

Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford

‘The Temple of the Free Spirit’

‘God is a spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth’
We believe that Christianity is a way of life rather than a creed or a system of doctrine. We believe that there are many different ways to God.

We believe in civil and religious freedom on principle for everyone. ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’. We have our origins in a group of Dissenters who were ejected from the State Church in 1662. Our beautiful chapel was completed and licensed for worship c. 1694, shortly after the date of the Act of Toleration.

Our congregation is run by our members, believing that ‘where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them’.

‘In the love of truth and the spirit of Christ we unite for the worship of God and the service of man. We invite you to worship with us’.

Chapel Committee

Minister:	Rev Alex Bradley	(01565) 754465
Chairman:	Mr Graham Birks	(01606) 558424
Secretary:	Mrs Susan Hutcheson	(01565) 650232
Treasurer:	Mr Alan Eastwood	(01565) 634992
Heritage:	Beulah Cornes	(01565) 632673

Sunday services begin at 11 am

Brook Street Chapel is a Registered Charity Number 1167088

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www.unitariansmda.org.uk

Chapel Heritage Web site: www.brookstreetchapel.org

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/brookstknuts>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BrookStreetKnutsford>

The Heritage Centre will be open Tuesday 10—12 and Sunday 12—1.
Other times by appointment please.

Newsletter Editor: john.hutcheson5@btinternet.com

Please submit any articles via e-mail or hard copy. If you would like to receive the calendar by e-mail please supply your e-mail address.

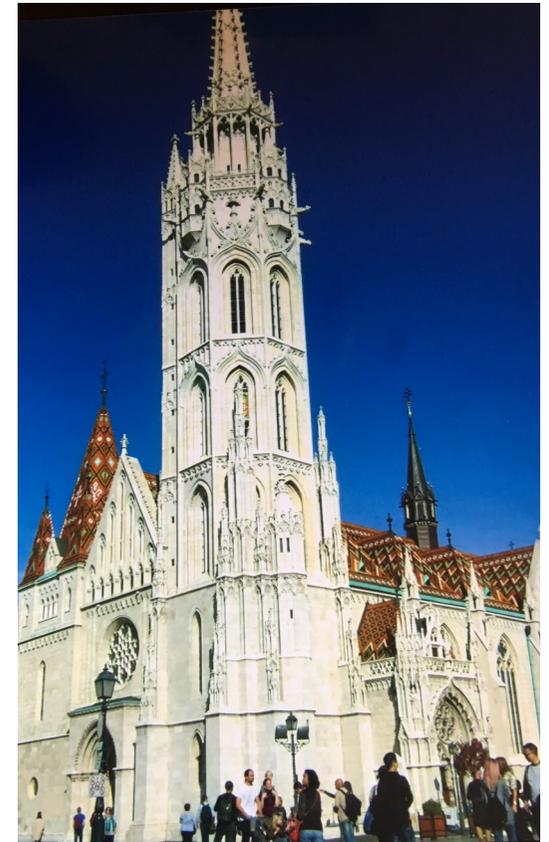
Please provide material for the January/February Newsletter by Wednesday **11th December** or earlier if possible.

Contributions from **anyone** on **any topic** are welcomed.

It is your Newsletter so as much as possible of any material submitted will be fitted in. **E and O E.**



Brook Street
Unitarian
Chapel



* November — December 2019 *

Dear Members and Friends,

Words from our Minister

This letter covers both November and December, a very busy period for our chapel. Our Remembrance Sunday Service begins at 10.45 a.m. on 10th November. The civic ceremony at the ‘new’ War Memorial on Toft Road has been moved to 11.00 a.m. (it was at 12 Noon last year) when I will be taking our own service, so Graham and Denise Birks will represent us at the ceremony. I will be present for a ceremony at 12.30 at the ‘original’ War Memorial, (the cottage hospital on Northwich Road) at 12.30. We will be honouring and remembering the brave servicemen and servicewomen and the countless civilians, land girls, miners, munitions workers, intellectual workers (including Alan Turing, the code-breaker) and so many others who gave so much, in some cases their very lives, for freedom, and for those who have lost their lives since in other conflicts, Korea, the Falklands, the Gulf and elsewhere: in all this we honour their memory and pray for peace to the God of peace.

