

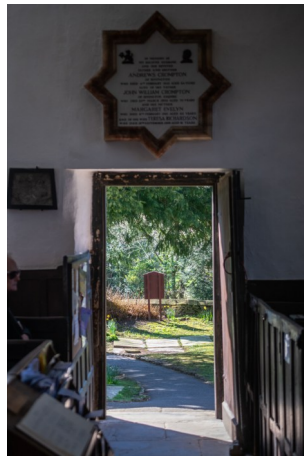
Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here let no one a stranger be"



Aug - Oct 2025

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

2025 Calendar

Sat 13 Sep	Heritage Open Day
Sat 27 Sep	Rivington Triennial Pilgrimage
Sun 19 Oct	Harvest Festival
Sun 21 Dec	Christmas Carol Service

Lay Person in Charge's Letter

After the excitement of the GA meetings, we had a pretty full-on May and never was fellowship more on display. Personally, I conducted five services, one by Zoom for Oxford and one to cover for our GA President at Doncaster. I had a Parish meeting, an MDA Exec meeting, a 'Coastal Connections' Zoom session, two Zoom 'Safeguarding' sessions with 31:8 and sadly two Unitarian funerals.

The main events, though, have to be Rivington Spring Festival on 10 May (9 May next year) and the Oak Apple Day music session on 29 May. Both were magnificently supported by our Chapel community and many good causes gained great benefit from them, not least us. The Spring Festival was blessed with fine weather and the village green was resplendent with charity stalls from Bolton Mountain Rescue, Rosemere, St Catherine's (who also had a picture framer), Rivington Terraced Gardens, Hedgehog Rescue, Velma and Roger's jigsaws, and of course our lovely stall and our ice cream vending bicycle. All told it is estimated £1000 was raised across the board.

We were so lucky to have the Bennet Singers perform beautifully in Chapel to a very appreciative audience and the weather was so good that the band 'The Mary Bardsley Experience' played outside

on the Chapel steps. Their performance was nothing short of perfect: there was such an amazing atmosphere that pervaded the day and the music topped it off sublimely.

The same has to be said about the Oak Apple Day session which was so well attended. The fellowship here too was palpable and the spirit of camaraderie amongst the singers and instrumentalists alike made the atmosphere so very special and so unmistakable. Truly it was a blessing to experience it; a big THANK YOU to Peter Gammon for organising this.

Talking of thank yous, if you haven't seen our Garden of Remembrance (GoR) recently, then you must and there you will see a magnificent transformation. The extension of the columbarium is a credit to the craftsmanship of the stone cutters and the guys who built it (Phil Kelly and Martin Denver of Adlington). You will also see that the bushes and ground has been cleared over at the Sheephouse Lane end and new turf has been laid. There is now a largely uninterrupted view across towards Anglezarke. So THANK YOU to Paul Fairclough and Debbie Atkins for making this such a success. And we haven't quite finished our workings in the GoR yet as plans are well under way for a 'Peace Bell' to be installed therein, using the huge bell that has been hiding for many years upstairs in the vestry. Watch this space!

A little sad news now; we lost Dr Frank Yates and held his funeral in Chapel at the beginning of April. Unfortunately, barely two months passed before we lost Doris, his wife. Such a devoted couple is rare to see. A lifetime of jointly lived experiences as they travelled to Africa with their medical work and eventually retired to Scarborough.

And lastly, but by no means least, we were all honoured to be invited by Frank Ascroft to celebrate his 80th birthday in the Village Tea

Rooms. Frank has been our Chapel keeper, Congregational Treasurer and stalwart of the Chapel for so many years. Frank's family travelled all the way from Newport, Gwent and a thoroughly good time was had by all. Thanks to all who made this possible and to Jayne, Jade, Elsie and all the staff who helped to make it such a special occasion.

Just time to remind folk that it's our Triennial Pilgrimage this year and Saturday 27 September is the big day. It's at one of these years ago that I realised our Chapel's connection to a dynamic, questioning and inclusive church that is spread across the United Kingdom and across the globe. So may it be.

Stay safe and God bless

Vince

Lay Person In Charge

Chairman's Letter

If you are thinking of coming to the Pilgrimage, please remember to book your place. The menu is now finalised and the choices can be seen on page 11. There are some booking forms available in Chapel or you can send me an email: contact@rivingtonchapel.org.uk.

A few Chapel members joined Chorley Chapel on Sunday 8 June at their Anniversary Service, and others went along to hear Doreen Jolly's talks about the history of the building.

Thank you to all those who took part in the service on Sunday 15 June. There was no specific theme, but nevertheless the items chosen shared important links, not least the stirring Welsh hymn tunes inspired by a talk about Gellionnen Chapel near Pontadawe. We also had thoughts about fellowship, a Swedish folk tale that pointed out the value of staying calm and applying intelligence to solving

problems and a reflection used by Rev Maud Robinson at the GA Annual service.

