

Stockton Unitarians



New GA joint Presidents 2026-2027 Reverends Jean and Alex Bradley and Vice-President Jo O'Sullivan at 2026 GA Annual Meetings. Photo Hazel Warhurst

Church News May/June 2026



Services held in March and April 2026

On Sunday 1st March 2026 Rev Paul Walker led our worship and delivered a service on narcissism, drawing parallels between the Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo and modern societal trends. He highlighted the dangers of narcissism, particularly in relation to wealth and power, and emphasized the importance of empathy and selflessness. He had chosen hymns that countered the idea of narcissism, as there were few hymns that encouraged self-centeredness.



Paul shared the Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus, highlighting how Echo's inability to initiate conversations led to his fading away after pining for the self-absorbed Narcissus. He explained that Narcissus's obsession with his own



reflection eventually led to his transformation into a flower, symbolizing the end of his self-obsession.

Paul also discussed the concept of narcissistic personality disorder, noting its extreme form, where individuals seek admiration and cannot form genuine attachments. He concluded by reading a biblical story about King David, who lusted after Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, illustrating how even leaders can exhibit narcissistic behaviour. Highlighting David's narcissistic behaviour and the consequences of his actions. He connected this story to modern issues of narcissism, wealth, power, and the dangers of echo chambers and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Paul emphasized the importance of empathy, self-sacrifice, and prioritizing the poor and powerless, while criticizing the current rise in narcissism among politicians and wealthy individuals. He concluded by encouraging reflection on personal narcissistic tendencies and the need for humility and acceptance of others' perspectives.

We had six people in the chapel and three people joined us on Zoom. We sang

“Blessed Spirit”, “From the crush”, “Nothing distress” and “Love knocks and waits”,

On Sunday 8th March 2026 Rev Victor led our worship.

Victor’s service focused on International Women’s Day, exploring its historical origins and celebrating influential women throughout history. Victor shared insights into the day’s socialist roots, tracing its evolution in America in 1909 to the Russian Revolution. Its subsequent development through communist activist Clara Zetkin (nee Eissner) and Vladimir Lenin’s recognition of women’s roles in the 1917 to its adoption by the United Nations in 1975. Drawing attention to its ongoing significance in advocating for social, economic, and political justice for women and all genders.



He highlighted key figures such as Eglantyne Jebb and Mary Wollstonecraft, a pioneering advocate for women’s rights, and read excerpts from Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.”

Victor also spoke of Dorothy Buxton (nee Jebb), and her sister Eglantyne, who together founded the Save the Children organisation after World War I, to relieve the effects of famine in Austria-Hungary and Germany. Also Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her bus seat sparked the Montgomery bus boycott. He discussed their contributions to social, economic, and political justice.

The service included hymns, prayers, and reflections on the theme of “bread and roses,” emphasizing the need for both physical sustenance and spiritual fulfilment. The “Bread and Roses” phrase, which originated in the early 20th century women’s rights movement. He shared a medieval story about Elizabeth of Hungary, who hid bread from her table under her mantle to give to the poor of her village. But when she met her husband in the street and he asked her what she had under her clothes, on lifting her mantle a bunch of roses was revealed.



**Bread
&
Roses**



He led a pray for freedom, beauty, and simplicity, and shared a feminist version of the Lord's Prayer. We had six people in chapel and one person joined us on Zoom. We sang **Bread and Roses**

The words of the hymn Bread and Roses dates back to 1911 and they received a new lease of life with the resurgence of the women's movement in the late 1960s and the role played by women in trade union history. James Oppenheim wrote the poem after he saw the slogan "Bread for all, and Roses, too".

The first mention of the phrase and its meaning appeared in The American Magazine in September 1911. Helen Todd a US suffragette and worker's rights activist describes how a group of women from the Chicago Women's Club began to campaign for the right of women to vote.

