



Newcastle Unitarians The Calendar



December 2020 – January 2021

www.newcastleunitarians.org.uk

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**A member Congregation of the General Assembly of
Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8XG**

Front cover: Christmas Wreath, buntysmum on Pixabay



Church News

Chairperson's Hello for December 2020 and January 2021

And so we head once more into the festive season, probably the strangest festive season any of us will experience (touch wood). It's going to be odd to have Christmas and New Year without carol services in person, parties, shopping, queuing to see Fenwick's window... but we'll manage.

Recently the Reading Group looked at the Danish concept of *hygge*. *Hygge* is hard to translate exactly into English, but the closest we can get is probably: "...creating a warm atmosphere and enjoying the good things in life with good people. The warm glow of candlelight is *hygge*. Cosying up with a loved one for a movie – that's *hygge*, too. And there's nothing more *hygge* than sitting around with close friends and family, discussing the big and small things in life."¹

As winter approaches, perhaps the best way to manage this odd time is to find whatever

¹ From: <https://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/highlights/hygge/what-hygge>

small pleasures we can, and enjoy them as much as possible. Certainly an evening ramble around the streets of Heaton indicates that a lot of people have decided to fend off the darkness and gloom by dressing their houses up in Christmas decorations and getting the sparkly lights out. And we might not be able to sit around in person with all of our friends and family, but we can always make a hot chocolate and Zoom. Not quite the same... but a lot better than nothing.

We'll be having our traditional Toy Service, Christmas Miscellany and Carol Service this year, although they'll be a little different since we're meeting virtually at present. For the Toy Service, we'll be asking people to donate funds rather than collecting actual toys. You're also asked to have a teddy bear – or another favourite childhood toy – with you during the service!

Looking to the future, it will probably be Spring 2021 before we can return to meeting in person, given the twin constraints of coronavirus restrictions and the temperature inside our building. Please be assured that we'll start meeting in person for worship again as soon as we safely can.

Recently I attended the series of Congregational Strategy workshops organised by the national Unitarian movement and hosted by Prof. John Bates, who is the Chair of New Unity congregation in London and a Fellow of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at the London Business School. It was a really thorough series of discussions about how to identify where a congregation wants to go next, what resources it has and how to get from where you are to where you want to be. My intention is that in the New Year, we'll use the approach presented in this workshop to plan what we want to do over the next few years, and everyone will be invited to have their say.

Finally, I'm continuing sending letters with highlights from our Sunday services to anyone unable to (or who prefers not to) join us for virtual worship and socialising, which is currently taking place via Zoom. If you'd like to be sent one of these letters, please call on: **07506 255 731**. If anyone needs support to go online, the national Unitarian movement has let us know that: "IT company Netserve Ltd. have volunteered their time and provided a dedicated phonenumber for Unitarians who need

help to get online from a trusted partner. To access support you can ring: 0203 728 8415 or email them at: theteam@netserve.support".

As always, we continue to have our weekly Sunday socials, Monday pub quiz and monthly reading group. Diana Bebb continues to do an excellent job editing the Calendar and putting together the regular Uplift newsletter to cheer everyone up in lockdown. If you're not receiving the Uplift and would like to, please email or call us and let us know.

As ever, my thoughts are with everyone and I hope that you and your families and loved ones are well – and if not, I hope you are finding the love and support you need. If Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians can help, you can email us at:

info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk, ring: **07506 255 731**, or write to us at: **Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE1 8XG**. We are keeping an eye on the building and your letter will be collected.

Finally, we are here for all our members and will support everyone as best we can! Please do let me know what works best for you.

Love and festive blessings,
Louise Reeve, Chairperson
Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

Updates:

Friends of Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians

We'd like to make everyone aware of the 'Friends of Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians'. These are people with a long-standing connection to our congregation. Some are former members who have left the area but who want to retain their relationship with us. Others regularly join in our gatherings, but feel that their existing religious or spiritual commitments preclude their becoming full members of our congregation. Friends are kept informed about what's going on at Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians, and may attend and speak at our AGMs and any Special Meetings (though not vote).

As a reminder, Members of the congregation are those who have confirmed to a member of the Management Committee (usually Louise Reeve as Secretary or David Venus as Treasurer) that they wish to become members, who then sign a declaration of membership and agree to make a regular financial contribution to the congregation. This gives you the right to vote at AGMs and Special Meetings, and to stand for election to the Management Committee.

