



Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians
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Hello

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

Here's the service summary letter from Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians for March 2022! Spring is here, and we're back in our building, offering the option for people who are not on Zoom to join in services by coming to the Turner Hall, where we have set up a screen and projector to show our online Zoom services. From 1 May 2022, we'll be back having 'hybrid' worship in person in the main Church Hall, with the option to join the service via Zoom as well.

We are asking anyone who comes to the building to do the following:

- If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 or have had a positive test, do not attend events at the building. Please follow government guidance to stay at home, self-isolate and arrange a test (more details here: <https://tinyurl.com/3vtnzbyj>).
- If you test positive for Covid-19 during the week after attending an event here, please call us on: 07506 255 731 and inform us so that we can let others know, and also provide you with any support you may need from us. We promise that we will not pass on your identity to anyone we contact – we will only say that there has been a confirmed positive case among people who attended the event.
- Wearing a face covering or shield is a personal choice, but we ask people to consider doing so indoors, particularly if you are sitting 2m or less away from someone. This does not apply if you are eating and drinking, or if you have a medical exemption from wearing a mask.

Our church AGM will be Sunday 24th April at 12.45 in the Durant Hall and online, please save the date! Two things:

1. We need nominations for the Management Committee. Nominees must be church members, and you need to have their permission before putting them forward. The nomination paper is on the noticeboard in the church; we can also receive nominations by email to

info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk, or call Louise Reeve (Secretary) on: 07506 255 731. Please send them in!

2. We really want to hear what you think – please give us your views on how things are going using the short anonymous survey I've included with this letter. It's also online here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PZSCN6X>

Unitarian General Assembly 2022 - how shall we vote?

The Unitarian and Free Christian General Assembly takes place over 19-21st April 2022. Among other things, the Assembly will consider these four motions, and as a congregation we need to decide which way to vote on them. Please read them, and think about if you think we should vote in favour, vote against, or abstain from voting. Louise Reeve is going as our delegate; the way we do things in Newcastle is that the congregation discusses the motions and comes to an agreement on how to vote, and the delegate votes based upon this. We'll have a discussion after the service on 10th April, if you can't make it, you can reply by email to info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk or call Louise on: 07506 255 731. You can read the full motions and background papers online here: [Motions and Background Papers](#). Here's a summary:

1. FROM TWELVE FULL MEMBERS - Support the NHS

"This General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches supports a well-funded NHS, free at the point of use and considers that the increased use of the private sector in delivery of NHS healthcare, benefitting shareholders at the expense of patients, is ethically reprehensible. We therefore call on the UK Government to make a renewed commitment to a well-funded NHS free at the point of use and to abandon plans and practices which further divert public resources to private healthcare companies."

2. FROM THE FOY SOCIETY - Transgender Rights

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches: a) affirms with joy that each person's understanding and statement of their own gender identity is a matter of conscience; b) Affirms that transgender rights are human rights; c) Joins the British Medical Association, the Trades Union Congress and others in civil society in urging the adoption of a self-declaration model for gender recognition by the UK and devolved governments; and d) Requests that the Chief Officer lobby for this model in response to UK or devolved government consultations and on any other suitable occasion."

3. FROM EAST MIDLAND UNITARIANS - UK Unitarian Rebranding

"That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches regrets the lack of consultation over the rebranding exercise and requests that the Executive Committee (EC) consults the constituent congregations and fellowships on whether to introduce the new logo or retain the traditional

Chalice Design adopted in 2007 in the interests of maintaining a consistent denominational identity."

4. FROM BRISTOL FRENCHAY CONGREGATION - We the Peoples Campaign

"That this General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches a) endorses a World Citizens Initiative "We the Peoples Campaign"; b) joins with campaigns and petitions of other Faith groups who support this initiative."

As ever, whilst we're not all 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 or email: info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk, I'm happy to discuss things anytime.

In fellowship,

Louise Reeve
Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

March 2022 Service Highlights

6th March 2022 – A meditation on the church as 'A House of Peace, a House of Prayer, a House of Hope', Rev. Tom and Brigitte McCready

A Zoom service led by Rev. Tom and Brigitte McCready from Doncaster Unitarians, inspired by world events, and created as a response to the appeal for an emergency motion at the GA put out by Rev. Jo James for the Unitarian Ministerial Fellowship that condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, concluding with the following words:

"Warfare creates terrible suffering, reinforces social inequality and causes incalculable environmental damage. Therefore we call on our congregations and affiliated societies to prioritise peace and peace-making in our Unitarian worship and culture."

