



Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians
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Hello

Updates on what's happening at Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians – from December

Here's the service summary letter from Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians for December 2021 – and welcome to the New Year! As you know, at present we're not able to gather in person, as the central heating at our church building is not working, and hence we've moved our services to Zoom until spring 2022.

We are looking at the possibility of using a smaller room on the ground floor of the church with a screen and projector to show the online services, so that people who are not on Zoom to join in services. Having a smaller number of people in a smaller room will hopefully make it feasible to both safely heat the space, and keep it properly ventilated whilst maintaining social distancing. This will be in the New Year as we need the electrical inspections to be complete before we can do this!

'United in Diversity: Unitarians and Christianity', a talk at the Newcastle Progressive Christian Network Meeting on Tuesday 11th January, 7.15pm

I will be speaking about Unitarianism at the Newcastle Progressive Christian Network meeting on January 11th at 7.15pm at Brunswick Methodist Chapel in the Hall. We are invited to join them – you may bring your own drinks and there will be some light snacks to share. I will be speaking for about 30 minutes, and then we will have questions and discussion, ending at 8.45pm.

With regard to Covid safety, they are asking people to wear masks (except when eating or drinking), and maintain social distancing within the room. Hand sanitiser will be available! Please do join us if you can as it should be a very interesting evening. **Please could you call me ASAP on 07506 255 731 to let me know if you're coming, so that we have an idea of numbers.**

As ever, whilst we're not meeting in person we will keep in touch with everyone by phone calls and letters, and I will keep everyone informed about what's happening. I'll be sending out these letters summarising what's happening with services and other aspects of our community life, and offering excerpts from services which I hope you will find interesting.

If you want to get in touch, please call on: 07506 255 731, I'm happy to discuss things anytime.

In fellowship,

Louise Reeve
Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

December 2021 Service Highlights

5th December 2021 – Toy Service

Diana Bebbly led our traditional Toy Service, in which members of the congregation shared their favourite stories and readings from childhood. Among them was Brian Robson's rendition of "The Lion and Albert" by Marriott Edgar:

The Lion and Albert (1930, Marriott Edgar)

"There's a famous seaside place called Blackpool
That's noted for fresh air and fun
And Mr. and Mrs. Ramsbottom
Went there with young Albert, their son.

A fine little lad were young Albert
All dressed in his best, quite a swell
He'd a stick with an 'orse's 'ead 'andle;
The finest that Woolworth's could sell.

They didn't think much to the ocean
The waves they were piddlin' and small
There were no wrecks and nobody drowned
'Fact, nothin' to laugh at, at all!

So, seeking for further amusement
They paid, and went into the zoo
Where they'd lions and tigers and camels
And cold ale and sandwiches, too.

There were one great big lion called Wallace
Whose nose was all covered with scars;
He lay in a som-no-lent posture
With the side of 'is face on the bars.

Now Albert 'ad 'eard about lions-
'Ow they was ferocious and wild;
To see lion lyin' so peaceful
Just didn't seem right to the child.

So straightway the brave little feller
Not showin' a morsel of fear
Took 'is stick with the 'orse's 'ead 'andle
And stuck it in Wallace's ear.

You could see that the lion din't like it
For givin' a kind of a roll
'E pulled Albert inside the cage with 'im
And swallowed the little lad - 'ole!

Now Mother 'ad seen this occurrence
And not knowin' what to do next
She 'ollered "Yon lion's et Albert!"
An' Father said "Ee, I am vexed."

They complained to an animal keeper
Who said "My, wot a nasty mis'ap;
Are you sure it's your boy 'e's eaten?"
Pa said, "Am I sure? There's 'is cap!"

The manager 'ad to be sent for;
'E came and 'e said "Wot's to-do?"
Ma said "Yon lion's et Albert
And 'im in 'is Sunday clothes, too!"

Father said "Right's right, young feller-
I think it's a shame and a sin
To 'ave our son et by a lion
And after we paid to come in."

The manager wanted no trouble;
He took out his purse right away
Sayin' "'Ow much to settle the matter?"
Pa said "Wot do you usually pay?"

But Mother 'ad turned a bit awkward
When she saw where 'er Albert 'ad gone
She said "No, someone's got to be summonsed!"
So that was decided upon.

And off they all went to p'lice station
In front of a Magistrate chap;
They told what 'ad 'appened to Albert
And proved it by showing 'is cap.

The Magistrate gave 'is opinion
That no one was really to blame
And 'e said that 'e 'oped the Ramsbottoms
Would 'ave further sons to their name.

At that Mother got proper blazin':
"And thank you, sir, kindly, " said she-
"Wot, spend all our lives raisin' children
To feed ruddy lions? Not me!"

12th December 2021 – Christmas Miscellany

We held our traditional Christmas Miscellany service, in which members of the congregation contributed songs, stories and poems on the theme of Christmas. One of them was Louise Reeve's reading of "Santa Fell Down Sizewell B" by Robert Garnham, reproduced here with his permission.

"Santa Fell Down Sizewell B"

There's nothing under the tree,
Nothing for you and nothing for me,
At least not a thing that I can see,
Since Santa fell down Sizewell B.

Rudolf has got the night off,
And Donner and Blitzen have a nasty cough,
The sleigh is now wrapped around a tree,
And Santa fell down Sizewell B.

A large concrete chimney silhouetted against the sky,
Santa's dodgy tummy from a bad mince pie,
He's run out of tea and he needs a wee,
And now he's fallen down Sizewell B.

To the boy in the window who waved,
To the elves in the factory who are all enslaved,
A Christmas elf dreams of liberty,
And Santa's fallen down Sizewell B.

The sleigh is all covered in tinsel.
The cars and the houses are covered in tinsel,
I can't think of anything to rhyme with tinsel,
And now Santa's fallen down Sizewell B.

Marjorie wants world peace,
Dave wants an end to starvation,
Gemma wants less underrepresentation in the media,
Francis wants a more transparent banking system,
Lisa wants a respite from the crushing oblivion which awaits us all,
Jim wants a cheap pair of socks,
But none of them will get what they need,
Unless Santa gets rescued from Sizewell B!"

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19th December 2021 – Carol Service

Ben MacLeod led our final service of the year, our Carol Service, in which we sang together, listened to a local author's story of two lost souls meeting on Christmas Eve, and shared this prayer by Rev. Cliff Reed (by 'Carnival of Lamps'):

THE SAME OLD CAROLS

'Why do we always sing the same old carols?'
someone always asks,
'Why do we never sing the new ones?'
The new ones, that is, which get written,
and forgotten, every year.

We sing the same old carols because,
from somewhere out of sight,
other voices are already singing them,
calling us to sing them too:

'O Come All Ye Faithful',
'The First Nowell', and 'Silent Night';
'Good King Wenceslas', 'Away in a Manger',
'O Little Town of Bethlehem', and all the rest.

Up they well from somewhere deeper
than our own memories, our own past.
As we sing them, we join, not just with each other,
but with our parents and our grandparents,

with their parents and their grandparents,
all singing down the Decembers,
in church and chapel, pub and lamp-lit street;
in front-parlours around pianos
and twinkling Christmas trees.

They sing with us and in us and through us,
spirits of Christmases past, benign and loving,
blessing this holy time, as ours will bless
the Christmases to come, singing in voices
that the Earth has yet to hear.

We sing the same old carols because,
though dry reason and dull fact deny it,
the angels and the shepherds sang them
on that holy night when Christ was born.