Anyone considering becoming a Member or Friend of the congregation who wants to know more is welcome to discuss this with the Chairperson of the congregation, currently Louise Reeve, who can be reached at:
louise.reeve@newcastleunitarians.org.uk

National Unitarian Fellowship:

People might like to consider joining the National Unitarian Fellowship: "a nationwide Unitarian network, for the exchange of ideas, opinions and news, and a point of contact for all with similar ideas, whether they belong to a church or not". nufonline.org.uk

Joseph Cowen:

We continue to support the Joseph Cowen Centre. They are accepting donations of their usual items – tea, coffee, sugar, powdered milk, men's socks and underpants, and men's toiletries plus paper, pens, puzzle books and playing cards – by drop-off at the centre in Byker, if you are able to get there safely. (Ring the bell and a member of staff will open the door to enable you to leave the donation on a table in the entrance hallway).

Alternatively you can make a financial donation via their Local Giving account online: localgiving.org/charity/tynehousing or by cheque (payable to Tyne Housing Association

with a note on the back that it is for the Joseph Cowen Centre).

Post to: St Silas Church

Building, Clifford Street, Byker, NE6 1PG.



Letter from Roger Tarbuck

Dear Friends,

When we came to Surrey in 2004, our doorbell was a simple “ding-dong” chimer.

The trouble was that many people (I did this too, when young!) touched the bell-push too quickly, so that, rather than “ding-dong”, we heard a weak “gdong”, which was too short for a hard-of-hearing person. An old-fashioned



ringing doorbell would have been even worse: it would just have given a faint “ping” when touched too quickly. We need both volume and duration, so, rather than trying to change how the whole world presses a button, I found a modern doorbell that gives a stirring rendering of two of Big Ben’s chimes lasting for seven glorious seconds, which is pretty good for a doorbell, and it plays all eight notes, no matter how fast you may be on the trigger. Some gdongers with excellent hearing

might call this a fuss about nothing, but I call it a blessing; besides, you can get great satisfaction from hearing the robust sound of Big Ben's chimes in your hall or throughout your house. (I've got a repeater upstairs.) I'd like to have the huge hourly "Bongs", of course, but that would be excessive. The main thing is that the signal should be loud and long and as friendly and jolly as can be,



but most of all, it should be meaningful. Telephones, too. Some of the modern telephone alerts are pretty awful, but one that I was delighted to find was the sound of a piano providing the first part of the main melody

of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer", which I love, and it lasts a lively twenty-three seconds, and then obligingly begins all over again if you're slow to answer. That sound comes on two of our telephones; the other four have different tunes, and when they all ring, they're hard to ignore, especially if the Amazon van arrives at the same time. There

are a couple of mobile phones, too. The doorbell and telephone sounds do more than just advise me that there's someone at the door or on the phone. They rouse me from sleep or from busyness and remind me suddenly of who I am and that I have responsibilities. It wakens me to the moment. And the greater the familiarity, as with Big Ben's chimes and "The Entertainer", the more powerfully do they remind me, because everything that we experience reminds us of something, to a greater or lesser degree.

There is always some kind of association, some kind of reminder, and the more meaningful it is, the better. I was once in a small number of people from the All Faiths group being shown round Newcastle's



Cathedral Church of St Mary's,
Newcastle upon Tyne

Roman

Catholic

cathedral and at one point, a member of our party asked the priest escorting us about the images surrounding us: “Why do you have all these statues and things?” To this, the priest gently replied: “For us, they are reminders.” What a beautiful reply, and how important it shows positive and good thoughts to be. What comes into our consciousness uplifts, or depresses, or might even deprave us. The images that we saw were all meaningful and good, and because like attracts like, the inner associations and responses of ordinary, fair-minded people will be good also. Thoughts are like things: “One thing leads to another.” Psychologists have known about this for over two hundred years, because the associations of ordinary thoughts may scoop (or dredge) from our unconscious, samples of the high and the low that dwell within each of us, doing its own good or bad or frightful chemistry. I’ve often dwelt on those few, very important words of the priest in the cathedral, and the older I get, the more I think of them.

Words, thoughts,
things *remind* me,
and that's what
Christmas does so
well: from the mighty
choirs of angels in the



sky to a bright little bauble lying on a tiny hand
- our hand - or the simple words and tune of
“Away in a manger”, or the snow that never
seems to arrive in time for Christmas, but
stands clear in our memory as if it always did;
or sleigh bells, and presents, and tender lips
on ours, and something soft against our face -
so simple, so strong - touching our hearts and
reminding us of the great and wonderful
mystery of which we are a part – a mystery
too often forgotten, but ever again, when we
are sweetly roused from our slumber, ringing
forth: “Ding-dong merrily on high!”

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a
Happy and Healthy New Year,

And God's blessing on you all,
Roger Tarbuck

Events Updates

Online Worship

Many congregations have moved to online services. This site has a list of congregations and how to connect with them online:

www.unitarian.org.uk/online-services

Alongside Sunday services, there are regular online Unitarian events during the week which all are welcome to join.

