

Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here let no one a stranger be"



Aug - Oct 2026

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

2026 Calendar

2026

Sun 13 Sep	Heritage Open Day
Sun 18 Oct	Harvest Festival
Sat 21 Nov	Christmas Craft Fair
Sat 28 Nov	Christmas Craft Fair
Sun 20 Dec	Christmas Carol Service

Lay Person in Charge's Letter

I hope you are all coping with our successive heat waves and keeping cool and well hydrated. Yet the world goes on and we all attend to that which needs attending to.

We have had a variety of events in Chapel since our last newsletter with highlights such as the Spring Fair, Anniversary Service, Oak Apple Day and Strawberry Tea.

The Spring Fair was simply joyous; though not as busy as our Spring efforts normally are, it was nevertheless a great deal of fun and the total raised is likely to be around £500. Everyone worked so hard on it and the fellowship was enjoyed by Chapellers and visitors alike. This year Jane and Jade kindly allowed us to have a hamper raffle on display in the Tea Rooms and this provided a substantial addition to the funds. Also, our friends Sam, Callan and Abbie from The Bay Horse (Heath Charnock) threw in their lot with us with a bottle tombola and home-made biscuits that they contributed along with a youthful energy.

It was a tremendous honour having Rev Danny Crosby with us for our Anniversary Service on 17th May. As ever Danny brought a refreshing energy with him to our Chapel, all the way from Urmston. Speaking of which, this July I conducted a service at Urmston Unitarian Church for the first time and was greeted warmly by the congregation. I must say what a charming and elegant church it is.

Oak Apple Day was also a lovely event and very well attended by visitors from far and wide and also by our enthusiastic congregation. We were wowed by the special atmosphere on the day and, a first I think for the Chapel, music by a harpist. Her playing was exceptional and very moving. Great thanks are due to Peter Gammon for organising it and we really appreciate the addition to Chapel funds that was raised.

Great thanks too to Diane for making our Strawberry Tea such a success. The strawberries and cream were absolutely lovely and along with Alison's home-baked scones it was a winning combination. I'm sure Jean Clements, who travelled to us from Denton to take the service, couldn't believe her luck when she got to join in with this Summer delight.

On 5th July we had two great things happen in Chapel. It was Frank Ascroft's 81st birthday and his first visit to Chapel since 2nd November 2025. We had a little lunch in the Tea Rooms which, I think, fortified him for what was to come and the welcome he was given was certainly a sight to behold, a truly heartwarming return to the fold after such a long absence through sickness.

Also on that Sunday we had a guest speaker, Peter Roberts, who told us about the work he does in Zambian villages, drilling for water, installing pumps and maintaining them too. Remarkable in itself, but

all the more so because Peter funds it all himself and in recognition of this and the rather splendid presentation he gave us (his first time as it turns out) the congregation happily donated the day's collection to his worthy cause. To cap it all, at the end, Peter's 13-year-old son William read out a lovely prayer that he had written (also a first). We all left Chapel humbled, fortified and happy at what we had witnessed that day.

Among other activities to report is that in June I became a trustee at Unitarian College during a meeting in Luther King House, a body I fully endorse and a role I fully embrace as being vitally important for the future prosperity and strength of our faith. As you would expect there is a great deal of business to deal with at these meetings and there is a huge workload undertaken by paid as well as unpaid personnel.

Safeguarding is also a vital detail in our collective and local existence. It is something that the MDA (Manchester District Association) and the GA (General Assembly) have long promoted and is again for the express benefit of all who are involved with our faith. As the safeguarding lead for the MDA I frequently attend courses which are, thankfully, funded by both the above bodies. I sincerely urge any and all who are interested to avail themselves of this meaningful facility. In fact I am on such a course (over two evenings) in July.

On 27TH June we married Lisa Graham and Jason Wiltshire in Chapel and were very kindly aided in our endeavours by Frieda Whittle of Padiham Chapel, who acted as our authorised person in the wake of Frank having stepped down due to infirmity. In future, weddings will be 'Registrar Attended', though the celebrant will be a member of Chapel. A largely unforeseen step but what with Frank's illness and other factors we thought it for the best in terms of succession planning.

It is the annual International Day of Peace on 21st September and so on Sunday 20th we are organising a special service to celebrate this worthy ideal. "Make a Noise for Peace" is our title for the day as we have installed in our Garden of Remembrance the Peace Bell in memory of Peter Bearon, a very long serving and much-loved member of our congregation and trustees (as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer at different times). This is a new venture for us and we hope to attract voices and involvement from all parts of our community.

