

Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here let no one a stranger be"



Aug 2023 – Oct 2023

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

2023 Calendar

Sat 9 Sept	Heritage Open Day and Late Summer Fair
Sun 15 Oct	Harvest Festival
Sun 17 Dec	Christmas Carol Service

Lay Person in Charge's Letter

Being the President of the GA, I am in a very unique position to see how things tick in different places and to speak with people I wouldn't normally meet. To date I have conducted services for districts on each side of the country, from Heswall, Wirral in the Merseyside District to Boston, Lincolnshire in the East Midlands District. I have assisted Ed Fordham and Reverend John Carter in dedicating the Peace Pole at Great Hucklow Chapel, and beyond these shores I have attended at the Synod of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland (NSPCI) and the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster.

From everything I have seen and heard I would say, with hand on heart, that our faith is in a good place both ethically and temporally. What stands out the most to me, is how the challenges that all our congregations face, congregations such as here at Rivington, are being met with good humour and steadfastness by energetic and fully engaged people. Without this grass roots commitment and dedication our Unitarian faith would simply not survive.

It is reassuring to know that the dedicated and dynamic team of our GA and its executive is working away behind the scenes, always ready, willing and able to back congregations and districts and take the strain where possible.

My hope is that our future will be secured by engaging with the young and hopefully our message of inclusion is permeating society effectively for this to happen. Even a cursory look at our GA Meetings is evidence of Unitarian commitment to all of society. Indeed, we have so much to offer and in a way that enables folk personally and spiritually to find their best “them” that it is imperative for us to work as a team to ensure that we don’t just survive but that we prosper too.

Stay safe and God bless

Vince

Lay Person In Charge

Chairman’s Letter

On Sunday 4 June we held our Strawberry Tea, and were joined by several visitors from Stand Chapel. The occasion was made even more special with a presentation to Vince to mark his ten years as the Chapel’s Lay Person in Charge.



The refurbishment of the notice board in the Chapel Grounds is almost complete. A new board for the central panel has been made by

Pendle Woodcraft in Darwen. The lettering is now engraved into the wood, which should make maintenance easier in the future. The Perspex on the doors has been replaced and the wooden frame has been painted. Many thanks to Paul and Dianne Fairclough for their hard work.

Thanks to those people who have opened up the Chapel early on service days so that we can welcome visitors to look round. We hope that early opening will continue during August and September – there is a gap on the rota on Sunday 3 September, so if anyone is available on that day, please let me know.

Our Late Summer Fair and Heritage Open Day event will be on Saturday 9 September. We intend to have our usual stalls selling bric-a-brac and home-made produce, plus a tombola. If you can donate any bottles for the tombola, please contact Dianne Fairclough.

Alison Whitaker

Thoughts

I think of 'God' as the fullness of being on which we depend, the bigger picture of which we are part, tiny as we are. There is a life enfolding our lives and all our fellow mortals, from which we come, to which we go, in which all things natural have their being, by which all things spiritual are accomplished. It is the Life Universal, of which we are part, by whose laws alone we are enabled to do good, but is not made complete without us.

From 'The Puzzle of God', by Rev Frank Walker

Published in the Inquirer, October 2022

**Report of the General Assembly Meetings held at Staverton Park
Hotel Tuesday 4th – Thursday 6th April 2023**

I felt honoured when I was asked to attend as delegate for Rivington Chapel. Where have all the years gone since I first attended the meetings on behalf of Bank Street Chapel, way back in the mists of time; 1968!

The dates and various venues in April were always eagerly anticipated and when the papers arrived with their interesting and challenging motions, these were debated and mandate on how to vote given to the representative. It was therefore disappointing that, considering the major problems faced by today's world - Global Warming, the War in Ukraine, Child Poverty to name but a few - that this year no motions were forthcoming.

It was heartening, however, that although numbers are greatly reduced, seventy five percent were newcomers, and it was a pleasure for we 'oldies' to introduce them to the rigours and mysteries of this annual event.

After the opening ceremony on Tuesday afternoon, I attended the book launch; the book in question was 'Cherishing the Earth – Nourishing the Spirit' edited by Maria Curtis. This book is for anyone who is seeking a spiritual response to the ecological crisis that confronts us all. A must read for us all as Maria believes that the ecological crisis presents us with the major challenge of our time and the book gives detailed insight into the urgent problems of which we are constantly made aware by the media.

