



Newcastle Unitarians The Calendar



August – September 2025

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**A member Congregation of the General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches**

Articles for the next calendar to be submitted by
Sunday 28th September 2025. Thanks to all those
who have contributed to this calendar.

Chair's Hello August and September 2025

It's been a busy summer! We've been part of the Northern Pride Prayer Service on 19th July, where Jane gave a reading, and later we marched with our flag at the Pride Parade.

We've also had the traditional Whitby Trip, Louise visited Golders Green Unitarians to lead worship for them on 'Art and Spirituality, and we've had a wide range of services, with Kainara's yoga-themed services adding a new element to our Sundays, alongside the varied and enlightening offerings from our usual worship leaders.



Looking to the future, our work with Unitarian Transformers, Rev. Mark Hutchinson and John Gill to further develop what we might want to do to grow our community here in Newcastle is proceeding at speed! We're drawing up job descriptions for community outreach workers to offer spiritual gatherings to people in Newcastle

which will be less formal and held on days other than Sundays; we want to reach out to people wanting a liberal approach to spirituality and offer them a space that will work for them. We're also looking at many different venues in Newcastle where these gatherings could take place – watch this space!

Looking to the past, our silver Tea Urn has rejoined the rest of the church silverware in the keeping of Newcastle City Council, and we're going to find a home for the church model.

And looking to the future once more, we'll have the Northern Unitarian Association AGM at Stockton Unitarian Chapel at 11am on Saturday 11th October – email Louise at: info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk if you'd like to attend and would like some transport – and our Fellowship Meal after the service on Sunday 5th October.

I look forward to seeing you soon, enjoy the sunshine,

Louise Reeve
Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

The Future of GA Zette – July 2025

The GA Zette, which has been covering the General Assembly Annual Meetings since the 1960s, is facing some challenges with its traditional



printed format. Louise Reeve and David Warhurst carried out a survey, then held a discussion at the Annual Meetings in April 2025 to see how people feel about it, whether there was a desire to retain it, and explore future formats that could be more sustainable.

What the future holds

Both the survey and the meeting agreed that our focus should be on going digital while retaining the option of paper copies in order to keep it accessible. Given that reporting on the Annual Meetings was the main thing that respondents said they valued, we will look to prioritise this in future. Everyone at the meeting agreed on the

need to maintain good editorial quality, and we hope that involving the *Inquirer* more in producing the *Zette* could help with this.