There's another photo by David Southern on this issue's cover.

Chris Martin has just let me know that he is hoping to arrange an event in the Chapel featuring The Lancashire Poetry Relay Team. More details to follow.

Alison Whitaker
Chairman, Congregational Committee

GA report

Back at Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel this year, proceedings got underway on Saturday afternoon with the Opening Service led by Rev Kate Brady McKenna, minister at Bury Unitarian Church. Vince had taken the Chapel banner along, so was able to join the opening banner parade. The banners were arranged around the walls of the main meeting room and remained there until the final session on Monday.

Once the official business of adopting the standing orders for the meetings had been dealt with, Plenary Session 1 considered a motion reaffirming our commitment to the Golden Rule in expressing solidarity with the humanitarian lifesaving work of the various organisations providing aid around the world. Unusually there were no speakers for, against or neutral, and the motion was passed unanimously. There was a one-minute silence to remember those who have died on both sides of the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine.

Chief Officer Liz Slade's report spoke about the decreasing number of quota members (roughly half our congregations have ten members or less), but emphasised the importance of developing connections

both within our movement and in the wider world.

As usual it was difficult to choose between the various workshops that afternoon; I went to those run by the Social Justice Network and Unitarian Transformers and came away from both with a better idea of how they work. I have a booklet from Unitarian Transformers which gives details of the work done over the course of a three-year project which focused on three main areas: Working with Children and Young People, Online Worship and Congregational Engagement.

In the evening, the keynote speech was given by Alison Webster, General Secretary of Modern Church. She used the analogy of mycelium, the underground network of fungi, to illustrate the importance of connections. An abridged version of her talk is in the May edition of *The Inquirer* if you want to read more.

Most of Sunday Morning was taken up by Plenary sessions. The first began with a message from the Hungarian Unitarian Church, then there were votes to accept the Annual Report and on some of the procedural motions. Two emergency motions had been submitted and, as the Standing Orders allow only one to be considered, we first had to decide which to take forward. After some debate, the original emergency motion on concerns over the consequences of the increasingly authoritarian stance of the current US government, was chosen and passed with a few abstentions. (The other motion expressed concerns over the consequences of the then very recent police raid on Westminster Quaker Meeting House.)

Richard Crompton gave part of the Nightingale Centre report, and Honorary Membership was conferred on Marion Baker, a past president of the GA and former convenor of the EC, with the citation delivered by her son Tim. The morning concluded with the

celebration of three new members of the Lay Leaders Register, one of whom was Vince, who was eligible having recently completed the Advanced Worship Studies course and meeting other required criteria.

During the afternoon I attended four workshops: the Unitarian Renewal Group which debated 'Must authentic worship be an AI-free zone'; Nick Butler-Watts, the newly-appointed Programme Manager for the Innovation Challenge Fund', talked about the fund and its purpose; the Unitarian History Society presented a talk on 'The foundation of organised Unitarianism in Britain and America in 1825; The Unitarians for Climate Justice session was a talk by Phil Whiting, a beekeeper from Kendal Unitarians, using bees as an illustration of what we might lose if we don't value our relationship with nature.

Reverend Maud Robinson's theme for the Anniversary Service was 'What strength can we call on in dark times?'. It included the story 'Everybody Needs a Rock' by Byrd Baylor and a reading from Nick Cave's Red Hand Files.

On Monday morning, we heard the report from University College, then considered a set of connected motions on the steps required for the GA to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This was approved in principle at the 2024 GA meetings. One major advantage of CIO status is that it removes the risk of personal liability from individuals who are trustees. There was a lot of debate, as some members, while not objecting to the principle of becoming a CIO, felt that the draft new constitution has too many drawbacks. After a motion to refer the matter back to the EC did not achieve the necessary two-thirds majority, the vote for the connected motions went ahead and was passed, with 78 for, 27 against and 15

abstentions. A motion to allow the EC to fill vacancies that arise during the year so that it can remain quorate was passed almost unanimously.

As I've been attending the monthly Admin Network meetings on Zoom, I went to the first in-person workshop, where it was good to meet some people that I'd only seen before on screen. Simon Bland, the GA Ministry and Congregational Support Officer, talked about using the Congregational Toolkit and asked for suggestions about what could be added. It was also pointed out that a grant from the Innovation Challenge Fund could be used to pay an administrator to work for more than one chapel.

The final plenary session dealt with the remaining motions. Honorary Membership was conferred on Jeffrey Teagle, a former General Secretary of the GA. After proposing several motions of thanks and greetings, The President, Geoff Levermore, was re-appointed for the coming year. This was because Jeffrey Bowes, the Vice President, had decided not to take up the post for personal reasons.

That just left time for the final meal before catching the train home.

Alison

Trustees Matters

Those visiting the Garden of Remembrance recently might have noted that one of the two niches already purchased is occupied, a true testament to the success of this initiative.