Helen Todd explained that she saw a pillow in the house where she was staying during a rally in 1910 which had the inscription, 'Bread for all, and Roses too'. "Woman", she said, " is the mothering element in the world and her vote will go toward helping forward the time when life's Bread, which is home, shelter and security, and the Roses of life, music, education, nature and books, shall be the heritage of every child that is born in the country, in the government of which she has a voice."

Helen Todd (April 1, 1870 – August 15, 1953) started her career as an educator and later became a factory inspector. What she saw led her to both exposed the terrible conditions of children in factories and campaign for votes for women.

After women won the right to vote, she continued to campaign justice for immigrants, workers and women.

Victor Ball

Sunday 15th March 2026 was our Mothering Sunday service, led by Jean Watson, Hazel Warhurst, Margaret Robinson and Jane Tomlin.

The service began with opening words from Kahlil Gibran and a short Chalice lighting for all mothers. Jane shared a poem about the journey of becoming oneself with the support and gradual stepping back of a mother. The group then engaged in a prayer and meditation for Mother's Day, reflecting on the complex emotions associated with motherhood



and the women who have mothered us in various ways, followed by a Mother's version of the Lord's Prayer, emphasizing gratitude and the interconnection of all life.

Further readings were "Mother's Day" a poem by Sandra Kerr, "You've been by my side" a poem, a reading by Judy Welles (Who's stronger than a lion, gentle as a lamb), "Honouring the Bouquet of Our Mothers" by Judy Welles, "Laura's Mother" by Jane Ellen Mauldin, and "A Mum's Life" by Delia Ephron. The closing words were "May peace come to your home." These readings and reflections were on motherhood, mothers' roles and the challenges of caring for aging parents.

We sang four hymns, accompanied by music from UMS hymn CDs, "We Gather Together", "A little sun, a little rain", "She comes with Mother's kindness" and "We have a dream". There were eight people in the chapel and two people joined us on Zoom. The five women present received a small bunch of daffodils and we enjoyed a large delicious slice of Simnel cake (baked by Jean Watson) with our cups of tea.

On Sunday 22nd March 2026 Rev Margaret Kirk led the service on the Theme of "Act of Creation in Destructive Times"



Focusing on themes of peace, gratitude, and hope during challenging international circumstances. She acknowledged the work of humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross and UNICEF, while expressing concern about difficult times globally and political developments in America. The service included hymns and a chalice candle lighting, with Margaret reflecting on the spring equinox and the emergence of new life, despite current difficulties.

Margaret's service included a prayer and a reading from a book of wisdom stories. The prayer focused on creating a better world with love and forgiveness, while the reading "Men at Work" illustrated different perspectives on labour, contrasting a disgruntled worker with one focused on providing for his family, and ultimately revealing the third worker's meaningful contribution to building a cathedral.

Margaret drew connections between historical construction projects and modern rebuilding efforts. She shared a reading from a book called "Caddy" (about St

Cuthbert) by Michael Benjamin Myers, which depicted a young boy's experiences working on Durham Cathedral, contrasting it with his previous demolition work. Margaret also spoke about the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in the Old Testament, the Roman Basilica in Trier, Germany, and current conflicts involving building destruction.

We sang "Gather the Spirit", "Conscience guide our footsteps", "Each seeking faith is seeking light" and "We sing the faith". Organist was Jane Tomlin.

The service ended with us saying together the following words by Keith Gilley.

In the name of us all
let there be Peace and Love among us.
May the skies be clear.
May the streets be safe.
In the name of us all
let there be peace.

No service was held on Sunday 29th March 2026 as a number of members were away at the GA Annual Meetings in Derbyshire.

On Sunday 5th April 2026 Rev Paul Walker led the Easter

service Paul discussed the importance of the Easter story in Christianity, highlighting how it centres around a healer and preacher who was crucified and later rose from the dead. He noted that while Christmas music is well-known, Easter hymns are less familiar despite having an equally rich musical tradition. Paul began his service by playing his favourite Easter hymn and mentioned he would later question some assumptions about the Easter story while acknowledging its foundational role.



