

Stockton Unitarians



Stockton Unitarians Coffee Mornings every 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.



March brings us - St David's Day (1), Mother's Day (10), St Patrick's Day (17), Good Friday (29), British Summer Time begins (31), Easter Sunday (31) **April brings us** - Easter Monday (1), St George's Day (23),

Church News March/April 2025





Thank you to Louise Reeve from Newcastle Unitarians for sending this embroidered chalice in the frame.

On the back Louise wrote these words:

**To all at Stockton
Unitarian Chapel
December 2024
with love from
Louise Reeve
In memory of
Mike Tomlin and
Peter Whitham**

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

March

*Elisha Hutton
Erik Cosidius Robinson*

April

*Arthur Tyr Robinson
Carys Thompson*



*Congratulation to Hazel & David Warhurst
celebrating their Wedding Anniversary in March*



Greetings for Imbolc - 2nd February. Our world is waking up. I was scraping frost of the car this morning and it didn't feel as if the world was waking up - but I know it in my bones. Look at the garden! Green shoots appearing. Snowdrops have shown their white heads and now they are opening. On the golf course this morning we saw two cock peasants confronting one another. One would win the hen. It's getting lighter earlier and darker later.



On Monday 3rd February the people of Ireland will be enjoying a holiday - St Brigid's Day. I smile to myself and many others will. St Brigid was a wonderful real woman. The nunnery she founded was built by an old well which celebrated the goddess Brigid. She emerges each year as a maiden from the winter crone. Her new life brought blessings to the children, to blacksmiths and all who worked under nature's sky.

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)

1st and 15th March, 5th and 19th April, 3rd and 17th May 2025

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

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

Worship Committee Co-ordinator: Margaret Whitham 01429 298641

Sunday services reviews for January and February 2025

On Sunday 26th January 2025 our worship leader was Rev Margaret Kirk on the theme of “Simple Things”

“All lowly things are here made beautiful,
Each simple task a sacramental rite,
The common day is garlanded with praise,
And peace unfolds her silver wings at night.

From The Magic of Common Things by Muriel Hilton

Margaret's readings were “Birdsnest” from a Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom *collected and adopted by Sarah Cooper*; and “Why” by Muriel Hilton

Margaret played a musical interlude “Simple Gifts” by Yo-Yo and Alison Krauss . We sang “Who would true valour see”, “True Simplicity” and “The Harvest of Truth”

Margaret spoke about the simple things that give us pleasure and happy memories. Margaret had been given some lovely wooden spoons for Christmas, as she had asked for something beautiful for her kitchen., which she brought to show us.



Members of the congregation both in-person and on Zoom were asked for their contributions. Margaret W spoke of the film “The Sound of Music” and how it reminds her of one of her pupils, Ann, who went to see the film with her Dad (her Mum had died). On being asked by MW which part of the film she liked best, the girl said when Maria returns to the Abbey and the Abbess says “When one door closes another door opens”. The girl’s father had recently just got a new girlfriend., who was very kind to Ann.

Jane T spoke of a couple of strangers who brought her a Christmas wreath

for her front door, made from some of the greenery which they had gathered from the gardener who had been pruning Jane's garden and was putting it in his wagon as they were passing. They didn't want any money, they just loved making wreaths and though Jane might like it.

Jane A had a mug with a large E on it, which had been given to her late partner. Jane uses it every day, to drink her tea, to honour his memory.

David always wears two rings, his wedding ring and a signet ring. The signet ring, which has the initials on it of his grandfather. The ring has been handed down from grandfather to David's father and then to David. The two rings represent to him the continuation of the family.



Margaret R spoke of the simple joy of singing, particularly in a choir.

Colin spoke of his love of wood and showed us one piece he calls Quirk, several branches, which he had mounted on a small plinth.