With financial assistance from the MDA, for which the Trustees are very thankful, a 'Heritage Statement' of the vestry has been undertaken by Jenny Wetton, the Heritage Consultant suggested by the MDA. She will provide her final report during August, but her

provisional one has the following statement within it:

'The staircase structure looks very Victorian and, while of some limited interest, the stairs are set into plaster on the east wall of the chapel and there are cracks by some of the steps which appear to indicate movement. They are in any case too steep to meet current Building Regs. I think replacement would be justifiable and would support a new staircase of a simple design in timber using the length of the vestry. I realise this would mean that it runs across the window, but it may be possible to design a staircase to minimise its appearance in views from the exterior.'

This is interesting in regard to the two provisional sketches offered by our architect in which the joint desires of installing a wheelchair access toilet on the ground floor and improving access to the first floor were the main considerations. In both, the access from the Chapel to the vestry would be improved by straightening the exit and raising the floor and a toilet facility installed where the sink and water boiler are currently located. The kitchen area would be moved towards the northeastern part of the ground floor. However, in one plan, the current staircase would remain in place and in the other (and more expensive) plan, it would be replaced by a less steep one (which conformed to building regulations) but placed against the northern wall and pass across the window in that wall. Thus, Jenny's provisional observations are important in assisting any future decisions by the Trustees since it is evident that the current (Victorian) staircase is injuring the plaster and fabric of the earlier Chapel wall and this should be remedied, most likely by its removal. The Trustees look forward to receiving the final report in the months ahead.

Richard Horrocks
Chairman of Trustees

Rivington Unitarian Chapel

Triennial Pilgrimage

Saturday 27 September 2025

Lunch at Rivington Village Green Tea Room

Sheephouse Lane, Rivington, Lancashire, BL6 7SD

Guest Speaker: Prof Geoff Levermore

President of the General Assembly

Please bring banners to display in the Tea Room

Service in Rivington Chapel

Conducted by: Rev Cody Coyne

Minister at Cross Street, Manchester and

President of the MDA

Times		Tickets for Lunch	
12:30pm	Meet at Hall	(booking essential)	
1:00pm	Lunch	£18.00	Adult
3:15pm	Service	£9.00	Child

Menu

Main Course: Hotpot (gf) or
Lasagne or
Quiche (v)

all served with potatoes and seasonal vegetables

Pudding: Cheesecake
Sticky Toffee Pudding (gf)
Lemon cake (vegan)

served with custard or cream (dairy free and gf options available)

If you require a vegan main course, or have other dietary requirements, please let us know.

Booking for Rivington Pilgrimage 2025

If you would like to book tickets for the Pilgrimage, you can:

- send a cheque made payable to **Rivington Chapel** to:

Alison Whitaker, 14 Church Street, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3RS

- pay by Bank Transfer (please email:
contact@rivingtonchapel.org.uk with your requirements and
for the bank details)

Please indicate the number of adult and/or child tickets that you require, your menu choices and any dietary requirements.

We would be grateful if you would either include a stamped addressed envelope or an email address so that tickets can be sent electronically.

The closing date for bookings is **Friday 12 September 2025**. Tickets will be sent out during the week beginning 15 September.

New email addresses

Some new email addresses have recently been set up that you can use for contacting the officers of the Chapel Trustees and for other specific reasons. These are:

trustchair@rivingtonchapel.org.uk to contact the Chairman

trustsec2@rivingtonchapel.org.uk to contact the Secretary

trusttreasurer@rivingtonchapel.org.uk to contact the Treasurer

remembrance@rivingtonchapel.org.uk for enquiries about the

Garden of Remembrance

estates@rivingtonchapel.org.uk for matters relating to the buildings and the grounds

publications2@rivingtonchapel.org.uk for inquiries about the various publications available

There is also an address to contact Vince McCully, our Lay Person in Charge: laycharge@rivingtonchapel.org.uk

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.

Publications

Please contact Chris Martin (01257 483702 email:

publications2@rivingtonchapel.org.uk) 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

Chris is in the process of compiling the next calendar, and there will be some new Christmas cards this year. They should be available shortly.

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 Aug	Jean Clements - Denton Chapel
17 Aug	Rev Abi Elliot-McGuffie - Rochdale Chapel
07 Sep	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
21 Sep	tbc
05 Oct	Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel
19 Oct	Harvest Festival Rev Danny Crosby - Altrincham and Urmston Chapels
02 Nov	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel

Flower Donors

03 Aug	Elsie Kent
17 Aug	Alison Whitaker
07 Sep	Diane Fairclough
21 Sep	Elsie Kent
05 Oct	Vince & Isobel
19 Oct	Mary Horrocks
02 Nov	Jacqui & Tim Kershaw

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sat 9 Aug Wedding of Naimh and Lewis

12:00 pm Conducted by Vince McCully

Sun 17 Aug 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 Oct 2025

Issue date: 19 Oct 2025

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

telephone: 01942 816569

email: 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.

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