Our national Unitarian movement has put out this statement of Solidarity with Ukraine:

“The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We condemn the unjustifiable attack on Ukraine and call for an immediate withdrawal of Russian forces and for an immediate ceasefire.

We urge the UK Government and devolved administrations to offer whatever humanitarian aid is possible to prevent catastrophe in the region. Safe corridors for the passage of civilian refugees are now an urgent priority and we urge the UK Government and devolved administrations to offer safe haven and refuge to those fleeing this war.

Warfare creates terrible suffering, reinforces social inequality and causes incalculable environmental damage. We resolve to prioritise peace and peace-making in our Unitarian worship and culture.

A message from our President, Anne Mills:

‘As President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, I endorse the sentiments of horror, apprehension, and fear aroused by the recent Russian attack on Ukraine. On behalf of us all, I send messages of solidarity, sympathy and support to the people of this war-torn country; we are thinking of them and praying for them, in their need; and we are glad that their neighbouring countries are freely offering them help and care, in their suffering.

Many of our chapels are organising vigils, which we may join, either in person or in spirit, and I know that our prayers will bring encouragement and reassurance to Ukraine.

Please remember that we may be able to help, tangibly, by donating funds; Unitarians have long supported the Red Cross as a way of providing relief in disasters, raising over £115,000 in the last ten years, and you can donate online to support humanitarian work in Ukraine here:

<https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-crisis-appeal> (You can also donate by phone by calling: 0300 456 1155, also call this number if you would like advice on how to donate by cheque or bank transfer.)

Let us all help, in whatever ways we can; no contribution is too small or insignificant. Thank you for your empathy, your efforts – and your hopes.

With very best wishes,

Anne Mills.’

Read this statement on our website here:

<https://tinyurl.com/UnitarianRedCross2022Ukraine>.”

This was also our first service with the option to view Zoom services in the Turner Hall, which was much appreciated by those who attended.

13th March 2022 – Spring Miscellany, Louise Reeve

Louise Reeve led our Spring Miscellany, looking at Spring and Ostara traditions, and with contributions from the congregation, including a poem for our times, and listening to 'O Rubor Sanguinis' by Hildegard of Bingen for our musical interlude. Here are the words used for our benediction, by the UUA author Amy Zucker Morgenstern.

Prayer - "A Blessing of Darkness and Light", by Amy Zucker Morgenstern

"Delicate branches, at night, surround the light of the moon
Blessed is the dark, in which our dreams stir and are revealed.
Blessed is the dark of earth, where seeds come to life.
Blessed are the depths of the ocean where no light shimmers: the womb of all earthly life.

Blessed is the light into which we awake,
the light that sparkles on the waters:
that calls the tree forth from the seed,
and calls the shadow forth from the tree.

Blessed are we as we move through darkness and through light. May it be so."

20th March 2022 – Sacred Beauty, Diana Bebbby

Diana Bebbby led our service on 'Sacred Beauty', in a new format. We contemplated works of art and music selected by the congregation and compiled by Diana, and asked ourselves about how they roused a sense of the sacred within us.

27th March 2022 – Mother Superior(s) and Cookies of Joy, Louise Reeve

Louise Reeve led a service looking at three topics: what it means to mother, the achievements of 12th century abbess, scholar and mystic Hildegard of Bingen, and the ministry of cake. In her writings on health, Hildegard of Bingen often recommended special food and drink to treat various ailments. Here's a recipe for her 'Cookies of Joy', intended to treat depression and anxiety:

"Take some nutmeg and an equal weight of cinnamon and a bit of cloves, and pulverise them. Then make small cakes with this and flour and water. Eat them often. It will calm all bitterness of the heart and mind, open your heart and impaired senses, and make your mind cheerful. It purifies your senses and diminishes all harmful humours in you. It gives good liquid to your blood and makes you strong."

Ingredients: 12 tablespoons butter, 3/4 cup brown sugar, 1/3 cup honey, 4 egg yolks, 2.5 cups spelt or plain flour, 1 tsp salt, 1 tbsp nutmeg, 1 tbsp cinnamon, 1 tsp ground cloves

Instructions

Melt the butter, then add it to a medium bowl with the sugar, honey, and egg yolks. Beat gently, then fold in the rest of the ingredients. Refrigerate the dough for an hour.

Flour a surface and then roll out the cookie dough until about a 1/4 inch thick. Cut the dough into small circles using a cookie cutter or an upturned glass.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, then bake at 375°Fahrenheit for 10 minutes, or until a golden-brown. Let cool, then enjoy!"