The Christmas Fayre is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, so I will only say here, make a note of the date: Saturday 23 November. Thank you very much, in advance, to everyone for all the work involved in events such as these.

Then on December 15th, at 11.00, we will have our wonderful, not-to-be-missed, Carol Service, when we will have our choir led by Jane Crowther, with carol singing led by the Cranford Brass Ensemble played by Steve Crowther and other friends. We are so grateful to them all.

On the 24th, Christmas Eve: we will have a pre-service social time in the hall from 8.30 p.m. onwards, followed by our ‘Midnight Service’ at 11.30 p.m. It will be a lovely and reflective way to mark the beginning of Christmas and the coming of Jesus into our world.

We are also beginning a poetry group, to meet in the chapel hall on the first Tuesday morning of each month from 10.30 to 12.00 noon. The first meeting will be on Tuesday 5th November, with the theme of ‘colours of Autumn’ Bring yourself and a poem (or two or three) to share! All these events are important milestones in the continuing life and work of our chapel but we are also all too aware of the world outside our doors. I donate to various charities from time to time when I can and two that come to mind in this instance are ‘Crisis’, a charity to help homeless people, and one called ‘Womankind International’ which tries to help women all over the world and is currently aiding widows in Nepal.

Dear friends,

The festive season is fast approaching so please refer to this issue of the calendar for the dates of the usual activities such as the Christmas Fair, Christmas lunch, and the carol service. Don’t forget that Jane Crowther is organising the “pop-up” choir for Christmas, and there are practice sessions being arranged, so if you wish to take part please see Jane, or add your name to the list held in the kitchen area of the hall.

Regarding the Christmas Fair, we of course need contributions in the form of goods to sell, and items for the tombola and raffle, and just as importantly we need volunteers to help set up and staff the stalls, and also to assist in the café for the serving of refreshments. If you can help in any way please inform any member of the committee. (I am expecting to be employed in my usual role of washing up)!

At long last I am able to say that the current project at the vestry end of the chapel has been completed, and that the access has been much improved, as well as, we hope, solving the damp problem. The end wall will need time to dry out, probably about 12 months, and then we can look at re-plastering.

I am also able to tell you that we have ordered a new notice board for the front garden, and it should be in place very shortly, if it is not there already.

I am sorry to tell you that John and Sue Hutcheson have decided to resign from the committee. Sue will continue as Secretary until the end of the year, and John will continue to produce a slim line version of the calendar in to the early part of the New Year. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them for all their hard work over the years, and for their very meaningful contribution to the committee. On a personal level, I thank them for their continuing support to me as Chairman. They will remain as chapel members, and will continue to represent us at meetings of the Manchester District Association.

This of course creates vacancies and I would ask for chapel members to consider putting themselves forward as committee members. There is always plenty of work for us to do, and as our numbers decrease for a variety of reasons, the work load on those who remain obviously increases.

So, as another year draws to an end, the committee wish to thank all those who have given their services over the year, in a variety of ways. We value your support and help. I personally wish to thank members of the committee for their commitment to the chapel work, and support for me as Chairman. I look forward to continuing our work together in 2020.

Finally, Denise and I wish all of you a very happy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

Best wishes

Graham Birks.

felt very creative and produced amongst others a ballerina, a tennis player, a skier and - by Maureen - a foil model of Ken on a hike complete with rucksack and walking sticks - completely made out of foil - no glue or sticky tape was used.

Although there were not many of our members present - 7 in total - we all had a thoroughly enjoyable time with lots of chat accompanied by tea and biscuits and the raffle. Maureen ended the meeting by thanking Vanessa and requesting that she comes back again to bring out more of our artistic talents!

Our next meeting will be a talk by David Russell entitled '46 years of buying and selling houses in the UK and Mallorca' on Wednesday 20th November at 2pm. Please come along to listen to what I am sure will be a very interesting talk.