Hazel had a small gold locket with on one side a photo of her grandma and on the other side a photo of her great uncle

"The greatest wealth is to live content with little" *Plato*

Sunday 2nd February 2025 was a Bring and Share service on the theme of "Looking Forward"

We sang "Gather the Spirit", "Ring out wild bells", "O Glad New Year of God", "A rose in the winter time" and "May the road rise with you".

The service ended with the Benediction:

During the year may you have
Enough happiness to keep you sweet
Enough trials to keep you strong
Enough sorrow to keep you human
Enough hope to keep you happy
Enough failure to keep you humble
Enough success to keep you eager

Enough friends to give you comfort
Enough wealth to meet your needs
Enough enthusiasm to make you look forward to tomorrow
And enough determination to make each day better than the day before.

Margaret Robinson led our service on Sunday 9th February 2025 on the theme of “A Society of All Ages”



The opening words were a responsive reading by Carol Mayer “We are people of all ages who enter this space”. Margaret’s Readings were “What DO We Teach Our Children?” by Pablo Casals, “Lifelong Learning”, “No Old Age” by Linda McNamar, “If I Had My Life To Live Over” by Nadine Stair, “Age”, “Beatitudes For the Aged” and “Cry from a Crabbit Old Women” all Anonymous. We sang “Open the door, step right inside”, “From the light of days remembered”, “We laugh, we cry”, “Lord of the growing years”, “There is a place I call my own” and “Go now in peace”.

We had two prayers, one by Rev Phillip Silk “For Our Journey Through Life” and one by John Corrado “As We Grow Older (Which each of us does with every tick of the clock)” We had seven people in the chapel and three people joined us on Zoom.

Three members of the congregation contributed to where they had learnt some useful lesson. One had been taught to read by their mother before they started school, one had learnt that if you want to write cruel words in a letter you should write it and then tear it up, not send it to hurt that person and the other person learnt not to rely on possessions but treasure family and friendships.

Rev Paul Walker led our service on Sunday 16th February 2025 at 3.00pm on the theme “Optimism and Hope / Pessimism and Concern”.

It is an attitude of mind. One widow when her husband died was pessimistic about her life and her future, where as



another widow was optimistic, full of life and hope.

We sang “Stillness, creeping through this place”, “We Sing the Roses Waiting”, “The Star of truth” and “To you who would as pilgrims go”

We had three people on Zoom and a congregation of eight.

Rev Margaret Kirk led our service on Sunday 23rd February 2025 at 3.00pm on the theme of “The Values of Jane Austen”. This year is the 250th Anniversary of Jane Austen’s birth.

We sang “All are Welcome Here”, “The Golden Rule”, “For All that is Our Life” and “Human Kindness”.

Margaret read an extracts from the Observer Editorial January 2025 “Self Improvement or Self Fulfilment”, and from “Emma” by Jane Austen

Jane Austen born 16th December 1775 and died 18th July 1817. She was an English novelist know primarily for her six novels, which implicitly interpret, critique, and comment on the English landed gentry at the end of the 18th century. Austen’s plots often explored the dependence of women on marriage for the pursuit of favourable social standing and economic security. In the book Emma, Emma prides herself on her matchmaking skills.

Some of Jane Austen’s quotes:

“What is right to be done cannot be done too soon.”

“Know your own happiness. You want nothing but patience, or give it a more fascinating name: call it hope.”

“Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure.”

“It isn’t what we say or think that defines us, but what we do.”

“There are people, who the more you do for them, the less they will do for themselves.”

“There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not in my nature.”



Used postage stamps

Margaret Whitham is still collecting used postage stamps (of all countries) for RNIB Guide Dogs. Please make sure when cutting them off the envelope that you leave at least one centimetre around all four sides.



The Knit 'n' Natter Group meet on alternative **Tuesdays** from 11.00am to 1.00pm. On **11th and 25th March, 8th and 22nd April, 6th and 20th May 2025**. £1 contribution for tea, coffee and biscuits.



Some of the 26 prem-baby hats and cardigans going off to the local hospital, knitted by members of our Knit 'n' Natter Group.

