



Newcastle Unitarians The Calendar



October – November 2025

www.newcastleunitarians.org.uk

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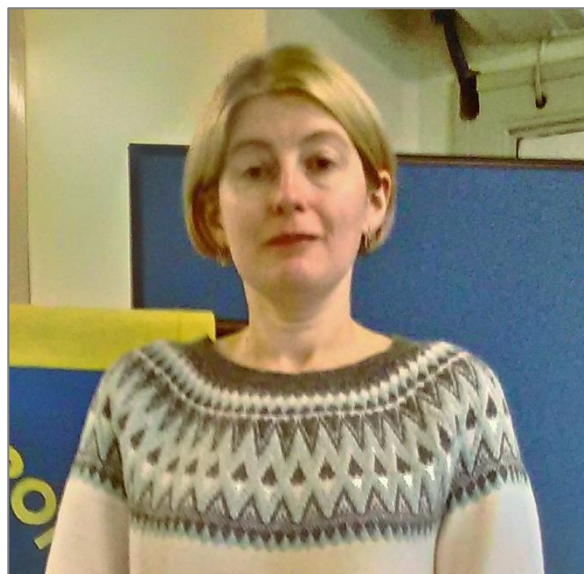
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**A member Congregation of the General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches**

Articles for the next calendar to be submitted by
Sunday 30 November 2025. Thanks to all those who
have contributed to this calendar.

Chair's Hello October and November 2025

We're now well into autumn, the leaves are turning, and Halloween costumes appear in the shops. By the time you read this, we will have had our Fellowship Meal on 5 October, the first Sunday in October, and the traditional date on which we celebrate our fellowship as a community. Brigitte McCready led a lovely service in which we marked the season, collected for the People's Kitchen (<https://peopleskitchen.co.uk/>), and had our traditional Fellowship Lunch at Claremont Teahouse. We also marked Fairtrade Fortnight with the Fairtrade Prayer, and remembered the victims of the synagogue attack in Heaton, Manchester.



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 now advertising for a Project Lead for Unitarians in

the Community, and looking at possible venues for new gatherings where people can explore Unitarian spirituality in new ways. You can find out more about this here, and if you know someone who would be interested, do send them the details! Link:

<https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/2025/10/06/we-re-hiring-project-lead-unitarians-in-the-community-newcastle/>

The annual Northern Unitarian Association AGM happens on Saturday 11th October at Stockton Unitarians, and we look forward to hearing from Geoff Levermore, the current GA President, on 'The Good Samaritan, Religion and Politics' at his service for us on Sunday 12th October. The NUA is also looking at applying for a grant from the Innovation Fund to do some outreach work in Newcastle and Stockton, to grow Unitarianism in the North East. Exciting times!

On a more social note, Louise Reeve recently led worship at Plymouth Unitarians, and Jane Simpson visited Ipswich Unitarians. Looking to the future, we have Paul Lindsay Dawson's talk on Rev. William Turner and the Railways on at the Lit and Phil on 20th October 2025 (see

<https://www.litandphil.org.uk/event/rev-william-turner-and-railways-lecture/> to book), and we're planning to have a stall at the Climate Day of Action for COP30 on Saturday 15th November.

I look forward to seeing you soon, enjoy the autumn days,

Louise Reeve
Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

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## **Fellowship, Fairtrade and Harvest, 5th October 2025**

On 5th October 2025, we had our annual Harvest and Fellowship Service, led by Brigitte McCready on 'Harvest and Community'. Thanks to all who donated good or financial support to the People's Kitchen, Our Fellowship Service is usually held on the Sunday nearest the fifth of October, as it marks the start of the long ministry at Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians by Rev. Herbert Barnes on 5 October 1919. On this date we celebrate the fellowship of our community.

Given recent events, Brigitte and her husband Rev. Tom McCready also took time to mark the recent tragic events at the Heaton synagogue in Manchester, and to remember the work of Rev. Herbert Barnes, a vigorous campaigner against antisemitism in the 1930s. On 8 January 1934, it was reported that, later that week, 'in appreciation of his personality and public works and services rendered to the Jewish People' and in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of his ministry, he was to be honoured by an inscription in The Jewish National Fund's 'Golden Book' and a certificate marking this was to be presented to him. We still have the certificate!





