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|  **February and March 2023** **Services 10:45am Sunday mornings****ALL ARE WELCOME****WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF LOVE** |
| Unitarians are a religious denomination that believe in a united world community, justice, peace and compassion. |

**MINISTER’S LETTER**

Dear friends

How is it the middle of February? Asking for a friend…!

Having thought that January would be a nice gentle month after all the Christmas chaos, I’ve had a general feeling of not knowing whether I’m coming or going! It hasn’t been helped by getting the lurgy (not the C-lurgy, just a-lurgy) which seems to have sapped a disproportionate amount of energy. However, from what I hear I’m in good company with other lurgy-sufferers. After so long social distancing and wearing masks, it’s not surprising that the viruses are all enjoying getting their hands on us again. Do take care of yourselves.

It's also been quite a momentous time – as you can read in the AGM article, the two original church/school charities have now closed and merged into one, the culmination of an awful lot of hard work. We’re also looking at expanding and improving our open mic night and film club. We’d like to run some discussion sessions and workshops on various subjects. And this year has to be the year that we get to grips with Boddan Lodge and start that moving.

It's one of the things about living community that there’s always a time of looking back, but also always things to be looking forward to and planning for. Sometimes the business and the administration and all the practicalities can begin to get in the way of the main reason for being here, though – the love and care for each other, supporting each other through life’s ups and downs; the spiritual growth both as individuals and as a community; and the offering of our services back out into community.

No matter how exciting the programme planning can be, and how fun the social activities are, and how satisfying the paperwork can be (yes it can, I promise you!), let’s try to keep the spirit of life and love front and centre.

Sending you all many blessings, Rev Anna

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SUNDAY 26th MARCH 12.30PM**

This is your notice (one of a few that will come your way over the next few weeks) of our Annual General Meeting – but it’s not going to be quite our normal AGM.

Over the last two years we have been working to update our governance, of both the church and the hall, to make it fit for purpose, modern and more appropriate for the community as it is now. This involved merging the two charities of Monton Church (Unitarian) and Monton Memorial Hall into one legal entity, Monton Unitarian Church – and it was finally completed on 31st December 2022.

So our AGM this March will in fact be the final closing meeting of Monton Church (Unitarian) and Monton Memorial Hall, and will be a celebration of all that both of those charities have achieved and provided for the community of Monton over many years. That will be the first half.

The second half will be a much more open meeting of the brand new Monton Unitarian Church – an invitation to people to become a formal member if they wish to (as a new charity we are beginning again with memberships!), and for everyone, member or friend, to bring ideas, suggestions, hopes and dreams for our future.

As this is a celebration of both an ending and a beginning, there will be food and drink provided, and a chance to mingle and share memories of the church through time after the main meeting. Hopefully there will be some displays of some special moments through our history as well.

So please put the date in your diary, whether you are wishing to be a member, or just wish to come as a friend – your support, encouragement and commitment to the community large or small is very welcome!

**FILM CLUB CHANGE OF DAYS**

We’ve tried Friday nights for a while, but attendance is very low – though I’ll admit my lack of publicity may also have something to do with that! Either way, we are trying a change of day and time – primarily Sundays at 6pm, although Holiday Specials which tend to be more orientated to children can be on either Saturdays or Sundays at 2pm.

Firstly, on Sunday 26th February at 2pm as a Holiday Special, aimed at both children and adults, we have Wall-E - In a distant, but not so unrealistic, future where mankind has abandoned earth because it has become covered with trash from products sold by the powerful multi-national Buy N Large corporation, WALL-E, a garbage collecting robot has been left to clean up the mess.

And the next one is in March, Sunday 5th this time at 6pm, we’ll be watching the beautiful Water Horse – a 2007 fantasy drama by Jay Russell, based on Dick King-Smith’s novel. It stars Alex Etel as a young boy who discovers a mysterious egg and cares for what hatches out of it – a water horse, which later becomes the fabled Loch Ness Monster. The film also stars Emily Watson, Ben Chaplin and David Morrissey.

