

# Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

*"Here let no one a stranger be"*



May 2023 – Jul 2023

[www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk)

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

## **Lay Person in Charge's Letter**

I have some extraordinary news to report in this newsletter: as part of the General Assembly proceedings this April I was inducted as its President for 2023-2024. This is a great honour, not only to myself but also to the MDA (Manchester District Association) in general and to Rivington Chapel in particular. Who would have thought that lightning would strike twice? After all, I follow in the footsteps of our illustrious and beloved Judith Crompton who graced this office in 2000-2001. If I can do half as good a job as Judith then I shall have achieved something indeed. I look forward to giving full and hopefully eventful details of my duties over the coming year, one of which will involve placing a wreath at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

I don't fully know why I was approached last July to fill this role, but I can say that I am eager and willing to bang the drum, as it were, for our denomination and to share the freedoms, both spiritual and of expression, that it has given to me. I am eager to share our inclusive approach to worship and piety. I am willing to help to provide a welcome to anyone who is seeking meaning and value in their life. At the same time, I am humbled by the staggering efforts our fellow Unitarians go to so that others can share what they have. That is simply to be able to find a place where their approach to their God in whatsoever form it takes is absolutely acceptable and unhindered.

Since wandering unsuspectingly into Rivington Chapel back in 1996 I never doubted the value of worship there. I have always found our Chapels to be havens of warmth and friendliness, places where ideas can be explored and thoughts of piety nurtured. Havens where the urge to think, to speak and to do good are actively encouraged and not cynically brushed off or treated with irony and as uncomfortable episodes.

As Unitarians here in the UK and Ireland, we don't have the luxury of the extensive physical tenure in the world that the large universal churches and denominations have, but we do have spirit, enthusiasm and purpose in our activities. This is, I believe, largely because each one of us is valued in our congregations; when one of us or one of our loved ones passes, we all feel the sadness. When one of us excels in a project or venture we are as happy as they are. If there is a good cause or charity that could do with 'a hand' we assist in any way we are able.

What society could learn from us we need to demonstrate, not in a proselytising way, but as a groundswell of good words, good actions and good thoughts and intentions.

I thank from the very core of my being those who have put their trust and faith in me to be GA President this year and, God willing, I hope to represent you all as best as I can.

Stay safe and God bless

*Vince*

**Lay Person In Charge**

### **Some thoughts of The Buddha**

The thought manifests as the word.

The word manifests as the deed.

The deed develops into habit.

Habit hardens into character.

So watch the thought and its ways with care.

Let it spring from love born out of concern for all beings.

## 2023 Calendar

Sat 13 May	Rivington Village Festival
Sun 21 May	Anniversary Sermons
Sun 4 Jun	Strawberry Tea
Sat 9 Sept	Heritage Open Day and Late Summer Fair
Sun 15 Oct	Harvest Festival
Sun 17 Dec	Christmas Carol Service

### **Chairman's Letter**

Thanks to all those members who let me have their views for the Chalice Logo Consultation. After considering all the responses, the Executive Committee of the General Assembly (GA) has now written to all congregations with feedback from the consultation process and this has been distributed to Chapel members.

Congratulations to Vince on his appointment as President of the GA for the year 2023-24. Judith Crompton was the Chapel's delegate to the meetings this time, and we look forward to reading her report in the next newsletter. In the meantime, here's an extract from what Tina Gandhi wrote about her first experience of the meetings: *It was also great seeing Vince McCully [...] being appointed GA president. His speech emanated peace, his voice and mannerisms so gentle. Let him maintain the glue that binds us all, cohesiveness all the way!* You can read her account in full on the Walmsley Chapel Facebook page.

The Rivington Spring Festival takes place on Saturday 13 May, and as part of this the Chapel will be having a stall on the village green selling

preserves and bric-a-brac. There should also be some live music in the Chapel.

The Chapel's 320<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is on Sunday 21 May, when the service will be taken by Rev Phil Waldron, Minister of Ullet Road Chapel in Merseyside. This will be followed at 4:00 pm by our Anniversary meal which will be at The Bay Horse, Heath Charnock. If you would like to join us, please sign the list on the Chapel notice board or let me know by phone or email. A choice of Sunday roast (including vegetarian and vegan options) and some specials will be available.

