

Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here let no one a stranger be"



Nov 2024 - Jan 2025

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

2024 - 2025 Calendar

Sat 26 Oct Craft Market in Chapel and Tea Room

Sat 02 Nov Craft Market in Chapel and Tea Room

Sun 15 Dec Christmas Carol Service

2025

Sat 10 May Rivington Spring Festival

Sun 18 May Anniversary Sermons

Sun 01 Jun Strawberry Tea

Sat 13 Sep Heritage Open Day

Sat 27 Sep Rivington Triennial Pilgrimage

Sun 19 Oct Harvest Festival

Sun 21 Dec Christmas Carol Service

Not able to be with us in person? Why not join us on Zoom?

Meeting ID: 768 122 9647 Pass code: 322865

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7681129647>

Lay Person in Charge's Letter

Now, as the nights close in, it is time to be still and take stock of all that has happened this year. We have certainly had our ups and downs and, without a doubt, it has been far harder for some than for others. I thank God that we can face hardship together. Amen

Now things will start to get busy for the Yuletide; interestingly, 'Yule' is one aspect of the season that was not absorbed into the Christian ethos. Chris Foley, a friend of the Chapel from Horwich Heritage Soci-

ety has given us sight of our very own Chapel's Sunday School register from the 1880s into the 90s. It makes fascinating reading and there is amongst the papers a Christmas play; it begins '*Friends and neighbours, children dear, we are glad to see you here . . .*' and ends with '*Amen*'. I have a feeling our Carol Service this year is going to be most eventful.

Also, I must mention the visit we had from Horwich Heritage Society on Wednesday 9 October. This was organised by their Derek Cartwright; there were more than 26 attentive attenders. Judith Crompton and I talked for approximately an hour about our Chapel, its history and characters and also our Unitarian ethos emanating from the Treaty of Torda in 1568. Chris Foley waved the Sunday School register high in the air as he explained its marking system and gave out the illustrious names written therein. Martin Brownlow, sadly recently deceased, had been an avid member and contributor to Horwich Heritage and he was remembered fondly and respectfully by all present. At the end of proceedings, we trooped outside and measured our yew tree at the front. The tree's girth, at shoulder height, is 290cm. The formula to work out its age is to divide this number by 1.25. This sum equals 232 years old, fascinating. We also had sight of notes that Martin had written for a talk he gave them about the Chapel on 1st August 2000. Therein he says the tree was planted in 1816. Gosh, controversy. All in all it was a splendid day and their treasurer has made a generous donation to the Chapel of £50; many thanks.

I'll head off now and wish you all every possible blessing for the coming season.

Stay safe and God bless

Vince

Lay Person In Charge

Note from the editor

I was going to include a photo of a page of the register Vince has mentioned, but the image was too indistinct to print successfully, So, here's a summary of the information that appears. The page records Sunday School attendance during January, February and March 1886.

There were three classes: Class I - Alfred Gerrard, Frederick Gerrard, Thomas Ratcliffe, Dinah Saul, M. H. Thompson, Lucy Entwistle, Lucy Marsden, Amelia Pilkington.

Class II - Herbert Whittle, Joseph Morris, Jacob Lee, Margaret Marsden, Mary Ellen Thornley, Ellen Ratcliffe, Mary Rodger.

Class III – Sarah Marsden, Esther Marsden, Esther Lee, Lucy Ann Ratcliffe, Marion Miller, Jessie Ratcliffe.

Attendance is indicated with an X-shaped cross, but these are not always complete, so presumably there was some sort of code. A final column seems to show the number of times each child attended, the maximum being 24. A note at the foot of the page says: '24th January. Holiday on account of snowstorm.'

If anyone would like a copy of the photo, please let me know.

Chairman's Letter

Now it's autumn, we have, thanks to June Martin, a lovely new wreath and garland for the pulpit and chalice as you can see in the photo on the cover.

On Heritage Open Day in September, we welcomed a steady stream of visitors into the Chapel. As well as the usual display about the history of the building, we had two special exhibitions. Members of Horwich Heritage Society set up display boards which chronicled '120

Years of Lever Park'. If you missed it, the exhibition is still on at Horwich Heritage Centre until Thursday 14 November.

We also had the 'Unitarian Voices' banners set up in some of the pews. These were on loan from the MDA, and document the involvement of the Unitarian Movement in LGBT+ matters over the years.