**DATES TO PUT IN YOUR DIARY – SPECIAL SERVICES AND EVENTS 2023**

Mothering Sunday Sun 19th Mar 10.45am

Annual General Meeting Sun 26th Mar 12.30pm

Easter Service and Communion Sun 9th Apr 10.45am

Eccles Community Choir Concert Sat 20th May 7.30pm

Flower Communion Service Sun 4th Jun 10.45am

Potential Monton Festival Sat 1st Jul

Charity Service (to be decided) Sun 3rd Sep 10.45am

Heritage Open Day Sun 17th Sep 10am-4pm

Harvest Service and Gift Day Sun 8th Oct 10.45am

Remembrance Day Service Sun 12th Nov 10.45am

Putting up the Xmas Tree Thur 30th Nov 10.30am

1st Advent Toy Service / Faith meal / Film Club Sun 3rd Dec 10.45am on

Christmas Tree Festival Fri 8th – Sun 10th Dec

Blue Christmas Service Wed 20th Dec 7.30pm

Carol Service Sun 24th Dec 10.45am

Candlelight Service Sun 24th Dec 9pm

New Year’s Eve Service Sun 31st Dec 10.45am

 **FILM CLUB 2023 – THE FULL SCHEDULE**



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|  **Sun 26th Feb 2pm – Holiday special – Wall-E****Sun 5th Mar 6pm – Water Horse****Sun 2nd Apr 6pm – The Green Mile****Sat 8th Apr 2pm – Holiday special - Encanto****Sun 7th May 6pm – Life of Pi** **Sat 3rd Jun 2pm – Holiday Special – Bee Movie****Sun 4th Jun 6pm – Dogma****Sun 2nd Jul 6pm – Nomadland** | **Sat 5th Aug 2pm – Holiday Special – Ice Age****Sun 6th Aug 6pm – Murder on the Orient Express****Sun 3rd Sep 6pm – Bohemian Rhapsody** **Sun 1st Oct 6pm – E.T.****Sat 4th Nov 2pm – Holiday Special – Coco** **Sun 5th Nov 6pm – Wonder****Sun 3rd Dec 2pm – Holiday Special - Arthur Christmas** |

Holiday specials are aimed particularly at children during the school holidays – but adults will enjoy these movies too! Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Suggested donation of £5.00 entry (£2.00 children)

Refreshments available

**MONTON UNITARIAN CHURCH OPEN MIC NIGHTS 2023**

**3rd Friday of the month**

**7.30pm in Monton Unitarian Church**

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| **17th February****17th March****21st April****19th May****16th June****21st July** | **18th August****15th September** **20th October****17th November****15th December** |

Music – poetry – drama skits – art displays

Whatever your talent, whether you are a professional or a first timer, come and share your creativity with us –

or just enjoy supporting others!

Suggested donation of £2.50 entry (children free)

Refreshments available

**TUESDAY COFFEE MORNING CONTINUES!**

Coffee morning continues, every Tuesday morning 10am till 12pm, in Monton Memorial Hall, with tea and coffee, biscuits and cakes on offer, and of course, plenty of fellowship and a good natter! Do come along and join us. We do ask for a donation for the refreshments, where possible, but we never turn anyone away!

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

March Committee meeting Sun 12th Mar

April Committee meeting Sun 16th Apr

May Committee meeting Sun 14th May

Please do speak to any member of our committee if you wish something to be raised at these meetings. Our committee members are currently:

Michael Couser, Wendy Donald, Irene Hitchcock, Rennie McFarlane, Colin Morse, Alan Perks, Lynne Stopani, Gloria Taylor, Dave Ward-Speers and Pam Ward-Speers.

Please also consider standing at the committee at our AGM – see separate article.

**CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL**

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas Tree Festival in December – we managed to raise £300 for 42nd Street – and had a whale of a time in the process! Put Friday 8th to Sunday 10th December 2023 in your diaries for the next one!

**TWO VERSIONS OF PSALM 23**

# Psalm 23 for This Moment, by Kevin Tarsa

May I remember in this tender moment
that Love is my guide, always,
shepherding me toward ways of openness and compassion.

I have what I need, really, with Love at my side,
above me, below me, in front of me, behind me,
inside every cell of me, Love infused everywhere!

Just when the weight of the world I inhabit
threatens to drop me in place
and press my hope down into the ground beneath me
Love invites me to rest for a gentle while,
and leads the center of my soul to the quiet, still,
restoring waters nearby that, somehow, I had not noticed.

And so, Love, quietly,
sets me once again on its tender and demanding path.

Even when the walls close around me
and the cries of death echo through untold corners,
gripping my heart with fear and sadness,
I know...
I know that all will be well, that I will be well,
when Love whispers near to me,
glints at the corner of my eye,
rests with gentle and persistent invitation upon my shoulders.

Yes, Love blesses me,
Even as the sources and symbols of my pain look on.
Love blesses me from its infinite well,
And I turn and notice...
that goodness and kindness and grace,
follow me everywhere,
everywhere I go.

I live in a house of Love,
Love that will not let me go.

I live in a house of love,
And always will.

**Psalm 23 – A Psalm of David – Contributed by David Coyle**

The lord is my shepherd -that’s relationship

I shall not want -that’s supply

He maketh me to lie down in tree pastures -that’s rest

He leads me beside still waters -that’s refreshment

He restores my soul -that’s healing

He leads me in the paths of righteousness -that’s guidance

For His Name’s sake -that’s purpose

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death -that’s challenge

I will fear no evil -that’s assurance

For you are with me -that’s faithfulness

Your rod and safe- they comfort me -that’s protection

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies -that’s hope

You anoint my head with oil -that’s consecration

My cup runs over -that’s abundance

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life -that’s blessing

And I will dwell in the House of the lord -that’s security

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**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.

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 their own faith. Our Congregation is affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.