The money raised at the Womens League coffee morning in aid of the Macmillan Cancer Fund held on Tuesday 24th Sept raised just over £400. Thank you to all for your help and support.

Barbara Bayley

Harvest Festival

There was a wonderful response for help to decorate the church for Harvest on Saturday 5th October. It looked lovely when we had finished. Well done to everyone who came along.'Many hands make light work'....

Vanessa McCluney



Committee Meetings

The next committee meeting planned is November 12th. If there is anything you would like to raise for discussion at these meetings please let any of the committee members know.

I think of the image of the holy family, homeless in a stable in Bethlehem (which despite the conventional pretty crib and nativity scenes must have been a dreadful experience), the plight of refugees (e.g. the Rohingya in Burma/Myanmar) remind me of the Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2.13-15), and the many references in the Bible to helping and caring for widows and children (e.g. James 1.27: 'Pure religion and undefiled religion before God the Father is this, to care for orphans and widows in their distress'). Our free Christian faith is not a world-escaping faith but one that embraces the world as God's creation. Unitarianism is something that must be put into practice, in good words, thoughts and deeds, or it is nothing (c.f. James 2.20 - 'faith without good deeds is a dead faith')

Our faith is a faith that affirms that there is a divine presence in each one of us, and that Jesus came to show us the way to love, justice and peace. It is a faith that can inspire us, not just to enjoy the Christmas festivities and have a joyous time with family, friends and loved ones, wonderful though that is, but a faith that can also strengthen and encourage us to make this world a better, more peaceful and happier place for all of us: a truly joyful Christmas message.

Every blessing,

Rev Alex

Cover Photographs

The front cover has two photographs this time—courtesy of Pat Leach. Thank you very much Pat.

Basilica of St Francis of Assisi (top photo)

Church is in Assisi and is an important place of pilgrimage. Construction began in 1228 after Francis was canonized. Frescoes inside the church show the life of St Francis, and many are by the famous Giotto artist Cimabue. It is a Unesco World Heritage site.

Matthias Church – Church of Our Lady of Buda.

This is a Roman Catholic church in Budapest, Hungary. Built in the Gothic style in 14th century. It was over run by the Turks in the 16th century and converted to a Mosque. Then restored to much of its original design in the 19th century. Has wonderful views overlooking the city and river.

CHRISTMAS FAIR

Saturday 23rd November

WANTED

Please help make the Christmas fair a great success by donating fancy goods, raffle prizes, home made cakes (presented on the day please), bottles and chocolates for the tombola and toys.

Also, for the Christmas raffle that is drawn directly after the Carol service, please donate various tinned or packet food stuffs, if not sure what to give, please speak to Jean Littler or Ann Clayton.

'Pop Up Choir' for the Carol Service

Jane Crowther is organising a Pop Up Choir again to take part in the Carol Service on 15th December. The original suggestion was for rehearsals to be on Tuesdays at 1.30 pm for approximately 1 hour in the Chapel but that may have changed to suit the schedules of participants. It is not necessary to for everyone to attend every rehearsal and normally 6 or 7 rehearsals are enough.

If you aren't already taking part in the choir but would like to be involved please contact Jane for details of the next rehearsals.

Jane looks forward to seeing you again – she said she has missed your happy smiley faces and voices.

Rev David Westhead—Celebratory Lunch

There will a Celebratory lunch on Sunday 17th November for Rev David Westhead and his wife to mark 10 years of his taking services at our Chapel.

The lunch will be in the hall after the service—everyone is welcome.

Then, because of the weather, the banner parade was cancelled and we all scurried up to the Chapel from the Church Hall, trying to keep the banner dry. The rather delightful service that followed was conducted by Rev Danny Crosby, Minister of Altrincham and Urmston Chapels, supported by a couple of readings by his fiancée. Somehow, he introduced the story of Chicken Licken (also known as Chicken Little) with much audience participation, to great amusement all round. He stressed the importance of even the little things in life that all contribute to our individual journeys. He thought we might have to have a sleep-over at the chapel if the weather didn't improve and the treasurer would have to go out to procure sleeping bags for us all.