As it was Fairtrade Fortnight on 22 September – 5 October 2025, Brigitte also read out the Fairtrade Prayer:

“Dear Lord, who prayed “give us today our daily bread”, we give thanks for those who work to produce our food and pray they may be given fair reward for their labours.

We pray for those who grow the things we love that can’t be grown in the UK, including our favourite cup of tea, coffee and bananas.

We pray for communities where a fair price sends children to school and supports basic health care. We pray that you will guide the Fair-Trade movement in its efforts to secure a fair deal for those whose bargaining power is weakest.

We pray for supermarkets, brands and other retailers that they will recognise that everyone involved in the produce they buy, and sell is important, and that sustainable communities and a sustainable planet depend on fairness for everyone in our food supply chains.

We pray for shoppers here in the UK facing cost-of-living challenges that they will recognise that fairness is for everyone.

When we come together socially and share a cuppa, in church, at parties or organised events, help us to remember to BREW IT FAIR. Amen.”



And we went for lunch at the  
Claremount Teahouse afterwards!



# Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

## Services – October to December 2025

### Northumbria University Large Spiritual Commons Room

| Date            | Speaker             | Topic                                                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>October</b>  |                     |                                                                       |
| 5               | Brigitte McCready   | 'Harvest and Community'<br><b>Fellowship Meal</b>                     |
| 12              | Geoff Levermore     | 'The Good Samaritan, Religion and Politics'<br><b>NUA AGM Weekend</b> |
| 19              | Paul Lindsay Dawson | 'To Boldly Go Where No Mandy Had Gone Before...'<br><b>Committee</b>  |
| 26              | Kainara Motta       | 'Meditation for Resilience'<br><b>CLOCKS BACK</b>                     |
| <b>November</b> |                     |                                                                       |
| 2               | Chris Carr          | 'My Little Apple Tree'<br><b>Committee</b>                            |
| 9               | Paul Lindsay Dawson | Remembrance Sunday<br>BEGIN AT 10.45                                  |
| 16              | Kainara Motta       | Meditation                                                            |
| 23              | Rev. Paul Walker    | TBC                                                                   |
| <b>December</b> |                     |                                                                       |
| 30              | Louise Reeve        | Toy Service                                                           |
| 7               | Kainara Motta       | Committee<br>Advent                                                   |
| 14              | David Venus         | Christmas Miscellany<br>Advent                                        |
| 21              | Louise Reeve        | Carol Service<br>Advent                                               |
| 28              | -                   | NO SERVICE                                                            |

## **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](https://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/](https://localgiving.org/charity/tynehousing/)



## **Bible Bulletin 38: “Underdogs, misfits and the art of battling giants” . . .**

...this is the sub-title of 'David and Goliath' by Malcolm Gladwell. The book describes what happens when ordinary people confront 'giants', by which is meant powerful opponents of all kinds. There are three parts:

### **The advantages of disadvantages (and the disadvantages of advantages)**

A man with no knowledge of basketball coached a team of 12-year-old girls to play in a national competition. One factor in their success was the irritation their unconventional method of play aroused in the opposition. Comparison was made with the unconventional warfare of Lawrence of Arabia whose military achievements were due largely to his not looking like a typical British Army officer. Two valuable lessons: effort can trump ability and conventions are made to be challenged.

It is commonly thought that, in schools, best results are achieved by small classes. Surveys show that this is not necessarily true. Apart from any effect on examination results, it was found

that in a small class it was not possible to get any kind of conversation or discussion going.

It is difficult for a rich man whose success has been gained by considerable effort to raise children to have correct values. A student choosing a university and the Parisian Impressionists seeking venues for displaying their work each saw the advantage of being 'a big fish in a small pond' rather than 'a small fish in a big pond'.

## **The theory of desirable difficulty**

The condition of dyslexia creates enormous problems for sufferers, resulting in many cases to despair. However, there are many examples, notably among business leaders, of sufferers overcoming the handicap and living productive lives; a construction worker became a leading lawyer. Dyslexics compensate for their disability by developing other skills that can prove highly advantageous.