Why not come along and either knit for yourself or for charity

All are welcome, bring your crafts, knitting or crochet, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits and a chat while you work.

Safeguarding Training


22 Mar 2025 At Scarborough Unitarians
Full day training course focused on children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding Children:

- Gain a basic understanding of what constitutes child abuse and neglect
- Recognise signs and symptoms of abuse
- Listen to and support children and young people who are in need of protection
- Know how to respond if there are concerns about a child or young person
- Recognise the importance of recording concerns

Safeguarding for Adults – Raising a Concern:

- What is safeguarding? Care Act 2014
- Common Safeguarding Issues
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Disclosure & principles of good reporting
- Duty of Care & Consent
- Raising a concern



These are some of the children's garments knitted by Stockton Unitarians Knit 'n' Natter Group members, going to the Grow Baby, baby bank in Acklam Road, Thornaby at the Teesside Vinyard Church. They also take second-hand clothes for 0-5 years.



Unveiling the Silverware, Mansion House

6 February 2025

On Thursday, 6th of February, we were invited by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle to a presentation of our silverware donation at the Mansion House, Jesmond, Newcastle. You may recall that we gifted this to Newcastle City Council back in September 2024 in recognition of the long relationship between the Council and Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians.

read the full history here: [Handing Over the Silverware](#).

Since then, the Council have had the silverware polished and valued, and found a display space for it at the Mansion House in Jesmond. Traditionally the residence of the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, the Mansion House is now used as a venue for functions and weddings, and to display some of the city's historic treasures (others can be seen at the Silver Gallery at the Civic Centre). The Lord Mayor kindly invited us to see them being put on display, and twelve members and friends of our congregation attended the Mansion House, along with the Lord Mayor, Cllr Rob Higgins, and staff from the Lord Mayor's Office.

As a reminder, the historic silver currency donated, dating back to 1852, was unearthed during construction works in the 1950s on the site of the former Unitarian church on New Bridge Street, which made way for the old City Library. The coins were owned by Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarian Church for many years until the congregation no longer had anywhere to display them, so they decided to give them to the council, along with a silver communion set of two chalices, two salvers, and a wine jug, formerly owned by Rev. George Harris, the congregation's minister between 1845-1859.

The Lord Mayor of Newcastle hosted a reception at the Mansion House to thank the church leaders for the precious gifts. The Lord Mayor, Cllr Rob Higgins, said: "It's a great honour to receive these on behalf of the council. They are part of our city's heritage, and we hope to put them on display for the public to enjoy. They underscore the association between the Unitarian church and city council going back hundreds of years."

Newcastle Unitarians' Chairperson, Louise Reeve, said: "We wanted to celebrate the long association between our congregation, the city of Newcastle, and the Council, and are very happy that our historic items have been given a home on display at the Mansion House."

Following the unveiling, we had tea and cakes, followed by a walk in the Mansion House grounds. David Venus, our Treasurer, commented: "It was nice to see David and Hazel from Stockton there, along with other members and colleagues – and the tea and cakes, afterwards, were exceptional!" Louise Reeve

Here's a link to an article about it on Newcastle City Council's website: [Historic coins gifted to the city council by church leaders](#) and on their Facebook page: [Historic silverware gifted to the city council by church leaders](#).



Photograph of David Warhurst, Newcastle's Lord Mayor, Cllr Rob Higgins, Louise Reeve and Hazel Warhurst with the silverware.

**Deadline for the next edition of Church News is the
Wednesday 30th April 2025**

Please send your contributions for the May/June 2025
edition to the Editor: Margaret Robinson

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

Holocaust Interfaith

Some time back, when Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians were looking for a potential new home, we considered building links with the Newcastle Reform Synagogue. In the US, Unitarian Universalism and Reform Judaism have [strong links](#), and both faiths share liberal and progressive approaches to the spiritual life. As it was, we have settled at the Spiritual Commons Room in Northumbria Student Central, but it was a pleasure to receive an invitation from them.

