last two and I still sound the same. What am I?
7. I am tall when young and short when old. What am I?
8. What smells nice, can be made foamy and gets smaller when used with water?
9. I am black when you buy me, red when you use me and grey when you throw me away. What am I?
10. What can fly without wings and does not breathe?
11. What is the instrument that you can hear but cannot touch or see?
12. This starts off small, the more you take away the bigger it becomes. What is it?
13. My rings are not worth much, but they can tell my age. What am I?
14. What must you break before you can use me?
15. I cannot be burned by fire or drowned by water. What am I?
16. What starts with P and ends in E and has millions of letters in it?
17. I go around the park, but stay in one place. What am I?

## ***CHURCH DIRECTORY***

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Stockton-on-Tees, **TS18 1RF**

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**website:** [www.stocktonunitarians.org.uk](http://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  
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3 Castle Dyke Wynd, Minerva Mews, Yarm, TS15 9DE

**Worship Committee Co-ordinator:** Margaret Whitham 01429 298641

## GA ANNUAL MEETINGS 2023



Stockton, Newcastle and NUA attendees at GA 2023 Meetings

### **Stockton Unitarians delegate report of GA 2023 Meetings**

On the more than 20 occasions when I have attended GA since 1994, I have never before attended as a full voting member! So this year was a real thrill and I shall treasure the voting card. We had met at Staverton, near Daventry in 2018 - a large sprawling building where it was still impossible to sort out the layout- long corridors, many stairs, and not always clear signage, and only one lift! The breakout rooms all seemed to be quite a distant from the core of the building. The good news is that the staff were very helpful and the food good, plenty of tea, coffee and water available, and I had one of the best bedrooms I have ever slept in.

What made it very special for me was the knowledge that I was amongst friends and was treated gently by people who were not quite sure whether they should mention Mike and were

reassured that I was pleased when they did. Marion Baker, retiring chair of the Executive, gave a very warm tribute to Martin West who had died in March as well as to Mike. They had worked so closely together on the Ministers' Pension Fund and GA Finances and both were Honorary Life members of the GA. Sadly Marion herself has been recently widowed by the death of Rev. Ernest Baker who did so much for SACH. I hope that she felt as comforted as I did.

It is impossible to go to everything on offer at the GA. I went to all the business sessions and was horrified that the Annual Accounts were not ready. I questioned this from the floor. The newly appointed auditors had not managed to keep to the deadline!. Worse than that, they had tried to increase the already agreed Fee for the job, (which is most unprofessional). We voted to return to the previous Auditor!

There are at least four different workshops or meetings of affiliated societies to choose from after the business sessions and it is difficult to decide which is the best to go to. Some promise a lot more than they deliver with such interesting titles as: *Congregational support tool kit: Renewing our faith: Stories from the Pandemic* (an exercise carried out in 2022 by a Church in Nebraska as to how things had changed): *Membership Sustainability*, where we pooled collective insights, knowing that 50% of our churches have fewer than 20 members. The Penal Affairs panel always has a good speaker, this year it was Chris Daw, a leading KC, on the failings of the criminal justice system. We have the highest proportion in prison than anywhere else in Western Europe and he explained why.

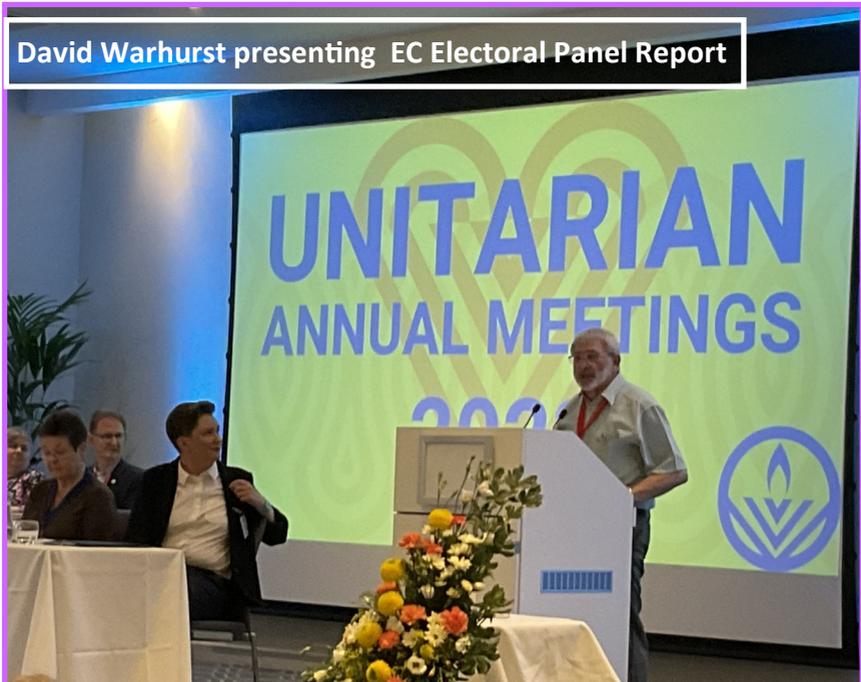
The John Rely Beard Keynote Lecture by Jon Alexander was based on his book *Citizens*, which explored the alternative to consumerism with its emphasis on only looking after number 1, which he maintains has led to so much of what is wrong with society today.