Paul discussed the significance of the resurrection story in Christianity, emphasizing its historical impact and the solace it provides to believers. He read from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, which described the first account of the resurrection, highlighting discrepancies with the later Gospel accounts. Noting the differences in details about appearances and questioned the accuracy of certain elements, such as the story of Jesus appearing to 500 people simultaneously. He

continue by reading from Mark's Gospel and John's account, comparing these narratives to explore different perspectives on the resurrection story.

Paul discussed the ending of Mark's Gospel, focusing on the women's discovery of the empty tomb and their subsequent fear in reporting it. He noted that later traditions, including Matthew's account, presented a more joyful response to the resurrection. Paul emphasized the powerful impact of the story, even if one doesn't believe it literally, and highlighted the significance of Easter hymns like "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" (which Paul played) in capturing the pensive and thoughtful nature of the resurrection narrative.

He explained that Mary Magdalene was consistently present in these accounts because she was likely the nearest female relative to Jesus, making her the most likely person to visit his tomb. Paul highlighted the recurring theme that the disciples did not initially recognize Jesus after his resurrection.

Paul discussed historical perspectives on the resurrection, noting that such claims were not uncommon 2,000 years ago and questioned the scientific likelihood of bodily resurrection. He highlighted the unique nature of Jesus's teachings in the Gospels, emphasizing that despite the beliefs of some followers, there seems to be a disconnect between believing in Jesus as the Son of God and seriously engaging with his teachings about the Kingdom of God, which emphasized radical forgiveness, love for enemies, and a reversal of hierarchical structures.

Paul discussed the concept of the Kingdom of God from a religious perspective, focusing on how Jesus's teachings about wealth and power contrasted with the later alignment of Christianity with powerful structures. He explained that Jesus's message about the difficulty of rich people entering heaven through the "eye of the needle" was considered too radical, leading to the church's eventual shift toward supporting oppressive powers rather than challenging them. Paul noted how the core message about creating a just world often gets lost over time.

Paul reflected on Jesus's final moments and the enduring power of his message, despite his perceived failure at the time. He led the congregation in a hymn about joy and love, followed by a prayer for those suffering hideous deaths and for religious leaders to speak out for justice and fairness. The prayer also included a request for the country to learn to listen and understand different viewpoints, emphasizing the call to love and forgive in the Kingdom of God.

We had a small congregation of four and we sang "Death's Dominion is Past", "Brightly, Breaks the Easter Morn", "Now the green blade rises", and "Through Human Means".

"Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anaemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." — Martin Luther King Jr.

We had five people in the congregation.

On Sunday 12th April 2026 Rev Victor Ball led the service, delivering a series of reflections and readings on spiritual themes including the universality of religion, love for strangers, and space exploration. Victor shared a story about a 17th century liberal intellectual who humorously described religion as "the religion upon which every gentleman agrees," followed by a discussion about religious universality. He introduced a hymn by Sidney Carter, explaining that the flame in the hymn represents the universality of all religions.



Another reading focused on unity and breaking down barriers between people of different nations, creeds, and backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of supporting one another during difficult times and celebrating together in moments of joy and a call for renewal in the search for common ground and building a fellowship of humanity without distinction.

Victor shared insights from Jack Kornfield's book "A Path With Heart," emphasizing the importance of connecting one's spiritual path with their heart rather than seeking extraordinary experiences. He read a passage about avoiding the traps of materialism and individual isolation in spiritual life, quoting Don Juan's advice to ask if a path has a heart.

Victor discussed his spiritual journey and mentioned a book called "Love Thy Stranger" by biblical scholar Bart Ehrman, focusing on textual criticism of the New Testament and historical Jesus research. He also recommended another scholar, James Tabor, who focuses on the archaeology of the Bible.

Victor discussed the moral impulse to help strangers in need, arguing that this is embedded in Western moral conscience due to the teachings of Jesus. He explained how Christianity revolutionized ethical obligations by universalizing the Jewish emphasis on caring for the poor and needy, extending these obligations beyond the Israelite community. He concluded by emphasizing the relevance of these Christian moral principles in today's world, where hatred and hostility towards others are prevalent, and encouraged considering these ethical foundations regardless of one's religious beliefs.