Our banner looked splendid amongst the several on display and the photograph shows the four of us just after the service when the weather finally relented. Note the boiler house chimney on the banner which will now need to be unpicked for the sake of accuracy!

Alan Eastwood

Women's League

Our first meeting after the summer break was held in Wednesday 18th September. This took the form of a 'Swap Shop' where the ladies were invited to bring along items of clothing, jewellery, handbags or anything not wanted or needed anymore that someone else might like. We had a large mirror and 3 clothing rails were set out. These were quickly filled with dresses, skirts, jackets and jeans and the trying on commenced! Fashion advice was readily given and accessories added to complete the look. Great fun was had and ladies were very pleased with their buys.

£70 was raised from sales for the Women's League funds. We had our usual cups of tea or coffee with lovely cakes followed by the raffle ending a very enjoyable afternoon.

Our next meeting was held on Wednesday 16th October. Maureen welcomed us all with a lovely reading and then introduced Vanessa who was going to show us how to have 'Fun with Foil'.

We had all duly arrived with our rolls of foil as instructed not quite sure what we were going to do with them. Vanessa then started to show us how by tearing and scrunching a piece of foil we could make a simple figure. We were then shown by doing a bit more squeezing and moulding and adding more foil we could make the figure look more active. We all

Rivington Pilgrimage, 2019



On Saturday 28th September, four intrepid chapel members attended the Rivington Unitarian Chapel Triennial Pilgrimage. Because Joan and I were not travelling directly back to Knutsford, we took two cars and, because Steve used to work on the reservoirs there, he and Jane took the best route and were there on time. You may remember this was a day of terrific, localised storms and Joan and I were using directions from the AA which only a computer could have invented. As a result, we found ourselves within 200 yards of the venue but half of that distance was under about two feet of water as the road crossed the reservoir. It presented a rather biblical picture that required us either to walk on the water or to part the Red Sea! Not being quite up to either option, we looked for an alternative route which led to us being 20 minutes late but still ahead of the main speaker, the GA President, Rev Celia Cartwright. She told us she had been turned back five times by the flood waters before finally arriving at Rivington Church Hall. After rushing her lunch of Lancashire Hotpot and Black Forest Gateau, she proposed a toast to the Unitarian and Free Christian faith to which we raised minute glasses of wine (picture those little plastic sample glasses in Booths) in response.

POETRY GROUP

We are starting a poetry group at Brook Street. It will be held on every first Tuesday of the month from 10.30am to 12 noon in the chapel hall. Our first one will be on 5th November on the theme 'the colours of Autumn'. Each gathering will have a different subject. Bring a poem (or two or three!) to share and discuss over a cup of tea or coffee.

All are welcome, members and non-members (no charge) – why not try to bring a friend as well? Any inquiries to Alex on 01565 754465

A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMASTIDE

If Christ is born a thousand times in Bethlehem but not in your own soul, then he is not born at all. Angelus Silesius, 17th Century German poet.

THE LIGHTER SIDE

A brother and his sister were staying with their grandparents a few weeks before Christmas. As they knelt down to say their prayers, the little girl prayed in a very loud voice several times over: 'O God, I pray for a bicycle for Christmas. Amen' 'Why are you shouting?' her brother asked her, 'God isn't deaf!'

His sister replied, 'No, but Grandma is'.

PRAYER FOR PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

(written by Andrew J Brown and John C Morgan)

God of perfect promise, I am grateful to belong to a people who have a lasting covenant with You. May I never forget that I share this Covenant with my Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. In keeping to Your paths as a faithful disciple of the Rabbi Jesus, help me to bring mercy, truth and respect into my encounters with the many children of Abraham.

But in my gratefulness at Your special Covenant with us, let me not forget that in Your love and mercy, You have made other Covenants of faith and they, too, will be lasting and trustworthy. With the people of these Covenants may I find common ground in building a world of peace and justice. Amen.

THANK YOU!

A big 'thank you' to Sue and John Hutcheson, who are standing down from the chapel committee and John as newsletter editor, for all their work for our chapel.

Rev Alex

