



Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel

Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here let no one a stranger be"



Nov 2023 – Jan 2024

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

2023-24 Calendar

2023

Sat 11 Nov Craft Market in the Chapel and Tea Rooms

Sat 18 Nov Craft Market in the Chapel and Tea Rooms

Sun 17 Dec Christmas Carol Service

2024

Sun 17 Mar Congregational AGM

Sat 11 May Rivington Village Festival

Sun 19 May Anniversary Sermons

Sun 2 June Strawberry Tea

Date tbc Heritage Open Day and Late Summer Fair

Sun 20 Oct Harvest Festival

Sun 15 Dec Christmas Carol Service

Lay Person in Charge's Letter

This letter hopes to find everyone in fine spirits after a mostly sunny Summer and an unseasonably warm and sunny Autumn, and all charged up and getting set for a busy, busy, Yuletide. Jumping ahead a bit there.

We are now halfway through the Presidency year for the GA and it's been all go; non-stop you could say. Since I last checked in with you, I

have concluded the residential part of the Advanced Worship Studies Course which was intense to say the least. Despite years of preaching, in many different pulpits, and continual study, there is still lots to learn and what a bonus to be in the company of many accomplished teachers and inspirational students.

Since my last letter in July I have been honoured to fly the GA flag in ten different chapels, from Kendal in the North, to Rochdale and Sheffield Underbank in the middle and Brighton in the South. They all have different ways of worship but there are more things in common than meets the eye. As you might expect the singing at Underbank was exceptional and the setting quite breath taking. Everywhere I have visited I've been made to feel so welcome and the hospitality has been faultless. The care and pride taken in all the chapels is heartwarming and a credit to everyone.

I always try to post pictures of where I've been on Facebook, though they hardly do credit to the effort involved. Brighton's colonnade is absolutely stunning and popular in a multifunctional sort of way; during Covid restrictions the '*Casa Italia*' next door gave *al fresco* dining a new dimension as they put chairs and tables there. In the evening it's a hang-out for the youths and at night a welcome sheltered area for some rough sleepers.

Back home, Isobel's wedding was just awesome and the Chapel more than exceeded expectations. There's lots on Facebook to see, but when the bride says, 'It's been the best day of my life', I think it's safe to say we got it right. The village hall dressed up a treat and once again it delivered on the day.

Our Heritage Open Day cum Late Summer Fair was well attended and had some innovations to boast, not least a gazebo next to the main

gate and a card machine that brought in the not inconsiderable sum of just under £40. Many thanks to Debbie and Sue and to everyone who worked so hard to make it a success.

Chris Martin is making a meaningful addition to Chapel activities with the first Wednesday informal open days proving a resounding success. Let's hope Chris' new book, 'The Case of The Abominable Snowball', an Inky Stevens adventure, is an even bigger one. Very well done Chris. Thanks also for your tireless work on our rather splendid 2024 calendar.

A big thanks to Alison who also works so hard on this newsletter, it's a lot of work and I should know, having produced it for a while.

And what about the Tearoom next door's accolade, 'Best Tearoom in Lancashire'? Of course it is: we've always known this; well done guys, couldn't happen to a nicer gang, whoop! whoop!

Really well done all round, well done: the Committee, the Congregation and the Trustees; it is a team effort to keep our Chapel a vibrant and welcoming place for all to use for the worship of God in their own way, a place to treat as a safe haven, as I know I do!

Before I sign off, you might see The GA President (me!) on TV on Sunday 12 November as I lay a wreath on behalf of Unitarians and Free Christians at the cenotaph in Whitehall.

Stay safe and God bless

Vince

Lay Person In Charge

Chairman's Letter

The Chapel was open on Saturday 9 September for Heritage Open Day and our Late Summer Fair. We raised £173 on the day, mainly from the tombola. As well as the stalls there was an exhibition about the history of the Chapel which featured some items from our collection of photographs, newsletters and service programmes from the past forty or so years.

Both the notice boards in the Chapel grounds now have cork board backing which makes it much easier to insert drawing pins for displaying notices.

We are very grateful to Mary Midgley from Pepper Hill Chapel in Shelf, West Yorkshire, for donating a new visitors book. The new book is already in use, as the old one was filled up by visitors to the Heritage Open Day.