Victor discussed the concept of hospitality toward strangers in ancient traditions, particularly mentioning guest-friendship customs and how they contrast with current approaches. He discussed how space missions have evolved to represent a more inclusive human spirituality, with examples like Buzz Aldrin's Eucharist on the moon and Jeremy Hansen's mission patch incorporating Indigenous sacred laws. He recommended talks on YouTube for further insight into this topic.

Victor spoke of the remarkable history of human space exploration, from early hot air balloons to the Artemis II project, highlighting the contrast between human achievements in space and ongoing global challenges on Earth. He noted that despite significant progress in space exploration over 50 years, governments have not made corresponding moral progress in addressing Earth's problems such as poverty, disease, and the climate crisis. He questioned whether the billions spent on space exploration might be considered a luxury when these urgent issues demand attention. We had six people in the congregation.

On Sunday 19th April 2026 Rev Margaret Kirk led the service on the theme of "What shapes our religious thinking"

Focusing on the theme of religious influences and how they shape personal beliefs over time. The service included readings from "Every Nation Kneeling" by Will Hayes, which emphasized nature and ethical teachings beyond Christian scripture. Margaret shared her journey from childhood experiences at Church of England schools and with traditional Unitarian services to her current Unitarian practice, highlighting how different religious environments and influences shaped her views. Other members, including Jane, Margaret W, Barry and Christine, also shared their personal religious journeys and experiences with the church

communities.

Margaret introduced a passage from the Sufi scriptures from "Every Nation Kneeling" for the chalice lighting.

Margaret's opening reflections on gathering for worship and praise, and concluded with a prayer for unity and wholeness. She then recited the Lord's Prayer, followed by further readings from "Every Nation Kneeling," including a passage from Lao Tzu's Chinese scriptures titled "Three Precious Things," which emphasized gentleness, frugality, and humility.

Margaret also read passages from different scriptures including Parsi, Egyptian, Quran, and Buddhist writings as part of "The Wider View." about compassion and helping others.

We had five people in the congregation and one person joined us on Zoom.. We sang "Gather us in", "All Faiths", "Others Call it God" and "So simple is the human heart"

Rev Will Hayes was minister from 1929-44 at Chatham Unitarian Church, Kent and again from 1948-9. Rev Will Hayes, a visionary who promoted inter-faith co-operation. He became the leader of the Free Religious Movement which sought to create 'a Brotherhood of Nations through the Sisterhood of Religions'.

Rev Will Hays also founded the Order of the Great Companions, which he hoped would encourage the emergence of an eclectic and universal world religion. Until fairly recently, Chatham Unitarian Church was actually known as the 'Church of the Great Companions' - the 'Great Companions' being the various prophets and religious leaders of all cultures, creeds and races.



Photo by Hazel Warhurst

The Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings 2026 were held at The Hays Conference Centre in Derbyshire. Hazel Warhurst was the delegate for Newcastle Unitarians, Margaret Robinson represented the NUA (Northern Unitarian Association) and David Warhurst had the vote for Stockton Unitarians (as Paul and Christine Walker were unable to attend).

The following three Motions were passed by the Assembly.

Motion 1 - From 12 full members and Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead

"Mindful especially of the need to respond in a timely way to the growing threat to basic human rights across the world, this General Assembly empowers the Chief Officer to issue statements giving a view on current public events, provided that:

(i) Where they consider it necessary this will be after consultation with the Unitarian Social Justice Network, and/or the Executive Committee and GA President;

(ii) Where a resolution on the same topic as the statement has been passed by the General Assembly in the preceding 20 years, the statement shall be consistent with that resolution (or if there are more than one, the most recent); and

(iii) Any statement issued shall not be contrary to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its two covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Motion 2 - Protest Motion From Octagon Chapel, Norwich

- That this General Assembly of Unitarians and Free Christians recognises and strongly affirms that protest is a fundamental Unitarian Spiritual practice.
- Believes that recent and ongoing proposed legislation is an attack on the right to protest and is thus a stifling of religious freedom
- Calls on Unitarians to demand a repeal of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023
- Calls for withdrawal of further plans to increase police powers and ban protests in England and Wales contained in the Crime and Policing Bill
- Urges Unitarians to join campaigns to effect the above and that the Chief Officer and President continue to join other civil rights, climate change and faith groups to pressure the government to repeal, reverse and/or amend this draconian legislation.