I now leave you to enjoy, if you can, a splendid Summer and assure you that you are in my thoughts and prayers, always.

Stay safe and God bless

Vince

Lay Person In Charge

Chairman's Letter

Despite being a smaller event than in recent years, the Spring Festival brought in a much needed boost for Chapel funds, which is likely to reach a total of around £500. This was augmented a few weeks later by donations at the Oak Apple Day music session, when just over £145 was collected.

There are still a few jars of preserves left from the Spring Fair if anyone would like some jam, marmalade or chutney.

Please note that we have changed the date we will be open for Heritage Open Days from that originally planned. The Chapel will be open on Sunday 13 September rather than Saturday, to see if this makes any difference to the number of visitors we get.

Alison Whitaker
Chairman, Congregational Committee

GA Meetings Report

This year's Annual Meetings were in a new venue, The Hayes Conference Centre near Alfreton in Derbyshire. As a not-for-profit Christian establishment, it provided a much less corporate feel and atmosphere. It is set in lovely grounds and has its own chapel. However, with meeting venues more spread out across the site, getting between the different sessions sometimes proved tricky for the less mobile, though mobility scooters were available on loan.

As well as the usual procedural business, there were two motions and one emergency motion. I only found out details of the motions when I arrived at the Meetings, so had been unable to let you know about them beforehand to find out your views. However, they were both carried with very large majorities and only a few votes against or abstentions.

Motion one was to allow the Chief Officer, Liz Slade, to issue statements on current public events, albeit within agreed safeguards. It was felt that being able to comment more promptly on rapidly changing situations, as other organisations do, was important.

Motion two was brought as a response to the increase in restrictions on peaceful protest and delegates voted to recognise and strongly affirm 'that protest is a fundamental Unitarian spiritual practice' and that recent and proposed legislation 'is an attack on the right to protest and is thus a stifling of religious freedom'. (We are dissenters after all!) The emergency motion called for peace, respect for international law, and humanitarian aid in the Middle East. This, after some discussion regarding a possible amendment to the wording, was overwhelmingly passed with no votes against and just three abstentions.

This year's keynote lecture was delivered by Sarah Corbett, who spoke about her organisation The Craftivist Collective, which promotes the use of craft activities to carry out gentle protest. (See pages 10 & 11 and also the March 2026 edition of The Inquirer magazine for more details - there should be a copy in Chapel).

Rev Daniel Costley, Minister to the Dover Unitarian congregation, took the Anniversary Service, which had as its theme 'Common Ground'. The service included a reading of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' and the text of the sermon was reproduced in the April edition of The Inquirer - see extracts on pages 9&10. Six new ministers were admitted to the General Assembly roll, including two who are serving Chapels in the northwest, Tina Ghandi at Walmsley Chapel and Rob Foreman at Park Lane and other congregations in the Merseyside district.

The workshops I attended this year included learning about the Unitarian Heritage in Derbyshire, particularly Belper Chapel, finding out about how Whitby Chapel managed its closure and transition to an Arts venue (they will still hold four services a year to mark the solstices and equinoxes) and listening to a panel of frequent contributors (including Danny Crosby) to The Inquirer magazine talking about what inspires their writing.

At the final session of the meetings, Geoff Levermore's two years as GA president came to an end. He has been succeeded by joint presidents Rev Alex and Rev Jean Bradley, who are currently part of Mid Wales Unitarians, a fellowship group that often meets outdoors. Jo O'Sullivan, of Horsham Unitarians and Chair of the board of the Inquirer, was appointed Vice-President.

Alison

Trust Matters

In the last newsletter I mentioned that plans were being drawn up for a Vestry upgrade along with the addition of a toilet. This is ongoing, and as part of this process, the Chapel and Vestry have been very accurately measured in order to assist both this project and any other works that may be required in the future. These measurements form the basis of working plans being prepared by Pearce Architecture which will soon be available to us.

The Memorial Garden The stone paving has been power washed to provide a clean, non-slip surface underfoot. The weeds between the flagstones are being removed along with those in the raised beds and the roses have never looked so good since Steve's pruning. Also, a coat of exterior metal paint has been applied to the Peace Bell Memorial in order to slow down corrosion.

The Chapel Yard Stone gravestones to the front of the yard have been sprayed with Wet and Forget to remove slippery green algae. This has the added benefit that the inscriptions can now be read again.