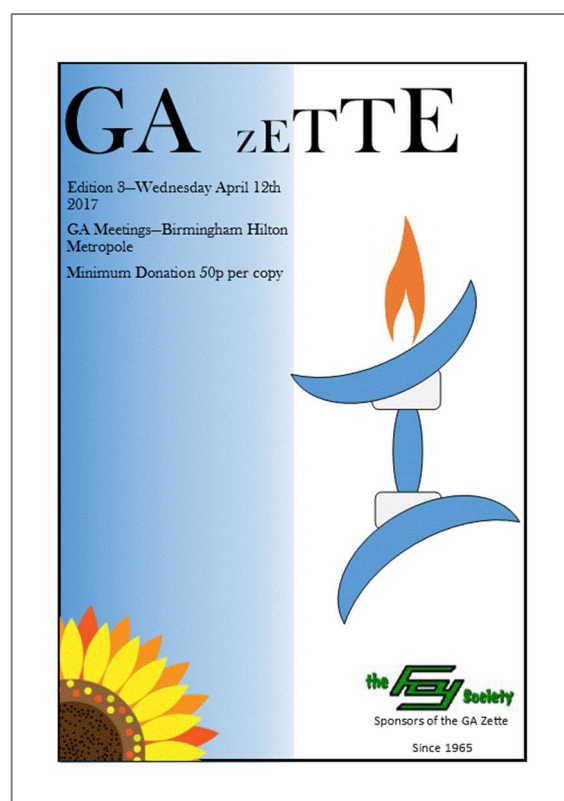
What we learned from the survey

- **People know the GA Zette:** 87% of respondents are familiar with it, with 81% having attended past meetings and 66% attending the 2025 meetings.
- **Meeting coverage is important:** 80% of people value catching up on missed meetings and workshops, and 69% appreciate reports on Annual Meeting events and decisions. The 2025 'Roving Reporter' live blog was well received, helping attendees and absentees stay informed.
- **Digital is the way to go:** 62% prefer daily summaries mostly online, accessible via smartphones or tablets, with print editions available on request for accessibility.
- **Community vibes:** Participants love the Zette's role in fostering community, especially for newcomers, and want to keep this connection.
- **Relevance concerns:** Some feel the Zette's shorter meeting coverage reduces depth,

risking a shift from engaging commentary to formal reporting.

- **Print model is unsustainable:** Overnight production of printed copies is not feasible; moving to online with print options and multiple 'roving reporters' is recommended.
- **Editorial oversight needed:** Future formats require editors to ensure content quality and consistency, with plans to recruit multiple editors and engage contributors for live summaries.

We'll pick this up in early 2026, and look to recruit more reporters and set up an online home for the Zette. We would love to hear from anyone interested in getting involved in this, as a reporter, an editor, or in any other role



Louise Reeve

Note: The author used Microsoft Co-Pilot to assist in summarising the survey findings. (Any mistakes however are mine, not the AI's!)

Services August – September 2026

August

Date	Worship Leader	Topic
3	Chris Carr	‘Who Do We Include?’
10	Louise Reeve	Flower Communion
17	Chris Newsam	‘What Might Equality Look Like?’
24	Louise Reeve	‘The Golden Rule’ (GA 2025 Resolution)
31	Rev. James Poore	‘Practical Wisdom’

September

Date	Worship Leader	Topic
7	Paul Lindsay Dawson	‘Sin and Sensibility: A Little Pride’ GREAT NORTH RUN
14	Kainara Motta	‘Meditation for Change’
21	TBC	TBC
28	Rev. Paul Walker	TBC

Supporting local, national and international charities

We continue to support various charities in the North East and internationally. We invite anyone who wishes to do so to donate to charities helping those suffering through the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, refugees fleeing war, persecution and natural disasters. Please search online for a charity that speaks to you.

More locally, GAIN is a charity that helps those with autoimmune conditions. Donate online here: justgiving.com/fundraising/geordie-leather

We continue to support the Joseph Cowen Centre, helping homeless men in the city. They need tea, coffee, sugar, powdered milk, men's socks,



underpants and toiletries plus paper, pens, puzzle books and playing cards – you can take them to the Byker centre or drop them at our church, or you can make a financial donation online: localgiving.org/charity/tynehousing/

Visiting Golders Green Unitarians

15 June 2025

I occasionally leave our northern Unitarian home to visit other congregations, and on 15 June 2025 I accepted Golders Green Unitarians' offer to visit them and lead worship on their monthly theme of 'Art and Creativity'. I chose 'Art and Spirituality' as my topic; I may well repeat it for Newcastle some time!

