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|  **OCTOBER 2020** **Services in church Sundays at 10.45am****ALL ARE WELCOME** **WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF LOVE** |
| Unitarians are a religious denomination that believe in a united world community and individual freedom. |

**MINISTER’S LETTER**

Dear friends

Just as we thought life was beginning to settle down a bit, there’s another cosmic twitch of the blanket and we’re all up in the air again. Yes, I’m referring to our Prime Minister’s announcement on Tuesday 22nd September. It’s not the total lockdown again, but it’s working from home where possible, pubs closed at 10pm, and the rule of six being rigorously enforced. And it’s not a two week affair – it’s six months.

And even while they say ‘schools are back’, school after school across our area and across the country is having to send whole year groups home as positive Covid19 tests come to light – as I’m writing this, my eldest is at home as one of those, and I’m not expecting it to be long before one or other my other kids go through the same thing.

It all leaves us with huge amounts of uncertainty and anxiety, on top of the scars of what we’ve already lived through, and its resultant feelings of isolation, fear, and stress. I find myself thinking of the Enterprise from Star Trek, and the calls of ‘Shields down to 30%, Captain’! Our force shields, our defences, our usual resilience has been worn away by month after month of continuous anxiety.

And that can make us each so much more fragile. It is no wonder that we are each of us finding it harder to cope with even minor irritations or worries – we are already so precarious that yet another problem to cope with can feel a step too far, even if normally we would just take it in our stride and barely even notice.

So we need to be gentle. We need to give ourselves the time and space we need to draw breath, to let go some of the tension, to remind ourselves that we will come through this. We also need to remember that the people around us are feeling equally fragile, and need us to be gentle to them too, and understanding that if they snap at us, or seem unreasonable in their demands, it’s because they too are feeling tired and fearful, and maybe they’ve forgotten to be gentle to themselves. Maybe we can tell them – I understand you’re stressed, me too, let’s step back from the issue and just remember who we are to each other – you are my brother and sister, and I am yours, and we need each other to survive.

The day will come when we will be able to let go of the fear and breathe deeply again, when we can hold each other in our arms and remember that sense of warmth and closeness. But for now we can hold with our hearts, instead of our arms – we can be warm and close over the phone or in a letter – we can acknowledge the stress that we are all under and offer gentle understanding – we can turn back towards each other with love again and again. That’s what beloved community is, what it does, what it will always try to do.

If you are feeling fragile and scarred, anxious and weary, remember to be gentle to yourself. Look for the good bits of each day – whether it’s the sunset, or a quiet cup of tea, or a good piece of music on the radio. Take time to just breathe – and if you need to have a great big cry about it all, go ahead, it’s ok to do that too, and I can absolutely assure you that you aren’t the only one who feels that way! Reach out to people you trust – whether it’s a family member, a long-standing friend, a neighbour. And I’m here too.

As I say at the end of each of my videos – Stay safe. Stay strong. And know that you are loved. Blessings to you all.

Rev Anna

**MUSTARD TREE COLLECTIONS**

As our church has now re-opened, so have our collection of food and personal hygiene goods for the Mustard Tree! The blue boxes are on the pew by the tower entrance, please do just drop your donations in as you arrive, and we will ensure that these get to the Mustard Tree.

These donations help support those in our community in greatest need – and with the pandemic and the resulting massive job losses, times are even harder than normal. So please be as generous as you can, it is really appreciated by the Mustard Tree and the people it supports. Thank you.

**HARVEST AND GIFT DAY**

Sunday October 4th is our Harvest and Gift Day celebrations. To make sure everyone stays safe, there will be a little bit of a difference, but not much. As always, we will be inviting donations of cans, packets etc of food, or hygiene goods such as soap and shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, tampons and pads, which will be taken to the Mustard Tree to support local families who are struggling just to put food on the table at the present time.