It's a special day for the McCully family on 29 July, when Vince will be the celebrant at the wedding of his daughter Isobel, and Sheila will be accompanying her into Chapel. Congratulations to Isobel and David.

**Alison Whitaker**  
**Chairman, Congregational Committee**

### **AGM report**

Alison Whitaker and Frank Ascroft remain in their posts of Chairman and Treasurer for another year. Jacqueline Dagnall has decided to step down from the Committee due to ongoing health issues. The other Committee members are Diane Fairclough, Paul Fairclough and Geoff Newey, who has joined for a second term. Jacqui Kershaw continues in the role of Publicity Officer.

Vince was re-elected as Lay Person in Charge. He has now completed the Intermediate Stage of the Worship Studies Training and has begun the Advanced stage.

Other matters that were discussed were an update on the refurbishment of the notice board in the grounds, rearranging the area by the

organ to provide more space for visiting music groups and sorting the upper vestry.

The draft minutes have been circulated by email and there is a copy on the notice board in Chapel together with the statement of accounts. They can also be viewed on the Chapel website ([www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk) ).

### **Trust Matters**

During the winter period, very little maintenance has been required within the Chapel and its estate. However, the second coat of lime-wash has now been applied to the Chapel interior walls and so this work is now complete.

As stated in the Autumn newsletter, the trustees, being concerned about the trees in the churchyard, had received a map of the trees on the Chapel estate. Following an audit of their state, most of the recommended work to remove overhanging and potentially dangerous branches has now been completed.

In addition, the concerns about the deteriorating state of the tea-room windows have been discussed with the tenants, who have been attempting to obtain an affordable quotation for the work, which they had agreed would be funded by a financial loan from their bank. After one almost successful attempt to achieve this aim, they are still actively trying to find an alternative quotation that would suit their financial position. Of course, any new windows would have to meet with our specified design drawn by our architect as well as meet current regulations.

A final issue has been the state of some of the monuments within the churchyard and the potential safety risk with respect to third parties.

We commissioned an audit during the January/February period with a local firm of monumental masons. The audit categorised those that were completely safe (not surprisingly, most of these were flat grave-stones), those that appeared to lean but were safe in terms of resisting moderate sideways pressure and those whether leaning or not that could be moved by applying gentle sideways pressure. Because those monuments falling into this last category were evenly spaced across the graveyard, the firm recommended that we prioritise those adjacent to footpaths in the first instance. A list of these was presented to the last trustees meeting and it was agreed that the firm should be invited to render these safe according to their costings. This work should take place during the next month or so.

**Richard Horrocks, Chairman of Trustees**

### **Pew Doors from Bank Street**

In December 2022, the Chapel became the home for three oak pew doors dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. A photo of one of the doors can be seen on the front cover. The doors were from Bank Street Chapel in Bolton, and had been sold at auction following the closure of Bank Street last May.

The doors were bought by Denis McCann who lives in Cambridge. As Bolton Museum was not interested in taking the doors, Denis appealed on Facebook for any ideas for a suitable home for them. The Chapel decided that it would be an appropriate place to house them, and Denis has now given them to us in perpetuity.

Bank Street was once called 'Windy Bank' and the first chapel there opened in 1696. The congregation had been formed in 1672 by Rev Richard Goodwin, who in 1662 had been ejected from his living as vic-

ar of Bolton just as Samuel Newton was in Rivington. Richard Goodwin took out a licence to preach in a house at the corner of Deansgate and Mealhouse Lane.

In 1695, a Mr Seddon, who lived in a large house at the top of Windy Bank, made a gift of some land for the purpose of erecting a chapel. The land, which had previously been used as a garden, was twenty-six yards long and eleven and a half yards wide. The application for the registration was dated September 22, 1696. The chapel is described as 'a Meeting House newly erected for the worship of Almighty God by his Majesty's loyal Protestant subjects, the Dissenters of Bolton.'

The original chapel was replaced in 1856, and four of the pew doors were saved and put on display in the new building.