Preparations in London for World War 1 included provision of several psychiatric hospitals to deal with the expected cases of trauma. In fact, few if any such cases occurred and the hospitals were

not put to their intended use. The resilience of the population exceeded expectation.

Jay Freireich, assisted by Tom Frei, made great advances in treating childhood leukaemia. The achievement followed many harrowing experiences among suffering children – and frequent clashes with his superiors. Freireich's own miserable childhood, largely deprived of parental love, stimulated his drive to help children.

The Civil Rights Movement in 1960s America found a focus in a photograph (widely published in the press) of a police dog apparently attacking a teenage boy who, far from showing fear, is showing great calm. The photograph seems 'rigged' but the propaganda value was immense.

## **Limits of power**

This section contains stories from Northern Ireland, California and Vichy France.

“The British came to Northern Ireland with the best of intentions and ended up in the middle of thirty years of bloodshed and mayhem”.

Two child killings: two different parental responses. “A man employs the full power of the state in his grief and ends up plunging his



government into a fruitless and costly experiment. A woman who walks away from the promise of power finds the strength to forgive – and saves her friendship, her marriage, and her sanity. The world is turned upside down”,

In Chambon-sur-Lignon, a village in a remote region of France – a region with a strong Huguenot tradition – André Trocmé, pastor and schoolmaster, organised a protection system for Jewish children. His attitude to attempts to restrain him was “Resist, but with no fear, pride or hate”. It is surprising that so few attempts *were* made to curtail his activities.

A visiting Vichy minister, Georges Lamirand, was presented with a letter the substance of which was “We have Jews. You're not getting them”. Trocmé and his co-pastor Édouard Theis were arrested and briefly held in an interment camp. Told that they could be released if they signed a paper promising obedience to the law; they refused but, astonishingly, were released anyway.

“It was not the privileged and the fortunate who took in the Jews in France. It was the marginal and the damaged, which should remind us that there are real limits to what evil and misfortune can accomplish.”

In an introductory chapter, the story of David and Goliath is told as it appears in the Bible (1 Samuel 17). However, Gladwell continues, “the problem with that version of events is that almost everything about it is wrong”. He argues that there is something strange about Goliath's behaviour. His slow movement is not entirely due to the weight of his armour.

It has been alleged that Goliath suffered from a medical condition, *acromegaly*, which would explain his size and would almost certainly give him vision problems, hence the presence of the so-called shield bearer who serves as his 'eyes'. David is usually regarded as an underdog but, as long as he had the sense not to respond to Goliath's invitation to approach, he could not lose the contest, armed as he was with a devastating weapon (common among soldiery). Far from a tale of a 'boy with a toy' pitted against an invincible giant, we have an account of a seasoned fighter pitted against a pathetic hulk of humanity.

Amazingly, Gladwell omits another aspect. It is recorded in 2 Samuel 21:19 that Goliath was killed by Elhanan, one of David's soldiers. Admittedly the assertion is disputed but If true the well-known story in 1 Samuel 17 is wrong.

Bible stories have a way of conveying helpful lessons even when there is uncertainty about the facts underlying them!

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### **Correction / Clarification**

In Bible Bulletin 3 a quotation relating to the importance of the Apocrypha is said to appear in the Preface to the Revised Version. Actually, it is in the Preface to the Oxford Annotated Apocrypha (RSV).



## **Paul Lindsay Dawson: ‘Rev. William Turner and the Railways’**

Full title: “Rev. William Turner and Railways: the life, times and importance of Turner and his congregation in the development of railways. A talk by Paul L. Dawson.”

Born in Wakefield in 1761, the Rev. William Turner Jr. became an integral part of the religious, educational and social life of Newcastle at the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th. As minister of Hanover Square Unitarian Chapel, his congregation included many who had interests in coal mining, as well as science and technology, for example, John Buddle, perhaps the foremost colliery viewer of his age. He was involved with the development of early railways in Britain and overseas. Another example is George Stephenson and his son, Robert.