In addition, it is also the day when we invite our members and friends to give an extra donation of money to the church if possible. It has been a very challenging year for the church financially, with the bills for the accessibility project and the graveyard repair coming due, a potential problem with the roof having to be investigated, and a significant loss of income due to the pandemic forcing us to close. So if you are able to give an extra donation, please place it in an envelope (cheques to Monton Church (Unitarian) marked “Gift Day” and place it in the collection bowl as you leave after the service, or send a cheque to Michael Couser at 28 Verdure Avenue, Sale, M33 3PP, or you can make an online donation (reference Monton Church Gift Day) to

Royal Bank of Scotland

Monton Church (Unitarian) Premium Account

Sort code 16 19 17

Account   12215852.

This invitation to donate financially for Gift Day is only directed to those who are able and willing to give extra financial support. I would stress, as I always do, that we recognise that these times are hard for everyone, particularly at present, and that some people are more able to give of their time and commitment than of money – even just turning up once in a while, or sharing a Facebook post, or phoning a friend, is support that is valued and cherished.

 **VISITS FROM THE MINISTER**

Please do give me a call any time you fancy a chat – you don’t need to wait for me to call you to see how you are! If I don’t immediately answer, please just leave me a message and I’ll get back as soon as I can.

And while I’m still not able to visit in quite the same way as I would like, we can still arrange meetups – we just have to be a bit inventive! Again, just give me a buzz, or drop me an email!



**SOCIAL MEDIA HELPERS NEEDED!**

We’ve had our website for a while, now, though it is very much in need of updating. Likewise we’ve had our social media accounts for a while. Did you know that we now also have a YouTube channel, “Monton Unitarian Church” (there’s a surprise!), and it has every reflection video made during the past six months on it for you to watch any time you need a bit of spiritual time-out!

We are also looking for some extra help with our website and social media management – it’s quite tough if it’s all on one person, but if there’s a few of us working on it, then as they say, “many hands make light work”. If you are social media / web savvy, or even an expert, and would like to help us update and reinvigorate our online presence, please do get in touch and join our team! Call Rev Anna on 07769 038773.

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**OCTOBER FLOWERS**

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| 4th | Miss I Hitchcock in memory of Mr & Mrs Hitchcock  |
|  | & their daughter Mrs K Searle |
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|  | Mrs S Johnson in memory of her Husband George |
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|  | Mr & Mrs P Coomber in memory of Mr & Mrs D Coomber |
|  |  |
| 11th | Mr & Mrs J McIntyre in memory of Mr & Mrs E Haslam |
|  |  |
|  | Mrs S Johnson in memory of her Mum & Dad, Mr & Mrs J Pullen |
|  |  |
|  | Mrs J Erlston & Mrs S Wakerly in memory of Tom & Doris Nixon |
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| 18th | Mrs R Summers in memory of both Families |
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| 25th | in memory of late Church members |

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**FLOWERS IN THE CHURCH**

For many years, Monton Church has had flower secretaries and flower arrangers who have made sure that the altar always has fresh flowers on it, in memory of late church members, or beloved relatives of current members and friends, and these people are always listed in this magazine so that we can hold them in our hearts, and donations are made so that the fresh flowers can be purchased.

At our last AGM, Ann Couser, our Flower Secretary, stood down from the role after several years, as did the flower arrangers, leaving us currently with no-one to undertake either of these roles. We therefore have a decision to make. We either need new volunteers to come forward to be flower secretary and flower arrangers, or we can purchase a selection of silk flowers that remain on the altar at all times. If anyone is interested in helping with the flowers on the altar, please do get in touch with Rev Anna and we can have a chat about it!

**WOMEN'S LEAGUE**

The Manchester District Women’s League Meeting, due to take place at Monton on Saturday 17th October, has been cancelled due to the present situation.

Also the project for 2020 is Emmaus, the UK homelessness charity. Susan Holt the Project Secretary has decided to hold this over for another year, as no branches have been able to do any Fund Raising.  So Emmaus will be the Project Charity for 2021.

The League Letter Editor and Distributor, Mrs Joy Foster, is retiring in December.  Apparently, there will be a League Letter for those who receive it (November/December).

I was asked by Joan McFarlane to send best wishes to the people at Monton, stay safe, keep well, take care.