We were very sad to hear of the death of Rev Penny Johnson at the beginning of September. Penny coming to take services at Rivington was always something to look forward to, especially if she brought her trusty assistant, Goliath. Vince, Peter and I went to her memorial service on Friday 6 October at Dean Row Chapel. This was led by Rev Jeff Gould according to Penny's instructions. She had even written an account of her life, which her husband Ken read out before adding his own personal tribute.

Alison Whitaker
Chairman, Congregational Committee

Trust Matters

Time seems to have moved quickly since my Summer newsletter report, perhaps reflecting the rather windy and wet weather which asked one to pose the question “When does Summer start?” One aspect of the very windy periods was the fracture of a main beech tree branch in the southwest corner of the graveyard, which fell on one of the horizontal gravestones and cracked it quite badly. While we had had a comprehensive tree audit earlier in the year, which had resulted in some remedial work being carried out, the branch fall was quite unexpected, although we were informed after the event that these sudden fractures are a particular feature of beech trees which cannot be predicted. It is hoped that some repair work may be carried out on the affected gravestone soon.

The side windows in the Tea Room have now been replaced based on our architect’s drawings of some time ago and while they are of hardwood as required, they are coated in a protective layer which has a guaranteed life of 20 years thereby giving the frames a rather synthetic look. The remaining windows requiring attention are the north gable, which it may be possible to repair, and a couple of smaller windows that may still need to be replaced or repaired.

The general state of the perimeter walls is causing some concern, and our local contractor has indicated that their remediation would be too large a job for him and so it is likely that we shall need to have a formal survey and so seek professional advice.

Of final note in this newsletter is that the final niche in the Garden of Remembrance has now been sold and the Trustees at their September meeting received a report from its small working group as to possible ways forward. Options included the addition of a lower

columbarium at the north side, adjacent to the road, the creation of an urn garden and/or a place to accept commemorative plaques. These options are currently being assessed by the Trustees.

Richard Horrocks
Chairman, Rivington Chapel Trustees

A Musical Service

The service on Sunday 19 November will be rather different from the usual format. It will be led by the former One Accord [Linda, John, Alison, Peter] and Peter Gammon. The idea was kickstarted when Peter Gammon said one day that it would be lovely to play some music in Chapel. That gave us the impetus to start thinking how we could draw on our collective love of traditional music to put together a service.

The Index of Composers, Arrangers and Sources of Tunes in the green hymn book lists over fifty tunes as 'Traditional', and the purple hymn book has over forty. We'll be taking a look at the sources of some of the traditional English tunes which were then adapted and arranged for use as hymn tunes. They are all set to very familiar words, so there'll be plenty for the congregation to join in with.

Quite some time ago, Peter [Bearon] came across an old handwritten manuscript book in the upper vestry. This contained mainly hymn tunes, and we are going to use a couple of those as part of the service. One is a very familiar tune but in a different rhythm, and for the other we'll use a set of words that you know very well.

As it will be only a week after Remembrance Sunday, we'll devote part of the service to the theme of remembrance.

We hope to see plenty of you there helping us to make a joyful noise.

Summer Travels

Over the summer Peter and I went to two week-long Folk Festivals: Sidmouth and Whitby. Both festivals use their town's Unitarian chapel as a venue.

Like Rivington, The Old Dissenting Meeting House in Sidmouth has two Sunday afternoon services a month. However, the Chapel and hall are used extensively during the week for activities



such as Pilates, aerobics, dance and as a café. During the festival this year it was the venue for small acoustic concerts and storytelling sessions, with workshops for children taking place in the hall.

Flowergate Old Chapel in Whitby had closed in 2021 as some expected funding had failed to materialise and the roof was found to be unsafe. Fortunately, Flash Company Arts Ltd, a creative arts organisation, were looking for a new venue.

They were already running community-based activities at the United Reformed Church further up Flowergate, and were wanting to expand. So, after essential repairs had been carried out, the Unitarian Chapel was able to reopen in August 2022, just in time for Whitby Folk Week.



This year the Chapel was used for a series of informal 'Tales and Tunes' performances by various festival guest artists. At the end of

the concert I attended, the MC sent us away with these words: ‘May the roof of this building never fall in, and may the friends who meet beneath it never fall out.’ I’m sure we would hope that for Rivington too.