THE GA EMERGENCY MOTION ON THE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM 12 FULL MEMBERS

- That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches stands in solidarity with all people suffering the devastating effects of the current war in the Middle East being waged by the United States, Israel and Iran.
- We join the United Nations, the International Red Cross and other global agencies in calling for all warring parties to respect International law and the UN Charter and immediately end this war, which has no UN Security Council sanction and is considered by the vast majority of international jurists illegal in international law and a flagrant violation of the UN Charter.
- We stand in solidarity with the peace witness of Pope Leo, Pax Christi International, the American Unitarian Universalist Association, the American Friends Service Committee, Quakers in Britain and other religious and humanitarian organisations and UN agencies in strongly urging an immediate end to the war and lasting peace and reconciliation in the spirit of the Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World's Religions and other advocates of peace worldwide.
- We call for massive immediate medical and other humanitarian aid to all victims of this war through the British Red Cross, Save the Children, UNICEF and other overseas aid charities and urge fellow Unitarians to respond with generosity to their life saving appeals.



NORTHERN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION



The NUA AGM will be held on **Saturday 24th October 2026** at Stockton Unitarian Centre. Members of the Northern Unitarian Association from Newcastle, Stockton and the wider area are invited to attend. The GA Presidents 2026-2027, **Rev Alex Bradley and Rev Jean Bradley**, will be with us for the weekend. They will be leading worship at **Newcastle Unitarians at 11.00am on Sunday 25th October** and at **Stockton Unitarians at 6.00pm on Sunday 25th October 2026**. This is your opportunity to meet the Presidents of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Joan Campling Unwin

We are sorry to report the death of Joan Unwin. Who peacefully passed away on Friday 10th April 2026. Joan was a member of Stockton Unitarians and we send our sincere condolences to Michael and their family at this sad time.

Joan's funeral will be held on Wednesday 29th April 2026 at 3.00pm at Hartlepool Crematorium.

On Sunday 22nd Mach 2026 Jean Watson and Margaret Kirk attended the Spring Equinox Celebration at Whitby Flowergate Chapel. This service included three circle dances led by Sally Lewis "'Vigil' and 'Uprising' by Bob Minnie. There was singing both by the Members of Whitby Community Choir and Communal singing of "Hares of the Mountain" and "Jack in the Green". The celebrations also had a Peace Meditation, a Sonic poem (made from words contributed by the congregation), a poem read by David Owen and the poem "Waking our chapel dragon" by Microcast Musings.



The UK contingent at the 1969 IRF Conference. Pat and Alan Wilkinson on front row. Photograph from Colin Wilkinson

Community Iftar at St Nicholas Cathedral, 21 February 2026 by Louise Reeve

Ramadan in 2026 lasted from 17 February to 19 March 2026. As the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, Muslims mark the month by refraining from eating and drinking during the hours of sunlight, with *iftar* being the meal traditionally eaten at a community gathering as soon as the sun sets.

Our friends at Dialogue Society North East and Newcastle Cathedral, alongside [NEDES](#) (North East Diversity Education and Solidarity) invited a wide range of people and organisations from across Newcastle join them for the fifth annual community *iftar* at the Cathedral on 21 February 2026 at 4.15pm. We arrived early to ensure we had time for speeches, music and live sand art before the sun set at 5.30pm. Speakers included HM Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear Lucy Winskell; the Lord Mayor of Newcastle City Council Henry Gallagher; the Very Reverend Lee Batson, Dean of Newcastle; Newcastle Cathedral – the Revd. Canon Zoe Heming; Bishop of the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle, Stephen Wright; the High Sheriff of Tyne & Wear, Jo Curry; and Chair of NEDES, Taha Ozleblebici.