Our own Women’s League Service is due to take place on Sunday, 25th October.  This is all the information I have at present.

Irene Hitchcock, Women’s League Secretary

**APPEAL FOR OLD CANDLES – AND NEW ONES FOR SALE!**

We are currently making candles in hand-painted glass pots, which we hope to sell in order to raise money for the Church.  We would like to donate ALL proceeds to church, however we are now running very short of candle wax.

If anyone has any candles they cannot use that can be melted down, they would be very much appreciated.  Also if anyone happens to have GU dessert or similar size glass pots, they would also come in very useful!

A container will be placed in church on Sunday for any donations and the finished candles are now on sale!

Thank you so much in advance for your help.

Pam and Dave



These are just some of the candles Pam and Dave have made so far!

**COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR RE-OPENING THE CHURCH**

Before any arrivals, the minister and warden will clean all door handles and high contact areas and toilet area.

All visitors will enter through the tower door / ramp. The side door will not be used. The entrance will be staffed by a ‘welcomer’ to ensure distancing is maintained and to ensure that all users use the hand sanitizer gel that will be available. The welcomer will have a mask and gloves for their own and others’ protection. All visitors must also wear a mask unless they have a good reason for not doing so.

All visitors must register their attendance on the slips of paper provided, and place them within the collection basket for our records.

Dogs are welcome but should remain on the lead next to their owner.

All visitors will enter through the main double doors down the centre aisle. All doors will remain open throughout the service to enable better ventilation.

Visitors are asked not to stand in the aisles talking, but to seat themselves straightaway to avoid bottlenecks. Every other pew shall be cordoned off, and seating should be only one household per pew, or two individuals at either end of the pew.

The front three rows of pews will be cordoned off to provide a safe distance between the minister and congregation.

No hymn books or service sheets will be in use. There will be music to listen to as part of the service, but no hymn singing.

There will be no collection during the service. A collection bowl will be at the back for cash or envelopes for those who wish to give, along with a contactless payment system for card donations.

All carpets and cushions have been removed from the pews. Visitors are welcome to bring their own cushion for comfort, but please do take it away with you afterwards.

Children are very welcome, but must stay with their responsible adults in the pew. Play bags (which are cleaned after each use) are available should they be wanted.

At the end of the service, should people wish to remain for a short period to talk to each other, this is permitted so long as they remain seated to keep the aisles clear, and continue to practice strict social distancing. They are welcome to bring flasks to drink from, but no sharing of food or drink is permitted, and all waste must be disposed of in the bin by the exit door, or taken home.

The minister will leave through the centre aisle at the end of the service, and wait on the front steps to greet people. All visitors upon leaving are requested to also leave down the centre aisle, leaving a two-metre gap between households – no handshakes or hugs!

Once everyone has left, the minister and warden will clean all door handles and other contact surfaces, the toilet and all used pews. The church will then remain closed until the next service.

These guidelines will apply both to Sunday worship, and to any rites of passage that may take place. Posters with this guidance, along with other useful signs as necessary, shall be placed around the building.

**MAGAZINE**

If anyone would like to contribute any articles for the magazine, please send them to the editor by the second weekend of the month by post or by email. Please contact me by phone for email address. Thank you. Debbie.

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| **MINISTER** | Rev Anna Jarvis | 07769 038 773 |
| **CHAIR** | Mavis Sumner | 0161 281 0614 |
| **SECRETARY** | Rennie McFarlane | 07846 634361  |
| **TREASURER** | Michael Couser | 0161 969 2124 |
| **ORGANIST** | Peter Collier   | 0161 281 2502 |
| ENVELOPES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS SECRETARY | Michael Couser | 0161 969 2124 |
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| **MAGAZINE** **EDITOR** | Debbie Hulme | 0161 707 1921 |
| **WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS** | All enquiries | 07769 038 773 |

MONTON CHURCH is open to all who wish to worship with an open mind, in a spirit of freedom, reason and tolerance. No doctrinal tests are imposed on anyone. Rather, each person is encouraged to develop his or her own faith. Our Congregation is affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.