Security In the past, security issues have been raised concerning the theft of stone and metal from Church yards and the lack of a stable phone signal in Rivington. I have attended site meetings at Chapel, and I am informed that technology now exists that will enable remote viewing of both the Chapel and grounds, internet, and an emergency phone.

Something to act on?

Paul Fairclough
Chairman of Trustees

Some extracts from the sermon at the GA Anniversary Service

The true magic of congregations is the breadth and depth of engagement and humanity. We each join a congregation for a personal reason. While you know why you are there, it's of equal worth to know why your neighbour is there too. This understanding only comes with sharing. With welcome, care, love and compassion.

Our role is to ensure our communities are good places, where all are welcome and treated with respect and kindness. We do that by recognising the worth of each and every member.

Leo Tolstoy said (*about the light of truth*), '...there are people who are approaching it from all sides - from as many angles as there are radii in a circle, in other words by infinitely varied paths.' The wish to go forward towards the light holds today too. Rev Hope Johnson (*a UUA minister*) wrote:

We are one,
A diverse group
Of proudly kindred spirits
Here, not by co-incidence
But because we choose to journey - together.

Our congregations and fellowships journey together in beloved community, continuing the work of love and compassion founded by those we never knew but to whom we are connected. Journeying together, finding a path on common ground is our task today; to listen, share, hear, learn and transform. The Very Hungry Caterpillar transformed by taking in all around him. He never lost his hunger. He never sought to stop. His progress came from without, but his transformation came from within.

As Angela Herrera (*UUA minister*) confirms:

All that you need
 For a deep and comforting peace to grow
 Lies within you
 Once it is in your heart
 Let it spread into your life,
 Let it pour from your life into the world,
 Let it shine upon all beings.

Follow that light...learn from one another. And walk in the light of
 your sacred and common ground.

Rev Daniel Costley

What is Craftivism? (information taken from the article in the March
 edition of The Inquirer)

‘Craftivism is a different form of activism. My Gentle Protest
 approach to craftivism is that it’s for everyone, whether you love craft
 or you’ve never picked up a needle and thread before. It’s about
 making sure that you prioritise the cause. Craft is the tool, not the
 taskmaster.’

‘Gentle Protest is about being gentle with yourself so you don’t burn
 out, and being gentle with the people you are trying to change to
 transform hearts and minds rather than causing division.’

Words of Sarah Corbett, founder of the Craftivist Collective, which
 she set up in 2009 to provide an outlet for people who wanted an
 alternative way to express their support for a cause who might feel
 uncomfortable joining a march or carrying a banner.

One project that made an impact was in support of a campaign to get M&S to be a Living Wage Employer, after previous actions including petitions and demonstrations had been unsuccessful. Fourteen craftivists were given an M&S hankie, on which they embroidered a bespoke personal message to one of the fourteen M&S Board members; these were hand-delivered, along with a personal hand-written letter, at the AGM. By the next AGM, M&S had announced that they had increased pay to be in line with the real living wage.

Sarah says that for a church group, Craftivism can act as a bridge to supporting and working with the community. It can help people to think more broadly about what activism strategies they are comfortable about using, especially if they are cautious about taking part in the more overt kinds of protest. She wants to encourage people to always stand up to injustice wherever they can, whatever their age.

The Craftivist Collective has a website, <https://www.craftivist-collective.com> which gives details of other activities and resources if you are interested to find out more.

A Thought from Buddhism, contributed by Di Fairclough

Butterflies rest when it rains
Because it can damage their wings
It's okay to pause during life's storms
You will fly again when the skies clear.

Email addresses

Please use these email addresses to contact 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 435860 , 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

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

02 Aug	Rev Amanda Reynolds - Kendal Chapel
16 Aug	Tanya Smalley - Rivington Chapel
06 Sep	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
20 Sep	'Making a Noise for Peace' International Day of Peace
04 Oct	Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel
18 Oct	Tanya Smalley - Rivington Chapel
01 Nov	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel

Flower Donors

02 Aug	Elsie Kent
16 Aug	Alison Whitaker
06 Sep	Diane Fairclough
20 Sep	Elsie Kent
04 Oct	Vince and Isobel
18 Oct	Mary Horrocks
01 Nov	Jacqui and Tim Kershaw

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sat 5 Sept Wedding of Leonie and Andy
Conducted by Vince Mc Cully

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: 18 Oct 2026

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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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