The Cathedral pulled out all the stops to make their main worship space a welcoming home for the iftar, with the meal laid out to the side of the altar. The food was amazing, and compliments to the very skilled cooks!

In the words of Dialogue North East: “It was a privilege to connect with over 200 attendees, including representatives and leaders from more than 80 communities and organisations. We were all North East from Blyth to Middlesbrough, Hartlepool to South Shields, Newcastle, Gateshead and more. As we broke our fast together, we were reminded that we are strongest when we are united. Real community is built through dialogue, learning about one another, and creating spaces for sincere conversation. The message is simple: let’s keep talking, keep listening, and keep building trust. We will continue working to connect people and communities – because together, we are stronger.”

At a time when our society seems to be becoming more divided than ever, we need organisations like Dialogue North East, NEDES and more, even our own small community here at Newcastle Unitarians. I made new friends and caught up with old ones from the Inclusive-minded Churches Network, the Reform Synagogue, and many more. What can we now add to this movement for friendship and solidarity?



Unitarian Women's Group Conference

Friday 11th to Sunday 13th September 2026

(4.00pm Friday to 2.00pm Sunday)

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

The future of UWG

???

"Discussions and decisions about the future membership of the UWG, with particular emphasis on inclusion/exclusion of transgender, queer/gender fluid/etc people."

Women of all ages are welcome to this weekend of friendship

Listen Talk Think Laugh together

For booking form and more information

Contact Margaret Robinson at margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

or ring her on 07799 896452 or 01642 782219

(I'm also on WhatsApp)



Are you inspired to lead Unitarian communities with your unique voice and want to improve the quality of your worship? The Lay Worship & Leadership pathway (formerly WSC) is led by experienced Unitarian Ministers over three courses, starting with:

THE FOUNDATION COURSE covering the following topics:

- Exploring theology & elements of Unitarian worship
- Writing sermons and addresses
- Choosing hymns and music
- Improving creative storytelling for all ages

Held via eight, 2-hour (19:00-21:15), online zoom sessions as follows:

- 16th Sept 2026
- 23rd Sept 2026
- 30th Sept 2026
- 7th Oct 2026
- 14 Oct 2026

BREAK

- 28th Oct 2026
- 4th Nov 2026
- 11 Nov 2026

BREAK

- 5th Dec 2026 - Final Assessment & next steps

The cost of the course is £150 and participants are encouraged to approach their chapels and districts to help with funding. Please contact to register: Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

Unitarian College

Growing our faith from the inside
www.unitarian-college.org.uk



"We Are All Stardust"

uniYouth weekend
2nd - 4th October 2026

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

"UniYouth" welcomes children of all ages 7-14yo. They will share The Nightingale Centre with meals, excursions and worship, but will have separate programmes for two age groups: 7-11yo's with their parents/carers and unaccompanied 11-14yo's housed separately.

ALL UNDER 18'S ARE FREE OF CHARGE FOR FULL BOARD!
Accompanying parents/carers Full Board cost is £220.

Please register your interest at:
Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

Unitarian College

Growing our faith from the inside

www.unitarian-college.org.uk



Unitarian Music Society

Summer Conference

7th-10th August 2026

Nightingale Centre
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Peace
and
Joy

Contact :