Like everyone else, the Chapel has been affected by the rise in electricity prices. It appears that the difference between daytime and nighttime tariffs has reduced, so running the storage heaters has become relatively more expensive. At recent Committee meetings, we've been discussing how we can make sure the temperature in the Chapel is kept at a level high enough to maintain the fabric of the building and that everyone attending services during the colder months is warm enough. We decided to turn off some of the pew heaters for the time being to see if we can manage without them. (It has sometimes been a bit too warm by the end of a service with all the heaters on!) If you think it's getting a bit too chilly, please let us know.

The Tea Room is holding Craft Markets on Saturday 26 October and Saturday 2 November, and some of the stalls will be in the Chapel again.

The dates of the 2025 GA Annual Meetings have just been announced. They will take place from Saturday 12 to Monday 14 April at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel. More details in due course.

Alison Whitaker
Chairman, Congregational Committee

Trust Matters

Following my last communication for the Newsletter in which I described the consequences of the immediate aftermath of Peter's untimely death, the Trustees as a group have now managed to cope with his loss in terms of resuming effective financial management under the new Hon Treasurer, Sue Walton, and our continuing investment treasurer, Chris Houghton.

Following the transfer of Peter's files from Alison, Sue has been able to move into her new role and by the end of August our new CAF-Bank mandate has me as the main contact with Sue and Chris as co-signatories.

As mentioned in the summer Newsletter, Chris has managed the almost complete transfer of our investments using an independent financial advisor to ensure that we are optimising their growth and earning potentials. In addition to our current portfolio valuation, the Trustees have authorised the transfer of an additional £15,000 from the Bank Street Chapel donation also announced earlier. It is anticipated that the new portfolio programme will be fully in place by the end of October.

As also mentioned previously, the role of Secretary was proving difficult to fill but I can now announce that Mr John Winstanley has been appointed in the role. He comes highly recommended by one of our Trustees and before retirement had a career in banking. Following close liaison with Natasha Stanley, MDA District Administrator and Development Officer, he has been appointed on a part-time, paid contract from the beginning of August, which will be an experimental appointment both for us and the MDA. John is not a Trustee and so will serve the Trustees through their meetings and take in-

struction from them accordingly.

It has been agreed by all parties that the Trustees will be monitoring the effectiveness and costs of this initiative during the months ahead.

The work on the columbarium wall extension at the north side of the Garden of Remembrance is now underway within our projected budget of £16,000. The details of how niches are to be allocated, at what costs and for what periods of time are yet to be decided.

Finally, with regard to the tearoom, the two ground floor external windows at the side of the main entrance have been replaced and the upper gable end window is to be replaced soon, thus completing the whole window replacement project.

Richard Horrocks
Chairman, Rivington Chapel Trustees

Conferences at Cross Street

Cross Street Chapel in Manchester was the venue for two day-long conferences recently, both of which I attended.

On Saturday 14 September, the Unitarians for Climate Justice Group ran 'Faith in Our Future'. The speaker for the morning session was Professor Geoff Levermore, the current GA President, whose work on climate science led to him being nominated as a Lead Author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 (the same year as Al Gore). His theme was 'Climate Change, Religion and Ethics' and he spoke about the need to accept that the 1.5 °C temperature rise agreed at the Paris COP21 is most likely unachievable, but the effects of a bigger increase could be mitigated with a much larger commitment to spending on renewable

energy. It tends to be the poorest people who emit the lowest amount of emissions but who are probably the most adversely affected by climate change. Geoff suggested that it is important for Unitarians to work for the reduction of inequality in the world.

The afternoon session began with a talk from Dr Abi Perrin, who started by describing her path from a more orthodox science career to that of a climate activist. We were asked to take part in an interactive quiz on climate issues (using paper and pencil to record answers was also possible!). She emphasised that to protect life in the future, action would be required, but that it should be up to individuals to decide the level they felt comfortable with, and that it needs to be collaborative.

The day continued with a Climate Café workshop and a nature-themed session of guided meditation led by Rev Laura Dobson .

Two weeks later, on Saturday 28 September, the National Unitarian Fellowship held its annual one-day conference. The first speaker was Rev Andi Phillips, minister of Upper Chapel, Sheffield, who spoke on 'Artificial Intelligence and Human Values'. This followed on from the motion passed at the GA meetings in April, which recognised the growing significance of AI and the need to be mindful of both its benefits and threats.

In the afternoon, Rev Claire MacDonald, Minister Emeritus at Lewisham Unity and Ministry tutor at Harris Manchester College Oxford, gave a talk entitled 'The Word for Church is Art', about the connections between art and religion and on what is now happening in the interconnected world where art and progressive religious values and practices meet, often through arts events taking place in places of worship.

Congregational Support Toolkit

The Unitarian Congregational Support Toolkit is now live and can be accessed at <https://toolkit.unitarian.org> The toolkit builds on the information in the 'Help is at Hand' folder that used to be distributed to Congregations, but as it is online it can be revised and updated more frequently than the paper-based resource, which is now officially 'retired'.