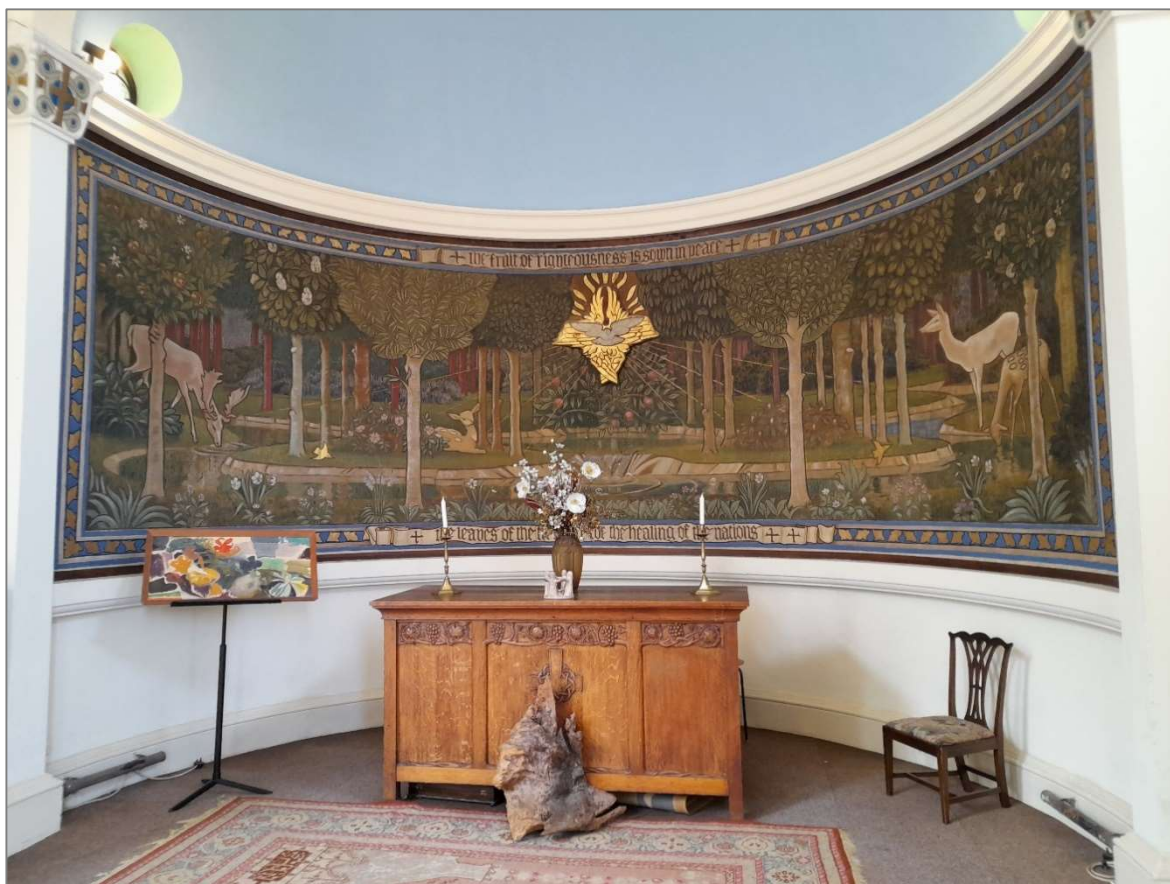


It was an absolute pleasure to visit their beautiful home and friendly community. Like many congregations, including our own Church of the Divine Unity, Golders Green has an interesting and in some



places unexpected history; it split off from Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel (Hampstead) in 1903. Unusually for the time, it was founded by two women, who funded the new congregation and eventually the building of the new church, which dates from 1925 and is Grade II listed.

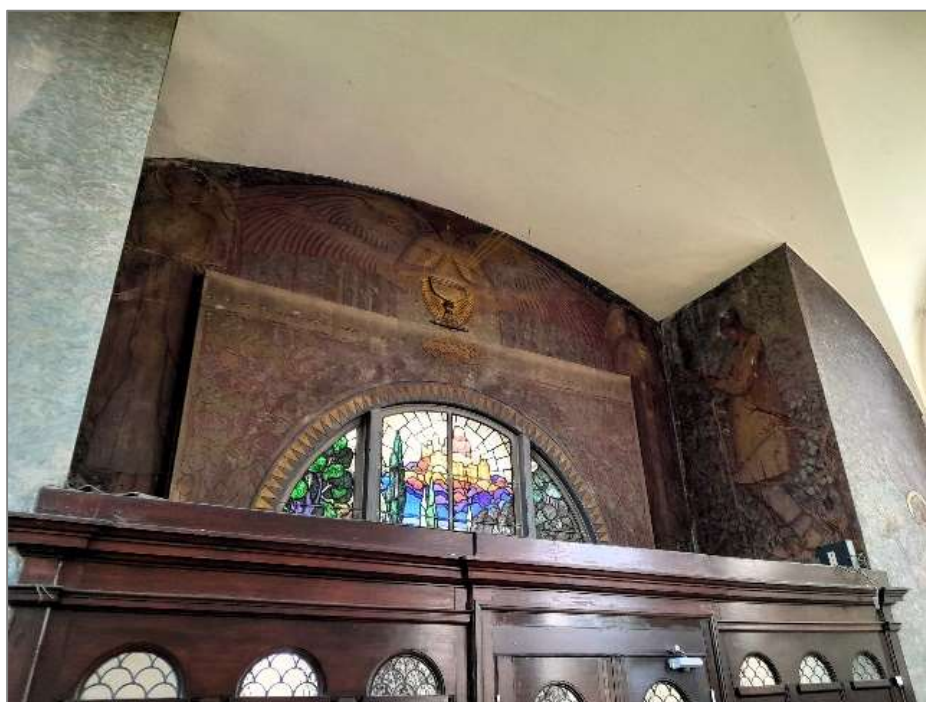
[Historic England](#) singles out for mention a "notable tempera mural by Ivon Hitchens", among other works.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the timing of its creation, signs of peace are everywhere, in the peaceful woodland 'tempera mural' scenes, to