On 24 January 2025, the council of the Newcastle Reform Synagogue invited members of other local religious and spiritual groups, and civic leaders, to their Friday night Sabbath service at the Kenton synagogue to hear Phil Rosenberg, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (the largest and second oldest Jewish communal and representative organisation in the United Kingdom), speak about the work being done by the Board of Deputies to tackle antisemitism in the UK, participate in the service, and join the congregation for a meal afterwards. It would prove a thought-provoking experience in how religious freedom works, and doesn't, in the UK.



The synagogue is a large and pleasant building, a welcome sight on a night in which the UK suffered the sort of weather warnings which cause most

people to dive indoors and hide under the duvet. The differences between how we experience our religious faith and what others in our own country experience were right there from the start; Unitarian congregations do not generally need to have a security officer on the door, nor do our noticeboards in the entrance hall have advice on how to spot someone acting suspiciously near the building. Lest this sound paranoid, a [quick look](#) at the rise in antisemitic incidents in the UK in 2024 will soon indicate it is not, and that 'religious freedom' operates differently for some of us here in Britain than for others, sadly.

Once through the door, we were made very welcome by the

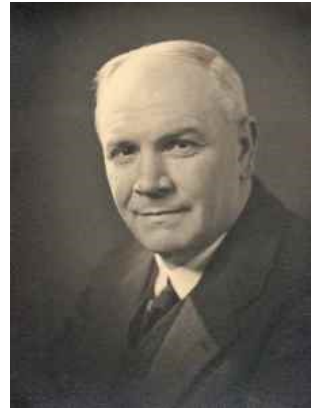
congregation, a member of whom sat with us and guided us through the service. Reform Jewish congregations pray in a mixture of Hebrew and English, and their prayer books have the prayers in both languages along with a clear explanation of the prayer, its context and meaning. We could learn from this – a thought that kept repeating itself for me throughout the evening.

As I write this, I've found myself asking 'do Jewish religious communities call themselves congregations?' 'what's the right word for a book used in Jewish services?' 'do you call the songs hymns, or is that a Christian term?'. Being in a religious community where everyone else knows what's going on, what the right words to use are, and the general way things are done, when you yourself don't, is an experience those of us who are serious about saying 'all are welcome' should have, because it's an eye-opener for those of us who turn up every Sunday to a warm Unitarian familiarity. (You'll note that there are few photographs here, unlike my usual writings; it is requested not to take photographs on the Sabbath within the synagogue.) I have to give the Newcastle Reform Synagogue every plaudit for making everyone so welcome, explaining everything so clearly – especially their worship leader, Rabbi Sybil Sheridan – and generally handling the entire event with grace, skill, and warmth. Also for their beautiful singing!

Needless to say, my personal musings were not the point of the evening, and Phil Rosenberg's speech was a powerful one. Whilst this gathering was part of the events for Holocaust Memorial Day on Sunday 26th January, he made the very salient point that for many non-Jews, Holocaust Memorial Day and the history associated with it are their main reference point for Judaism in the UK – that, and the ongoing situation in the Middle East. For many of us here in Newcastle (my thoughts, not those of Mr Rosenberg), it would also be the large [Orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead](#), but like our own spiritual movement, Judaism is diverse, with different viewpoints, philosophies and ways of practice within the broader tradition. Obviously, we should never forget history, particularly at a time in world politics when I fear we're at risk of doing exactly that, but what of the present? Do we truly know our Jewish neighbours, and what can we do to build links between our communities?

As a member of Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians, I thought of our own history, in particular, of perhaps our most influential minister of the modern age, Rev. Herbert Barnes (minister between 1919-1951).