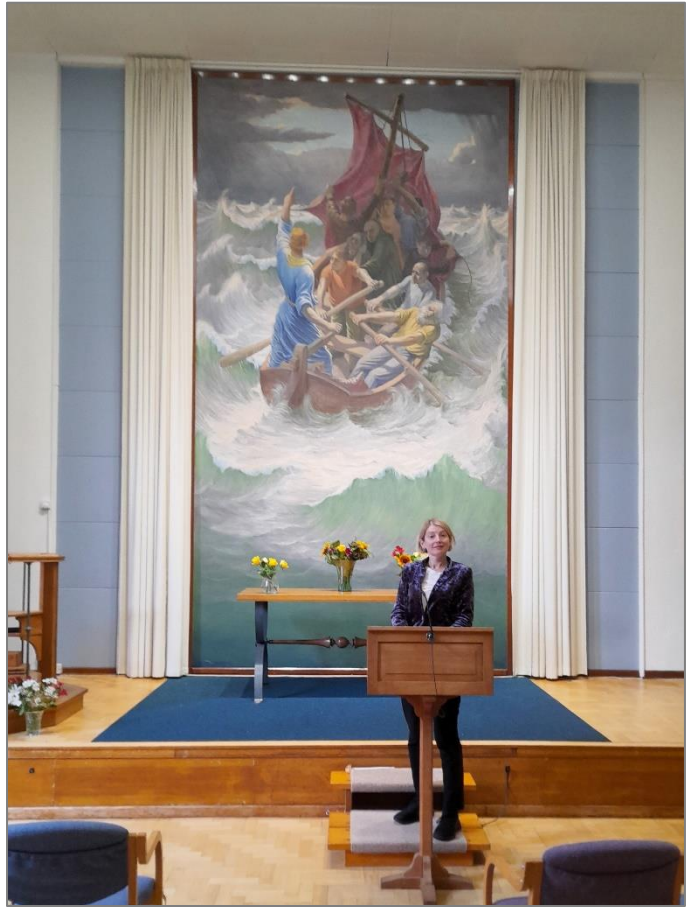
The development of railways was a Yorkshire phenomenon. The world's first public railway was in Wakefield; the world's first successful and commercially viable steam railway was in Leeds. Attending a meeting of Unitarian clergy in Leeds, William Turner witnessed the wonder of the age. He gave a paper to the Newcastle Lit & Phil which was the genesis moment for the development of the steam locomotive on Tyneside.

Paul L. Dawson is a postgraduate of the University of Leeds, holding the degree of Master of Arts by Research. An active Unitarian Lay Minister, he has written over 50 books on the history of Unitarianism, societal development in the long 18th century, the Napoleonic Wars and more recently the Wars of the Roses.

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 Library Desk team on 0191 232 0192 and they will be happy to help)

## Plymouth Unitarians, September 2025

Louise Reeve writes:  
"On 21 September, I had the privilege of leading worship at Plymouth Unitarians on the topic 'Whales and Wonder'. They are proud to be a Silver Eco-Church, supporting the environment and committing to sustainability, and their building is a warm and welcoming space.



It was lovely to be part of a thriving congregation, and I hope they appreciated my ramblings about some of the most fascinating creatures on earth - you can see me leading worship here!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQkhGVGO-Zo>



## **We're hiring! Project Lead: Unitarians in the Community – Newcastle**

Working with Unitarian Transformers, we're hiring for our new community and spiritual outreach project. Here's the details, and how to apply! If you've got questions please get in touch with Judith Knight, details at the end of the advert.

An exciting and innovative new initiative supported by the Unitarian movement to develop and support a new community of Unitarian and like-minded people in the heart of Newcastle. This is a brand new venture and one that may be replicated across the country, so being flexible and innovative at this stage will help develop this first pilot project in Newcastle, and to help the movement develop, grow, and learn from it!

Part time and on an initial 18-month contract (£17.5k, and 18.5hrs a week) the project lead will be a self-starter and real people person. At the forefront of a new initiative the successful person will be someone with gifts that will inspire others within the context of encouraging individuals to be spiritually reflective, encouraging and exploring religious freedom, valuing different faiths and

perspectives and ethical principle; as well as someone who is able to develop great community relationships, spot opportunities, understand charitable organisational responsibilities and project manage and be at ease in communicating with people at all levels!