the dove of peace over the stained-glass window at the entrance.

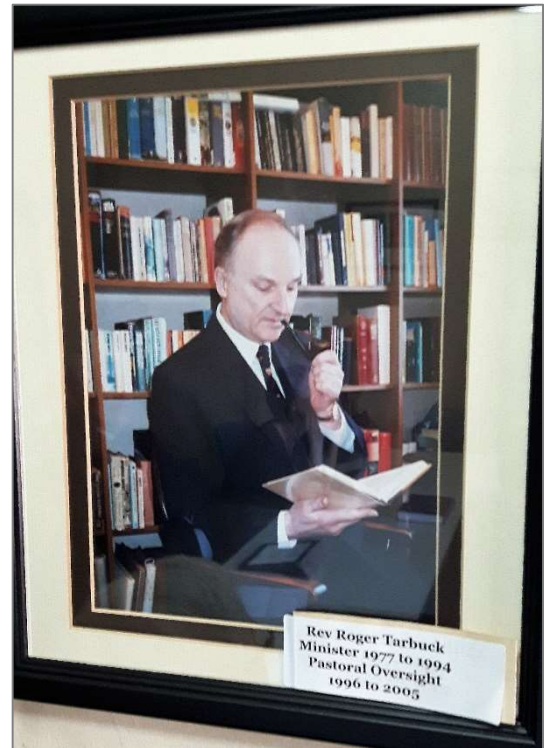
Certainly it would be hard to find a more inspiring setting for a service on art and spirituality. I was very happy to speak to ten attendees in person, including the minister, Rev. Michael Allured, and someone attending for the first time – and one large bumblebee, which travelled in with the altar flowers. We decided to leave it in peace to find its own way out. I had not expected to preach to a bee, but life takes us down some interesting routes! It would be lovely to return some time, perhaps one day. Thanks to all for making me welcome.



Letter from Roger Tarbuck

Dear Friends,

How adaptable our wonderful language is. From brutish grunts to the eloquence of Shakespeare it dwells easily on our lips and in our minds and, if I may cheekily adapt the Bard's words, it "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name", offering us knowledge, reasoning, explication and understanding. What a choice of expression there is: too much, one might say. Out of all the welter of words that spill over the globe every minute, I suggest two that might be used more often than any other – whether spoken by Anglophones or not. These are: Okay and Awright. They may be used this way round: "Okay?" – "Awright!" or this way: "Awright?" – "Okay!" What more could you ask of any two simple, wholly international words? (I know, Awright is really two words!) And with the embellishment of gestures of hands, faces, heads or shoulders,



their scope for communication is great, whichever country of the world you may be in.