The theme of the Anniversary Service was abundantly clear ***Showing up for Justice*** and Rev. Winnie Gordon spoke with passion.

I went to *The Inquirer* reception and enjoyed the free wine, but was disappointed that after a quiz delivered with much mirth, none of the Board Members present really took on board the difficult financial position of the paper. They agreed that they needed to raise at least £20k each year to cover the shortfall. No one questioned what they were doing about this other than to hope that Districts, Churches and Trusts will send them enough. I asked whether it is time that the publication became monthly, rather than fortnightly. There was no satisfactory answer. They urgently need a Finance Director!!

Please do read the write ups of the meetings in *The Inquirers* for 15th and 29th April for more details.

Thank you for inviting me to go as your Delegate Jane Tomlin



## Words on the Stockton Unitarian Centre Noticeboard



There has been a non-conformist religious witness in Stockton 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 sex. 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 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 a part

Uphold the right of civil and religious liberty worldwide

Encouraging 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.

### Answers to the Riddles on page

1.Cornfield 2.Ice 3.Alarm clock 4.Yourself 5.Footsteps 6.Pea 7.Candle 8.Soap  
9.Charcoal 10.Time 11.Your voice 12.Hole 13.Tree 14.Egg 15.Ice



Well attended by about 25 Unitarians from across the UK, this was the first 'Coffee & Comms' online gathering, led by Rev. Robin Hanford, minister of Hinckley Unitarians in Leicestershire, who shared

his experiences of using social media to engage with the local community and wider public. The idea behind this is to have a new, informal series of Zoom gatherings for sharing the excellent communications work being done by Unitarian congregations. It was a great chance to share and connect with others, and Rev. Robin's experience of social media was very interesting in terms of what works and what doesn't.

It left me thinking that perhaps it's time to revive the old Uni-Coms network of Unitarian Communicators, maybe merge it with Unitarian Digital Resources Network and the work done by Lizzie Kingston-Harrison (Congregational Connections Officer), and Rev. Rory Castle-Jones (Communications Officer). Hopefully there will be more of these meetings, as it's great to hear what works!

Louise Reeve

### Unitarian Connections and 'Migration', 10 May 2023

Attended by 11 Unitarians, this event organised by Unitarian Transformers followed on from the Emergency Motion We looked at the factors that cause migration, and people shared experiences of what work they have been involved in to help migrants and refugees. Sue Cockerill spoke about her work with refugees in Chorlton helping those who have been placed in hotels, and her concerns about a 'hierarchy of migrants' being created, whereby some migrants (from Ukraine, Hong Kong, and those who worked with the British Armed Forces in Afghanistan) are able to benefit from schemes set up to enable them to legally enter the UK, whereas others have no legal route. We agreed that there was a need to educate ourselves about these issues, so that we can educate others, and the need for safe routes into the UK. Louise Reeve (Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians), Lizzie Kingston-Harris (Congregational Connections Officer) and Anne Howell (Social Action Officer) are working together to create a Worship Pack on Migration. This will contain prayers, musical suggestions, poems, readings, articles, and suggestions for action that can be taken to support migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Unitarians across the UK are invited to send in material!



Louise Reeve

## Sunday Services for 2023



Date	Time	Worship Leader
2nd July	10.30am	Christine Walker
9th July	6.00pm	Flower service Worship Group
16th July	<b>No service at Stockton</b>	Visit to Whitby 2.00pm service
23rd July	6.00pm	Dr Barry Thomas
30th July	6.00pm	Jane Tomlin
6th August	10.30am	Rev Margaret Kirk
13th August	6.00pm	tba
20th August	6.00pm	Rev Jefferey Bowes
27th August	6.00pm	Bring and Share
3rd September	10.30am	Rev Margaret Kirk
10th September	6.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
17th September	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
24th September	6.00pm	Harvest Festival Worship Group

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

### Flowers for 2023

2nd July	Mrs Jobson
9th July	Mrs Smith and Mrs Fish
16th July	at Whitby
23rd July	Gail Moore
30th July	Flower Fund
6th August	Mrs Margaret Whitham
13th August	Rev Jefferey Bowes
20th August	Mrs Josie Squires
27th August	Mrs Freda Laverick
3rd September	Rev Victor Ball



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**