The doors are made of black oak and are carved with various initials which are likely to be those of the pew owners. Denis's information suggests that the initials AO and AG on one of the doors are those of Abigail Oaky and her aunt Alice Gregge, but further research is needed to verify this and to identify the other owners.

The missing fourth door, pictured here, is thought to have belonged to Roger Thropp, and is carved with the date 1696.



*Many thanks to Denis McCann for sending the information on which this article is based.*

## **Rivington Open Hour**

In place of the Talk, Tea and Teacake events he ran last year, Chris Martin will now be opening the Chapel on the first Wednesday of each month between 2:00 and 3:00 pm. He will give visitors a free guided tour of the Chapel and talk about its history. The next open hour will be on Wednesday 3 May.

## **Virtual Tour**

If you are not able to visit the Chapel in person, you can look at the 3D virtual tour created by Daniel Stenson from ViewPro360 in conjunction with Chris.

The tour shows a 3D image of the interior of the Chapel, and by clicking on the buttons for the highlighted features you can find information about each one.

You can 'enter' the virtual tour either by following this link <https://rivingtonchapel.org.uk/virtual-tour-of-rivington-chapel/> or using this QR code if you have a reader on your phone or other device.



There are now some QR codes in the Chapel and also at various points in the grounds.

## **Visit to Lincoln Unitarian Chapel**

At the beginning of March, John and I took the Motorhome over to North Lincolnshire. We stayed for a week at Willingham by Stow and took the opportunity whilst there to visit family and celebrate our niece's birthday with them.

On the Sunday we visited the Unitarian Chapel in High Street, Lincoln for their Formal Worship Meeting. There is no car park at the chapel and city centre parking is not particularly easy. Fortunately, our

nephew David lives just round the corner, so we were able to use his parking space and walk round to the Chapel which was originally built in 1725 (before which the congregation used to meet in the home of John Disney).

We walked through the doors into a warm and welcoming space with large, imposing wooden pillars that are thought to have been ships' masts. The pews had been moved to the sides of the room and the Chalice sat on a low table in the centre of a circle of comfortable chairs occupied by the small congregation. One of their number, Jennifer, played music on a keyboard to set the mood as people readied themselves for worship.



The theme of the service was the first of a series of four that would address the four principles of Creation Spirituality as outlined by writer and teacher Matthew Fox; The Via Positiva, Via Negativa, Via Creativa and Via Transformativa. In order to consider the Via Positiva, the Minister, John Carter, gave a number of readings relating to the presence of God in nature. He had grown up in North Arizona and Kansas and the desert landscapes that he remembered served as illustrations for his address. After readings, prayers and the address a microphone was passed around the circle so that people could comment on, question or add to what had been said. There were four hymns from the Purple book accompanied by music from a CD. We knew the tunes to two of them but they were all easy to join in with.

After the service we chatted with Rev. Carter who has led a most interesting life. He studied at University in California and has worked as an outreach minister on HIV/AIDS prevention. He said he grew up in an Evangelical, Fundamentalist Pentecostal home, later joining the Mennonite Church. He describes himself as an Anabaptist Unitarian follower of Jesus with pagan sensibilities, so that covers a lot of bases! He became a Unitarian after moving to Suffolk in 2004 with his British partner. He came to Lincoln three years ago on a six month contract (working also as a Chaplain



for Lincoln University and as Minister at Hull Unitarian Chapel). The long-distance relationship he and his partner have had since may not be ideal but they make it work.

By now the other 5 members of the congregation had moved through to the kitchen where we joined them for tea and coffee. They were very welcoming and we chatted for quite a while. Jennifer, who had played the keyboard before the service, had lived in Preston for a while. We were surprised to meet someone who knew Croston, but it didn't end there. One told us that his Son-in-Law, Tom Shepherd, came from Croston and his own mother-in-law was buried in Croston Cemetery. Talk about a small world!

Eventually it was time to leave so we said our goodbyes and made our way back to Willingham by Stow for lunch at the camp site. A most interesting visit and one we shall remember fondly.

**Linda Green**

**Psalm 23 for This Moment by Kevin Tarsa (UU minister in California)**

May I remember in this tender moment  
that Love is my guide, always,  
shepherding me toward ways of openness and compassion.