There are six main sections on the website: Communications; Finance; Partnership Guidance for Ministers; Safeguarding; Vision into Action and Legal and Governance Obligations. There is the facility to search by key word and the information may be there as a document or accessible via a hyperlink.

Tribute to Peter Bearon

At Peter's funeral in July, Richard Horrocks spoke about his service as a Chapel Trustee. Here's a summary of his tribute.

Peter became a Trustee at the AGM in March 1991 and was appointed as Secretary in September 1992. From 2011 to 2016 he also served as Chairman, though he did have a break from the role of Secretary between 2013 and 2015. In 2019 he, jointly with Chris Houghton, became Treasurer. He spent the next five years trying to shed one of those jobs!

Peter was a driving force within the Trustees and some notable projects in which he was involved were the restoration of the Willoughby Memorial, the installation of the Walt Whitman plaque, the handrail by the main door into the Chapel, the reprint of the Early Registers booklet, the construction of the Chapel website, the reacquisition of the original 1704 Trust Deed and the registration of the Chapel's es-

tate with the Land Registry. Some of these involved close liaison with Historic England to ensure that any alterations to the building were in line with the Chapel's Grade II* listing.

Peter was the Trust's representative with the Charity Commission which involved assuring that we were operating within the law as a charity.

At the time of his death, the Trustees had agreed to purchase a new organ (now installed) and also submitted planning permission for an extension to the Columbarium. His efforts live on in that the latter has been agreed by Chorley Council (*and is now under construction - Ed*).

Finally, he lived to see the £30,000 windfall, the gift from the Trustees of the now-closed Bank Street Chapel, which will more than cover the costs of these initiatives and add to the financial security of the Chapel.

The Longest Darkness

The longest darkness holds the shortest day
 In the clasp of our future illumination
 A necessary settling into the winter of becoming
 Into a time of remembering
 We welcome you into our winter heart
 With the mist of your breath
 And any snow soon to begin
 Even the storms
 We rest here on the shortest day, in your arms
 The arms of darkness, that are necessary and beautiful to behold.

Rev Mark Hutchinson published on Worship Words

Save us from religion

Cliff Reed (published in the Inquirer)

Save us from the religion that divides us,
the religion that breeds hatred and war,
the religion that promotes violence and cruelty,
the religion that fosters misogyny and homophobia
and all the irrational prejudices of which we, in our
flawed humanity, are capable.

Save us from the religion that degrades the human spirit,
the religion that denies the truth,
the religion that denies the truth,
the religion that closes the mind,
the religion that believes itself beyond doubt,
the religion that claims a monopoly on knowledge
and seeks to silence or to kill those who question it.

Save us from the religion that claims power over others,
the religion that feeds the egos of phoney gurus and pseudo-messiahs,
the religion that fills the pockets of crooked evangelists,
the religion that bolsters the arrogance of tyrants who claim divine au-
thority,
the religion that deals in superstition and rules with fear,
that corrupts the unwary and loads the innocent with guilt.

Save us from the religion of unreason,
the religion of wilful ignorance,
the religion of self-righteousness,
the religion of sanctified hypocrisy,
the venerate religion that overlays a mean spirit,
a hard heart and a narrow mind.

And save us from the religion that believes itself to be
better, wiser and more enlightened than all the others.

From 'Dear Life', by Canadian writer Alice Munro suggested by Iris Wharton

'The thing is to be happy,' he said. 'No matter what. Just try that. You can. It gets easier and easier. It's nothing to do with circumstances. You wouldn't believe how good it is. Accept everything and then tragedy disappears. Or tragedy lightens, anyway, and you're just there, going along easy in the world.'

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 6 November.

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.

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 2025 'Scenic Rivington' calendar is now available at a cost of £7.00. They are on sale 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.

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

03 Nov	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
17 Nov	Rev Laura Dobson - Chorlton Chapel
01 Dec	Jean Clements - Denton Chapel
15 Dec	Christmas Carol Service
05 Jan	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
19 Jan	Rev Lynne Readett - Chowbent Chapel
02 Feb	Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel

Flower Donors

03 Nov	Jacqui & Tim Kershaw
17 Nov	Judith Crompton
01 Dec	Carol Worsley
15 Dec	Christmas Decorations
05 Jan	Christmas Decorations
19 Jan	Mary Horrocks
02 Feb	Alison Whitaker

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sun 2 Nov Congregational Committee Meeting
After service

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 Jan 2025

Issue date: 19 Jan 2025

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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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