After the first plenary session, with its formal motions efficiently dealt with and passed, we had an opportunity to visit some of the many splendid exhibitions mounted by the hard working members of

various activities. There was such a plethora of workshops and meetings during the short two and a half days we were together that difficult choices had to be made. I chose 'Youth Leading Change', a vital issue if Unitarianism is to have a future and move forward.

After dinner, during which it was good to chat with friends of many years standing and make new ones, came the lecture by the keynote speaker Jon Alexander: 'Citizens - why the key to fixing the future is us'. After social time in the bar, it was tired but happy to bed.

Breakfast on April 5th was followed by opening devotions led by Rev John Carter. The plenary session heard the presentation of the annual report given by Chief Officer Liz Slade and the accounts from Rob Whiteman. The second half of the morning, I greatly enjoyed the Associate Members gathering which keeps us in touch with each other during the year, but it is wonderful to meet face to face.

The afternoon sessions were both special for me. The Women's League has a dwindling membership but an optimistic outlook.

Many years ago, when my dear friend the late Rev Elwyn Davies came to speak at our Pilgrimage, he dubbed me an honorary member of the Welsh Unitarians. The speaker on '60 years of Welsh Unitarianism' was Rev Eric Jones; this for me was one of the highlights, with its traditional Welsh mix of information and humour.

I have to admit that I skipped the sessions between tea and dinner and took myself off for a much-needed nap.

The Anniversary Service was led by Rev Winnie Gordon who took as her theme 'Stand Up for Justice'. Briefly she explained that justice and love prevail through connectedness. That we have a proud history of activist resolutions dating back to the abolition of slavery,

equality of education, disarmament from 1929, acceptance of refugees since 1943, gender rights, abortion rights, LGBTQ+ equality, anti-poverty initiatives, prison reforms, peace calls, freedoms, human rights and environment justice. Winnie reminded us that Dr Seuss's Lorax says that 'unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot nothing is going to get better, it's not'. Food for thought indeed. A final thought: it's time we move outwards, away from the glories of the past, away from the internal bickering about autonomy, chalices and names, quotas and 'theological representation'. Amen to that.

Ably assisting at the service were Revs Kate Dean and Stephanie Bisby who wrote a special hymn 'Showing up to fight for justice' with music by Jan Hazel. The music was extremely high standard for both the service and throughout the meetings, provided by musical director Peter Flowers.

Thursday morning's Plenary Session dealt with the Stipend Review Committee Report and the GA structures.

After coffee, I chose the fringe event 'Criminal Justice' and found that since my 30+ years as a magistrate, things had changed in my view, not always for the better!

The Plenary session included the Presidential Address in which Sue Wooley spoke of the overwhelming kindness with which she had been treated during her years of office.

The final plenary was the moment at which our own Vince McCully, who had been appointed President of The General Assembly for the ensuing 12 months, was installed by Sue. Vince told the assembled company that 'To be appointed President of The General Assembly is a great honour, the greatest I have ever or will ever likely receive'. Our heartiest good wishes and love to Vincent. We shall miss you

when you are fulfilling your Presidential duties but will keep our chalices burning brightly as ever.

P.S. I feel sure that advancing age and health issues will prevent my going to the meetings next year. Please appoint a delegate to support Vince when his task will be the challenging but enjoyable one as Chairman.

Judith Crompton

Trust Matters

The last few months have seen a number of maintenance issues undertaken including the usual gutter cleaning. During this an anti-bird mesh appeared to have become dislodged (by acrobatic squirrels?) over the pulpit area and a bird was found to have entered the roof space and built quite a large nest. Obviously, words from the pulpit during this period were not fiery enough to dissuade entry!

The tree work started earlier in the year has now been completed, although ensuring that all trees are safe and that overhanging branches are trimmed is a recurring challenge.

The most major work undertaken was a consequence of the churchyard monument audit which was carried out during February. At their AGM in March, the Trustees agreed to fund the work highlighted as being of a high priority, which were mainly some of the taller monuments close to the path around the south side of the Chapel and leading to the Tea Room. Some of these had been found to have either weak cement joints or unstable foundations. This work has now been completed and so we are confident that any hazards arising from monuments erected many years ago are now at a minimum level.