I have what I need, really, with Love at my side,  
above me, below me, in front of me, behind me,  
inside every cell of me, Love infused everywhere!

Just when the weight of the world I inhabit  
threatens to drop me in place  
and press my hope down into the ground beneath me  
Love invites me to rest for a gentle while,  
and leads the centre of my soul to the quiet, still, restoring waters  
nearby that, somehow, I had not noticed.

And so, Love, quietly,  
sets me once again on its tender and demanding path.

Even when the walls close around me  
and the cries of death echo through untold corners,  
gripping my heart with fear and sadness,  
I know... I know that all will be well, that I will be well,  
when Love whispers near to me, glints at the corner of my eye,  
rests with gentle and persistent invitation upon my shoulders.

Yes, Love blesses me,  
Even as the sources and symbols of my pain look on.  
Love blesses me from its infinite well,  
And I turn and notice... that goodness and kindness and grace,  
follow me everywhere, everywhere I go.

I live in a house of Love, Love that will not let me go.  
I live in a house of Love, and always will.

*A reading used by Hannah Stephenson at a recent service.*

## **Publications**

Please contact Chris Martin (01257 483702, [email: chris\\_and\\_june@hotmail.com](mailto:chris_and_june@hotmail.com)) if you would like to buy any of the various Rivington Chapel publications, details of which can be found on the website: [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk/publications](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk/publications)

## **Donations**

Please remember that if you are not able to attend services in person, you can donate what you would have put in the collection via CAFDonate. Gift Aid can be added if you are a UK taxpayer.

You can either follow the Donations link on our website [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk) or go directly to <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/12556>

## **A Note from the Editor**

If you need to inform us of any change in your details, or if you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please contact me, either by emailing [newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk) or phoning 01942 816569.

Also, please email if you would like to help us reduce the cost of printing and posting the newsletter by opting to have an e-mail version rather than a paper copy. You can read this and past issues online at [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk).

**Alison**

## Dates for your Diary

### Sunday Services at 2:15 PM

07 May	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
21 May	Anniversary Service Rev Phil Waldron - Ullet Road Chapel
04 June	Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel
18 June	Ewen Sim - Bury Chapel
02 July	Rev Lynne Readett - Chowbent Chapel
16 July	Rev Shammy Webster
06 August	Hannah Stephenson - Southport and Park Lane

### Flower Donors

07 May	Mary Horrocks
21 May	Jacqueline Dagnall
04 June	Judith Crompton
18 June	Jacqui and Tim Kershaw
02 July	Frank Ascroft
16 July	Jacqui and Tim Kershaw
06 August	Elsie Kent

## Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sat 20 May	Wedding of Lisa Thompson and Tony Rowan
2:00 pm	Conducted by Vince McCully
Sat 29 July	Wedding of Isobel McCully and David Hansen
2:00 pm	Conducted by Vince McCully

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If you would like to arrange a ceremony at Rivington  
Chapel, please contact Alison or Vince  
Contact details overleaf

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**Issue date: 16 Jul 2023**

send to: Alison Whitaker, 14 Church Street, Westhoughton, Bolton,  
BL5 3RS

telephone: 01942 816569

email: [newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk)

Please send your contributions electronically if possible to the email address above. For those without access to the internet I am still happy to receive handwritten copy.

Lay Person in Charge & Pulpit Supply	Vince McCully 20 Thirlmere Close, Anderton, Lancashire, PR6 9QD 01257 483733 email: vinmcul@hotmail.co.uk	
<b><i>Your Committee</i></b>		
Chairman Newsletter Editor & Flower Rota	Alison Whitaker 14 Church Street, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3RS 01942 816569 email: newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk	
Secretary	Position vacant	
Treasurer & Chapel Keeper	Frank Ascroft 13a Highfield Road North, Adlington, Lancashire, PR6 9RN 01257 483635	
Other Committee Members	Paul & Diane Fairclough Geoff Newey	01257 474761 07746 906635
<b><i>Other Contact Details</i></b>		
Publicity Officer	Jacqui Kershaw	email: jacqui@analpa.co.uk 01704 821854 07857 354192