If you are interested in finding out more please do get in touch, and if you know someone who might be please do share this with them. More details about the role can be found online here:

<https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/2025/10/06/were-hiring-project-lead-unitarians-in-the-community-newcastle/>

For more information or to arrange to have a chat about the role please do get in touch with Judith at Judith Knight HR: [Judith@Judithknighthr.com](mailto:Judith@Judithknighthr.com)

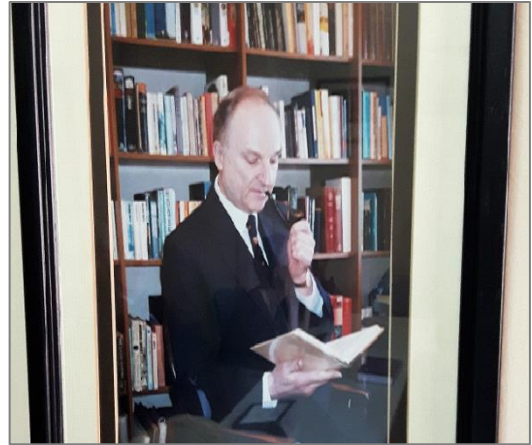
The closing date is 31st October 2025.



## Letter to Newcastle for October- November 2025

Dear Friends,

I had read so many horror stories about the NHS and its 7000,000-long waiting lists that in 2023 when I needed treatment, I went to a private hospital (which damaged my life's savings). When I arrived at the hospital, escorted by my family, I was given a warm welcome and a special lunch, which was delicious and my dear ones were happy to see what appeared to be me settling in well. All the time that I was eating and chatting with the staff I would occasionally hear a faint wailing from the depths of the hospital, and I thought, "They'll take all kinds here."



Little did I know that in a few hours I would be doing the wailing – for a "bottle". (Of course, you know what that was for) and from then on, all my calls for any assistance were cruelly ignored for what seemed *prescribed* times, as a routine, or

as a punishment, or just to show me who was boss around there. Now read this.

From the beginning, on and off, the staff treated me as a friend on one day, and in a hostile way on the next, in the manner of imposing domination like that of political prisoners in some of the nastier countries. The atmosphere in that place was unfriendly and unpleasant – and extremely expensive for a week or two.

So, coming to 2025, when I needed hospital treatment again, I was taken in the NHS ambulance to my local hospital, and I had no great hopes for my future there.

But it was fine! The atmosphere was highly efficient friendly, and whatever I asked for, I received it. I was there for six weeks and overall, my treatment couldn't have been better, and it was all free. My special needs were catered for. An example: I use a lot of tissues and was allowed a large plastic bag to place the used ones in, plus any other old junk. That, and such things as a “comfort” towel, eased my situation considerably. Oh, and strawberry jam spread on my croissant at breakfast – in bed. You try cutting a croissant lengthwise with a blunt table knife. They did it with ease.

The staff did their best to make the sometimes- straitened conditions comfortable. For instance, hygiene. For people like me, who couldn't go to the bath or toilet rooms, the only means of cleaning our hands was with "hand wipes". The only application of water to my hands was at the time of the morning wash / bath, when I quickly asked permission to plunge them into the bowl of precious water before the nurses took over.



The staff helped all the time, as they did with teeth / denture cleaning. For this, they gave me "the kit": a papier mâché spitting bowl, a tooth brush (supplied, with toothpaste) and a small tumbler of water for rinsing. Our regular staff would come along and take my dentures and wash them under the ward tap, but when a strange relief nurse was on, this complicated luxury had to be spelt out to them because they knew nothing about such niceties. (And for relief staff the NHS pays the earth!)

The staff must deal with many crises. On two occasions – at about midnight – a new patient had been brought in who was shouting and foully swearing for a long time. The security people were called, wearing body armour forsooth – for

knife attacks, I suspect. Luckily, I didn't see any violence.

On one occasion the patient quietened down on the ward while on the other the disruptive man was magically wheeled away to a special place somewhere else. Through all this, the staff were well organised. I later discovered that both patients had been smoking something evil which had cracked their brains, but that is the way of the world now.