From taxi drivers in the strangest places to chatty professors who spoke hardly any English in others, these two little words – with appropriate gestures – have helped me to describe what I and others wanted and our satisfaction on receiving it. The words don't easily lend themselves to sarcasm or cruelty: they fit naturally into their place with genuine feelings of concern. If a poor friend of yours can't afford a proper meal, you'll smile as you slip him a fifty-pound note, cordially enquiring "Awright?" and he will gratefully murmur "Okay, thank you." But if a thief with a weapon has just made your pocket lighter by the same amount you might, with a caustic glint in your eye, enquire: "Okay? Happy now?" with no sense of cordiality. Many facts of life have a bad side, but it is not the fault of the words.

While at sea, I had a captain who would never allow anyone to use Okay or Awright: "Unseamanly", he would say. "Lazy, ignorant speech. Stop it now!" But he wasn't aware of something that would become important one day. In a later world, when politicians of all sorts would struggle

woefully for “Levelling up”, Okay and Awright, even in the briefest sense, would become great levellers – leveller ups, if you like – bringing a welcome friendliness and approachability to a coming relationship, which, however short or long, will quickly have you and your interlocutor on equal terms. I’m sure that this is what my captain would certainly not permit, and as a senior sort of chap, he must be allowed that.

When meeting a rather nervous new colleague at work, the attitude of some people is often defensive or hostile. When introduced, they may grunt, with an upward tilting of the nose, “Uh?” But, encouraged by a smile and a nod, they might easily add, “Okay. Awright, mate. Pleased to meet you. Come right in.” The newcomer is immediately raised to the level of the comradeship of the staff.

Speech is essential for the brain’s development. There have been cases of people stranded on a desert island who succeeded in keeping their sanity by talking to things, or animals that they managed to capture and train. As related in *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe tells how he managed to tame and talk to some of the goats on

the island that he inhabited for a while, as practice for his book.

A member of our church who impressed me greatly was Ruth Healey, who taught children born deaf to talk. This task seemed impossible to me, but Ruth explained that the first thing she taught the chil-



dren was to make simple puffing actions with the mouth and going on from there so that they would eventually speak in a way that they couldn't even imagine before. Like the faculties of sight and hearing, speech is a function of the brain whose communication is life itself in action, no matter how small the words may be.

'Okay' is probably the most used word in the world. Many years ago, my wife Bronda and I enlisted in a course of instruction – ten people or so – in using the computer. It was a very good

course, but what impressed me was the number of times in a minute that our teacher used the Okay? word. It would appear up to ten times in a sentence, but it seemed a natural thing to do because it came in the rhythm of his speech as a genuine desire to know whether he was successfully doing his job. It was like needing a permanent form of reassurance. And that is what we all need, isn't it?

Yours sincerely, Roger Tarbuck

Future of the Inquirer, 11 June 2025

It's hard to imagine British Unitarianism without *The Inquirer* magazine, but like literally every other British organisation these days, the prevailing economy it has to survive in isn't exactly kind and forgiving. It was therefore quite exciting to be invited to a 'Future of *The Inquirer*' online event, and reassuring for those of us who have hoped for some updates on what's happening.

There will be a full write-up in the July edition of *The Inquirer* (natch), but here's some headlines

for now, courtesy of Laura Autumn Cox and Kieren Mardle-Moss:

- **Finances:** Kieren presented the good news that *The Inquirer* is in a healthy financial position, and donations are increasing.
- **Content:** Laura stated that current editorial policy is to focus on accessibility, variety, and a diverse spread of authors and article topics. A style guide has been created for contributors to use.
- **Contributors:** All budding writers are invited to contribute to *The Inquirer* and they don't have to be Unitarian; the editorial board is keen to welcome other views and build connections beyond the movement.
- **A surprise!** *The Inquirer* has launched a brand-new creative competition! Details are in the June edition, and on the new Instagram page: **@theinquirer_mag**.

The discussions afterwards covered the range of topics in the magazine, details of the style guide, and the need to create an AI policy, which the editorial board plans to move forward with, much to the delight of yours truly, since it was me who brought it up.