Among his many other achievements, he was said to have taken a vigorous stand against anti-Semitism. On 8 January 1934, it was reported that, later that week, 'in appreciation of his personality and public works and services rendered to the Jewish People' and in commemoration of the 15th Anniversary of his ministry, he was to be honoured by an inscription in The Jewish National Fund's 'Golden Book' and a certificate marking this was presented to him. (The public works referred to included serving on both the Newcastle



Rev Herbert Barnes

Public Libraries Committee and Education Committee.)

This inscription in the 'Golden Book', given on the recommendation of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, was said to be the highest form of tribute Jewish people can pay to those whom they wish to honour. Speeches would be made by Rabbi J. Kyanski and Rev. Emmanuel Drukker from the Jesmond Synagogue. Members of Mr Barnes's church were invited to the presentation, and it was reported in Rev. Barnes' obituary in 'The Daily Journal' in 1954, that he was 'one of the few gentiles to have had their names inscribed in the Golden Book'. The certificate is now stored at Harris Manchester College in Oxford. (My thanks to Arthur Andrews at Heaton History Group for these details; his full biography of Rev. Barnes can be found here: [Rev. Herbert Barnes](#).) His memory is a powerful one; what should we be doing in the modern era to carry on his legacy?

The meal itself was lovely. Again, it is always in the details that the texture of life is revealed; we had cold food, because Jewish law prohibits cooking, baking, and starting fires on the Sabbath. As we

sat at our meal, we sat near a memorial for hostage Amiram Cooper. An economist and one of the founders of Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel, he was taken captive by Hamas on 7 October 2023, and his death whilst still being held hostage by Hamas was confirmed on 3 June 2024. Synagogues across the world have adopted hostages, praying for them and their wellbeing since 7 October 2023, and remembering those who died without being freed. A sharp reminder to all of us that what to many of us is a “complex moral issue”, is to others an ongoing horror, a reminder of what has happened in the past and happens now, and that when we discuss such situations, we should be mindful that this is not a theoretical exercise, but a lived experience.

Yet at the same time, there was music, companionship, food and laughter. We joined together for hours, Jewish, Christian, secular, Muslim, Hindu, and many more. I was struck also by how similar we all are. Jewish congregations also love singing, have concerns about how we can provide for the spiritual needs of the younger members and not have them leave when they become teenagers, and are well aware that it's a bad idea to keep the congregation from their food.

(Also, that if you ever want to start a conversation in any religious community anywhere in the UK, ‘how’s the parking situation?’ will work pretty much every time.) I thought of our own past, and I don’t know what our future together holds, although I can’t help thinking that reviving the Newcastle Peace Walks would be a good start.

Dates For Your Diary



26th April 2025
YUU Spring Gathering

Hosted By
Scarborough Unitarians



COVID-19
**DAY OF
REFLECTION**
9 MARCH 2025

Sunday 9 March 2025 is the Day of Reflection across the UK for the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an opportunity to come together to remember those who lost their lives since the pandemic began and to honour the tireless work and acts of kindness shown during this unprecedented time.

Sunday Services for 2025

Zoom link: 6680459646



Date	Time	Worship Leader
2nd March	6.00pm	Christine Walker
9th March	6.00pm	Ann Mills
16th March	6.00pm	Rev Paul Walker
23rd March	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
30th March	6.00pm	Worship Group - Mother's Day
6th April	6.00pm	Dr Barry Thomas
13th April	6.00pm	Rev Victor Ball
20th April	6.00pm	tba Easter
27th April	6.00pm	Diana Bebbly
4th May	6.00pm	tba

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 March-May 2025

2nd March	Rev Margaret Kirk
9th March	Flower Fund
16th March	Mrs Josie Squires
23rd March	Hazel & David Warhurst
30th March	Mrs Jane Tomlin
6th April	Mrs Pam Coates
13th April	Hazel & David Warhurst
20th April	Rev Margaret Kirk
27th April	Mrs Jean Watson
4th May	Mrs Josie Squires



Photographs thanks to Hazel Warhurst and Louise Reeve

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**

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