Another thing about how the world is now is the matter of first, names. The staff are all supposed to ask for your permission to use your first name. Thirty years ago, I would have answered "That's alright, if I can call **you** by your first name." But I found this attitude tiresome, so that now, with those below doctor, the staff and I all use first names.

I'm very much in favour of this; how wonderful it is to hear a smiling nurse saying the comforting words "Hello Roger". This attitude created a tender moment for me when a dozen or so nurses grouped outside the entrance to cheer and wave me off when I left. Hence, closeness, friendship, trust: the building blocks of love in action.

Yours sincerely, Roger Tarbuck.



# Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House

On 7 September 2025, whilst on holiday, I visited the Unitarians whose late 17th century meeting house stands back from Grey Street in the middle of Ipswich.

It was built in 1799 and is Grade 1 listed. I was slightly late but was made very welcome and led to an original box-pew near to the organ.

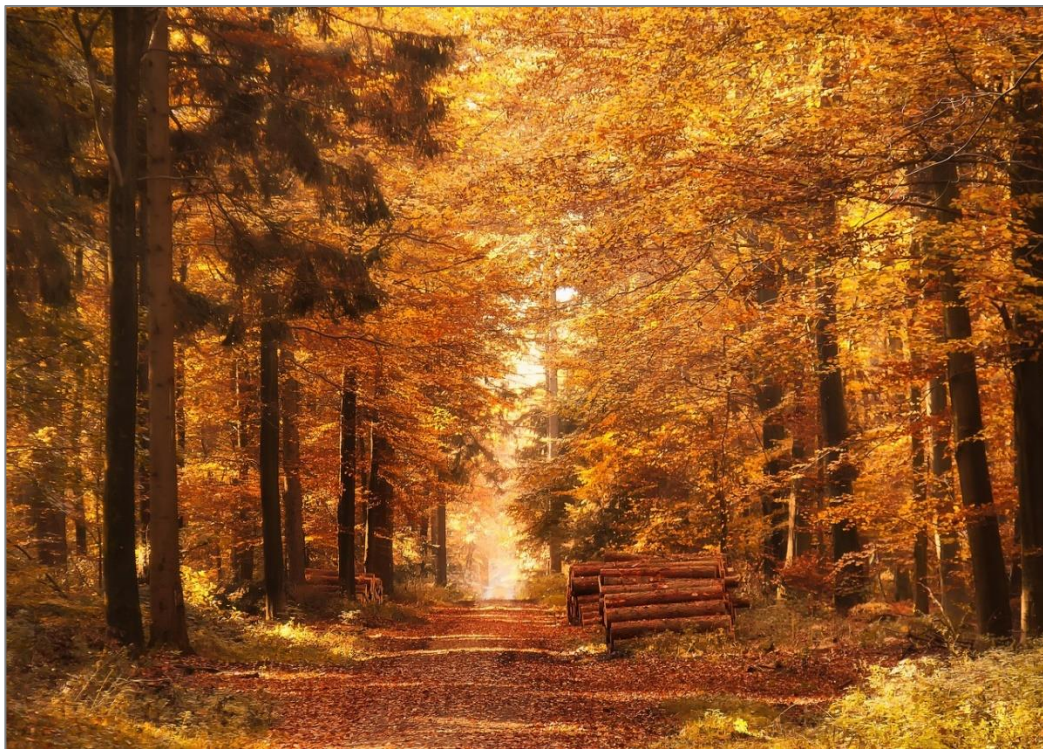


The congregation was not huge and seemed swamped by the size of the hall which had a magnificent Grinling Gibbon-esque pulpit. There are the original wig pegs and spy hole, plus a large, brass chandelier hanging from the ceiling. I had a very pleasant discussion during tea and biscuits after, and managed to get a lift to the station, too.

Jane Simpson

## A Traditional Irish Blessing

“May there always be work for your hands to do.  
May your purse always hold a coin or two.  
May the sun always shine upon your  
windowpane.  
May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain.  
May the hand of a friend always be near to you  
and  
May your heart be filled with gladness to cheer  
you.”



## 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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