Margaret Robinson UMS Secretary

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com



*Congratulations
to those Celebrating their
Birthday in*

May

Kazel Warhurst

June

Paul Walker

Victor Ball

Stockton Unitarians Annual General Meeting

Sunday June 28th 2026

Following the evening service

**Coffee Morning at Stockton Unitarians is on the
second Saturday of the month from 10.00am till
11.30am**

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

Saturday 9th May 2026

Saturday 13th June 2026

Saturday 11th July 2026

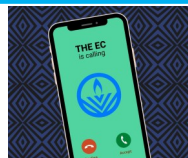


**Deadline for the next edition of Church News is the
Wednesday 24th June 2026**

Please send your contributions for the July /August 2026
edition to the Editor: Margaret Robinson

margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

Executive Committee Messages, 24 February



On Tuesday 24th February 2026, we logged onto Zoom to hear some key messages from the GA EC, including updates on plans for the Annual Meetings, Unitarian College, CIO and what they discussed at their recent meeting at Ullet Road, Liverpool at the weekend. It's good to have the chance to speak directly to our national representatives; a positive thing for our movement that would not have been so easy in earlier years. Discussions afterwards focussed on support for smaller congregations and paying for work to be done, also the future of Congregational Connections and Worship Words resources. Good to catch up with all!

Louise Reeve

Our Knit 'n' Natter Group meet on alternative Tuesdays from 11.00am to 1.00pm. If you enjoy knitting, crocheting, sewing or just chatting, come along bring your lunch and enjoy a couple of hours in good friendly company with a cup of tea.

Dates: 5th and 19th May, 2nd, 16th and 30th June 2026.



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

Unitarian Connections: Geoff Levermore, “Reflections on the Presidency”, 23rd February 2026

On Monday 23rd February, the National Unitarian Fellowship (<https://www.nufonline.org.uk/>) invited Geoff Levermore, the President of the General Assembly, to reflect on his experience of being our President for the past two years. It was great to hear from him about his experience, and what he would share. A large part of it, as ever, is that the term ‘Unitarian’ isn’t widely known, or understood, in the same way that perhaps ‘Quaker’ or ‘Anglican’ is, and that in Geoff’s view we need to do better at using our building spaces and other places, including online, to explain to people what ‘Unitarian’ means.



We discussed the unique challenges of the Unitarian model of an association of independent congregations and the difficulties of getting the balance right between support from the centre, congregational independence, and what support we can afford to pay for, the role of the Executive Committee, and whether we should move to individual, not congregational voting, at the Annual Meetings. A thought-provoking hour! Thanks to the NUF for organising this.

Louise Reeve

Postage stamps

Hello everyone, you must be wondering what has happened to all the stamps you collected for me.

Unfortunately, the RNLI and the RNIB no longer accept used stamps, which left us in a quandary. (My friend at choir also collected stamps) but I’m pleased to say we have found a charity which will accept them. It is **retina UK**. This charity supports people affected by inherited sight loss investing in medical research to help make their challenges a thing of the past.

I am no longer collecting stamps as it is becoming more difficult to dispose of them.

Yours in fellowship and thanks
Margaret Whitham

From our 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 the present 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.



Magnolia tree in Jean Watson's garden

Photo by Jean

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

Or see

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

**Sessions: Saturdays
3.00pm (open 2.30pm)
2nd and 16th May,
6th and 20th June
2026**

Come and sing

Sunday Services 2026

Zoom link: 6680459646



Date	Time	Worship Leader
3rd May	NO Service	May Bank holiday
10th May	3.00pm	Brigitte and Rev Tom McCready
17th May	6.00pm	tba
24th May	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk
31st May	3.00pm	Rev Robert D Foreman
7th June	6.00pm	Barry Thomas
14th June	6.00pm	tba
21st June	NO Service	Visit to Whitby Chapel for 2.00pm service
28th June	6.00pm	Rev Margaret Kirk and Church AGM
5th July	6.00pm	tba
12th July	6.00pm	tba
19th July	6.00pm	tba
26th July	3.00pm	Brigitte and Rev Tom McCready

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 May, June and July 2026

10th May	Mrs Josie Squires
17th May	Mrs Margaret Whitham
24th May	Rev Victor Ball
31st May	Mrs Jane Tomlin
7th June	Flower Fund
14th June	Margaret Robinson
28th June	Mrs Jane Jobson
5th July	Flower Fund
12th July	Mrs Smith and Mrs Fish
19th July	Gail Moore



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