Alison

Rivington Open Hour

Chris Martin hosts an open hour in the Chapel on the first Wednesday of each month between 2:00 and 3:00 pm, when he gives visitors a free guided tour of the Chapel and talks about its history. The Chapel will next be open on Wednesday 1 November. Chris will be taking a break in December and January, but will resume the open hours on Wednesday 7 February 2024.

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.

Autumn

Sometimes I wonder why the seasons need to turn.

Already there are signs that the summer is coming to an end.

At the edges of the warm summer days is a touch of cooler weather,
the lights are being switched on that bit earlier,
and the wind has already dislodged a few leaves.

Even in the summer there is a creeping reminder that darker and
colder days will return.

Do we really need this reminder?

Or is it doing us a favour - a heads-up - giving us time to get used to
the idea?

Not many of us like sudden changes or rude shocks.

Going from the height of summer to the depths of winter would give
us no time to prepare, no time to stock up and make ready.

So maybe we would do well to give thanks for the subtle changes and
gentle reminders.

May we look forward to the season of Autumn, with all its grand
colours, reminding us that there can be beauty and dignity, even in
death.

May we have the grace to cope with the sudden changes in life that
we get no advanced warning of, which can catch us unprepared and
leave us reeling as we try to make sense of things.

from **Rev Ant Howe**

In **Worship Words** online resource

Affirmations

I am alive in the midst of other creatures who are alive.

I am grateful to be alive and value the share of life that I have. In me there is a creative power that I rely on that enables me to make something good out of my life however simple and basic it may be.

I am not alone. I am surrounded by countless other lives on whom I am dependent and I must respect these lives. Just as I rely on the creative power within me to think and act, so I must also rely on the creative power in others, my neighbours. I depend upon their lives and work, so I must value my neighbours just as I value myself. I rely on the creative flow of life in which all beings find themselves.

Whilst we confess that humans are selfish, greedy, foolish and murderously destructive, we believe that they are also capable of cherishing and trusting what is true and beautiful.

I live in society, and all members of society must help and respect one another if life is to go well. Without this grateful cooperation we may destroy ourselves. So I myself, my neighbours and the cooperative society we fashion for ourselves are all bound up together in the great bundle of life.

Although we live now in the new global era we may still draw strength from a specific religious tradition that we inherit, while at the same time acknowledging that other religious traditions may also have great value. No one tradition is exclusively ultimate.

At the same time we try to find and cherish all that is universal, trying to approach the universal through what is particular and specific.

from **Rev Frank Walker, minister emeritus, Cambridge Unitarians**

Some thoughts of Hildegard von Bingen, 12th Century German mystic, author and composer

Dare to declare who you are. It is not far from the shores of silence to the boundaries of speech. The path is not long, but the way is deep. You must not only walk there, you must be prepared to leap. Even in a world that is being shipwrecked, remain brave and strong. Humanity, take a good look at yourself.

The earth is at the same time mother,
She is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human.
She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all.
The earth of humankind contains all moistness, all verdancy, all germinating power.
It is in so many ways fruitful.
All creation comes from it.

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

The 2024 'Scenic Rivington' calendar is now available at a cost of £7.00. They are available in Chapel, and also from various local outlets including the Tea Rooms and Rivington Visitors Centre. Christmas cards featuring seasonal views of the Rivington area are also available at £3.50 for a pack of 6.

A Thought

No one is finally dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away, until the clock wound up winds down, until the wine she made has finished its ferment, until the crop they planted is harvested. The span of someone's life is only the core of their actual existence.

Sir Terry Pratchett

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

- 05 November Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
- 19 November A Musical Service led by
Peter, Alison, Linda, John and Peter Gammon
- 03 December Jean Clements - Denton Chapel
- 17 December Christmas Carol Service
Members of the Congregation
- 07 January Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
- 21 January Gary Hammond - Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington
- 4 February Rev Danny Crosby - Altrincham and Urmston Chapels

Flower Donors

- 05 November Jacqui and Tim Kershaw
- 19 November Judith Crompton
- 03 December Carol Worsley
- 17 December Christmas Decorations
- 07 January Christmas Decorations
- 21 January Mary Horrocks
- 4 February Alison Whitaker and Peter Bearon

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: 21 Jan 2024

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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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