Finally, after a number of failures to find suitable craftsmen to quote for the replacement of the Tea Room windows, the tenants have now found an interested tradesman and discussions are about to start which hopefully will lead to a satisfactory conclusion.

Richard Horrocks
Chairman, Rivington Chapel Trustees

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 2 August.

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.

From the Archives

During a clear-out of old Chapel papers, some interesting items came to light. One was a poem written by Judith Crompton which you can read later in this newsletter.

The oldest was a balance sheet for Rivington Chapel Sunday School for the year ending March 1915. Entries under income included 18s 7½d of proceeds from the Annual Field Day, and 10 shillings '*Received from L. and Y. Rly. Company for delay of Scenery*'. This was presumably for a production of the play '*King Catarrho*', as one of the entries under expenditure is 12s 9d for '*11 Copies of Play*'. The largest expense was £9 16s 6d for the Children's Christmas Party. Coal and coke cost £3 10s 10d and £1 4s 8d was spent on lamp glasses and oil. The closing balance was £51 17s 4d.

There were also some orders of service; these included two for the Anniversary Sermons on Sunday May 27, 1956. The minister was Rev Joyce Hazlehurst of Horwich, who led services in the afternoon at 3 pm and in the evening at 6.30 pm, with different hymns (and, presumably, a different sermon) at each one.

In March 1970, Captain J.W.R. Crompton wrote the following letter from his home at Rivington Farm, Burstow, Surrey.

'Dear Dick Milner

I have much pleasure in enclosing cheque in respect of this Family's Pew Rents for this present year. Your official receipt in due course (May next will do quite well, to save postage etc), will be appreciated.

Kindest regards from us both.

Yours sincerely

John W. R. Crompton'

A scan of the 1915 balance sheet, along with many other old Chapel documents, can be found on the Chapel website at www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk/ephemera

From 'Cherishing the Earth – Nourishing the Spirit' (as mentioned by Judith in her GA report)

Earth Mother,
Our fragile, floating home,
We hear your weeping.

As we sit in our comfort,
Help us to see how changes – large and small –
Can make a difference to our suffering siblings.

Let us put the natural world
At the heart of every action,
At the centre of every decision,
Choosing to tread lightly on the earth
So that we may be good ancestors
To those not yet born
And good stewards
Of that which is yet to grow.

May we not be bowed down
By our despair for the future,
But use our anger as potent fuel
To energise our actions
For a fairer world
For all.

Rev Kate Dean

The Rivington Chapel Bell

Listen! listen! listen! Do you hear the bell?
In days gone by it summoned folk to worship;
Across meadow and moorland they came
 ~ they, the faithful ~
To worship in this chapel on the village green.

Listen! listen! listen! Do you hear the bell?
Years have gone by; times and customs changed;
But still we come to worship;
 ~ we, the faithful ~
To worship in this chapel on the village green.

Listen! listen! listen! Do you hear the bell?
Ever may folk answer to its call
To worship here in spirit and in truth
 ~ they, the faithful, they who follow after
To worship in this chapel on the village green.

Judith Crompton



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

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 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 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.

Alison

Dates for your Diary

Sunday Services at 2:15 PM

- 06 August Hannah Stephenson - Southport and Park Lane
- 20 August Jean Clements - Denton Chapel
- 03 September Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
- 17 September Geoff Newey - Rivington Chapel
- 01 October Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel
- 15 October Harvest Festival
Rev Laura Dobson - Chorlton and Macclesfield
- 05 November Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel

Flower Donors

- 06 August Elsie Kent
- 20 August Alison Whitaker and Peter Bearon
- 03 September Diane Fairclough
- 17 September Elsie Kent
- 01 October Vince and Isobel McCully
- 15 October Mary Horrocks
- 05 November Jacqui and Tim Kershaw

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sat 29 July Wedding of Isobel McCully and David Hansen
2:00 pm Conducted by Vince McCully

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

Copy date for next issue: 1 Oct 2023
Issue date: 15 Oct 2023

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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.

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