I'm not opposed to AI, but I am firmly in favour of its careful and responsible use, and, above all, transparency about when it is used and how. If something is presented as the work of a human being, we need to be sure that it is – or, if not, how



much of it is of AI origin. Indeed, in 2024 our national movement resolved that, among other parts of Resolution 1, our “[Unitarian] individuals and congregations to study AI, algorithms and their societal impact ...Unitarian bodies to host and / or facilitate wider societal and philosophical conversations”.

Watch this space for more details, and for now, all seems promising!

Louise Reeve

(Written without the aid of any AI whatsoever. All mistakes entirely my own fault.)

Northern Pride, 19 July 2025

A highlight of the city's calendar, Northern Pride 2025 took place over Saturday 19th - Sunday 20th July. As in previous years, it was a slightly damp affair, although unlike in previous years, the location was Newcastle City Centre rather than the Town Moor and Exhibition Park. Also unlike previous years, we were marching down John Dobson Street due to the rather large holes littering Northumberland Street.

Before all that, though, it was time for the traditional Pride Prayer Service led by Rev. Kai Millar at St James' URC church, for which we were happy to be joined by Rev. Tom McCready and Brigitte McCready from



Doncaster Unitarians. Jane Simpson from our congregation was among the readers during a powerful and uplifting service, ending with a Glitter Blessing and some excellent singing! And followed by some cake and buns.



After that, it was time to start the march! Unfortunately, it was also time to start the downpour, but no-one let that put them off. Having collected the flag and flagpole, I headed over to the Civic Centre to join the Pride march gathering on Ceremonial Way. Whilst there are no official sections in the march, it's not uncommon for similar organisations to gather together, so I joined St James URC, Northern Lights MCC, and various other inclusive-minded churches to wave our banners and wait for the start. Finally, we were off, possibly to the relief of the person behind me; our flag is over a metre long, and whilst the flag pole is 3m long, if you're not careful with the angle you can end up with the person behind you inadvertently wearing the flag!

Louise Reeve

The Whitby Trip, 3 August 2025

The annual Whitby Trip took place on a sunny Sunday 3rd August 2025, when Unitarians from Whitby, York, Stockton, Scarborough and Newcastle gathered to hear Claire Lee's afternoon service on 'Looking for Truth Behind the Words' in the atmospheric Flowergate Chapel in Whitby.



The chapel looks a little different with the back screen removed and the floor levelled, it's more accessible and much easier for visitors to get around inside. Claire led a thought-provoking service on truth and wisdom, with music from the wonderful Whitby Community Group. We followed up with home-made cookies and coffee. It was wonderful to see everyone again!

Here's our video of Claire Lee's 2024 service, 'The Lost Words': <https://youtu.be/r9ozOoLE4z8>

Louise Reeve

Rev. William Turner and Railways – Talk by Paul Lindsay Dawson

A talk by Paul L. Dawson, who regularly leads worship for us. We look forward to seeing you there! The full title is: "Rev. William Turner and Railways: the life, times and importance of Turner and his congregation in the development of railways."



Attending a meeting of Unitarian clergy in Leeds, William Turner witnessed the wonder of the age. He gave a paper to the Newcastle Lit & Phil which was the genesis moment for the development of the steam locomotive on Tyneside.

A LIVE Lit & Phil Event. Tickets are £3, book here: <https://www.litandphil.org.uk/event/rev-william-turner-and-railways-lecture/>

If you would prefer to book directly over the phone, please call the Lit and Phil Library Desk team on 0191 232 0192 and they will be happy to help.

About Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

We are a free religious faith and affirm the unity of the human family, regardless of race, creed, class, orientation or sex. We believe that peace,

compassion and justice should be the hallmarks of a truly spiritual society, pursued in a spirit of freedom, reason and tolerance.

The Unitarian Community in this city traces its history back to 1662, when Dr Richard Gilpin and Rev. William Durant started separate Nonconformist meetings after the Act of Uniformity. Under the Rev. Herbert Barnes, our former building in Ellison Place opened on Sunday 21 January 1940.

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