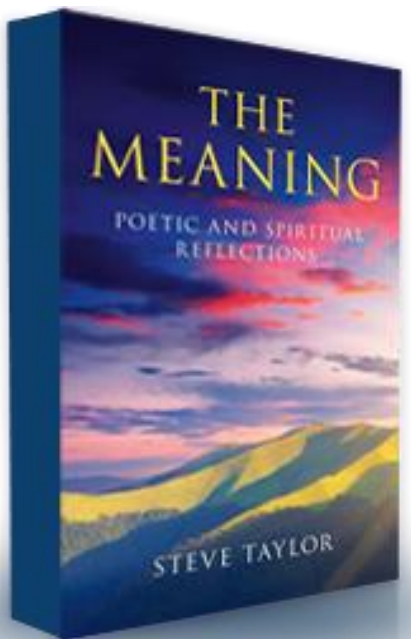
Newcastle Church Online Activities

www.newcastleunitarians.org.uk/events :

We hold two weekly activities over Zoom:

Monday Quiz Night (7pm)

Sunday Social (12pm)



Monthly Reading Group:

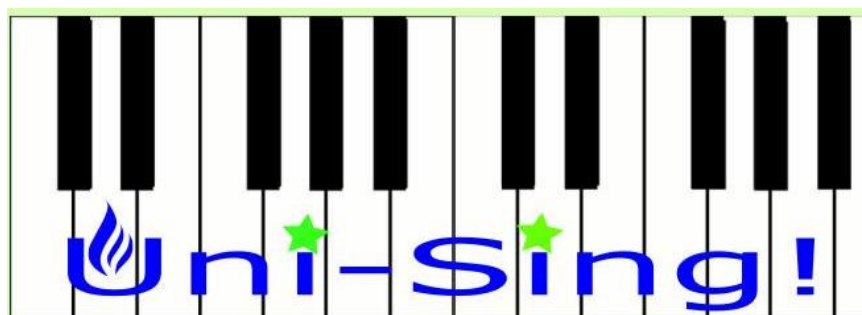
We run a **virtual reading group** via Zoom once a month. In October we finished discussing Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, and in November we discussed spiritual poetry by psychology lecturer Steve M Taylor. We'll have a Christmas themed session on 20 December.

Across Continents Coffee:

North Shore Unitarian Church in Chicago, USA (www.nsuc.org) have invited us to join 'Across Continents Coffee', a relaxed and informal online get-together for Unitarians from across the world, at **2pm on Saturday 5th December**. If you're interested, please email Louise Reeve with your name asap so she can supply North Shore Church with a list of attendees:

info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk or call 07506 255 731.

Uni-Sing! A group for online hymn singing:



A Zoom meeting where Unitarians sing hymns from the green and purple Unitarian hymnbooks and have a short breakout to chat to a small group at **3pm on Saturdays**. Find out more on Facebook here:

www.facebook.com/groups/687366168770017
or email Louise Reeve for details:
info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk.

Heart and Soul Groups: contemplative spiritual online gatherings in which you can

take time to reflect on life in the company of others. Kensington Unitarians hold these gatherings **throughout the week** – visit the website for more information:

www.heartandsoulcircles.org.uk

Unitarian and Free Christian Bible

Discussion: a group for people attached to Unitarian and Free Christian Churches to discuss the Bible where all views and beliefs are welcome and respected. Online discussions take place on **Monday evenings at 6.30pm**. Find out more here:

www.facebook.com/groups/689768408524659

or email Louise Reeve for details:

info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk.

Living the Questions: a spiritual and philosophical exploration group, organised by Rev. Danny Crosby at Altrincham. Topics have included "Our Common Search for Meaning" and "Inspirations and Heroes". Find out more by emailing Rev. Danny Crosby here: dannydcrosby@hotmail.com .

Via Zoom at 3pm on Saturdays. They have a Facebook page, or you can email Louise Rogers to find out more:

louise.rogers256@gmail.com

Earth Spirit Network Winter Solstice Gathering 21 December: you can join the ESN's solstice celebration via **Zoom on 21st December 2020 in the evening.**

“The return of the sun from standing still in the South is encouraged by lighting fires and candles. It is a time to decorate the house with evergreens and celebrate the turning of the year. We all have special memories of Yule and Christmas and there will be an opportunity to share them during our celebration.” Joining details to be given out nearer the time, email Louise Reeve for details: info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk.

Recent Service Highlights

Recorded, available online:

YouTube: tinyurl.com/NUnitarianYouTube

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/NewcastleuponTyneUnitarians

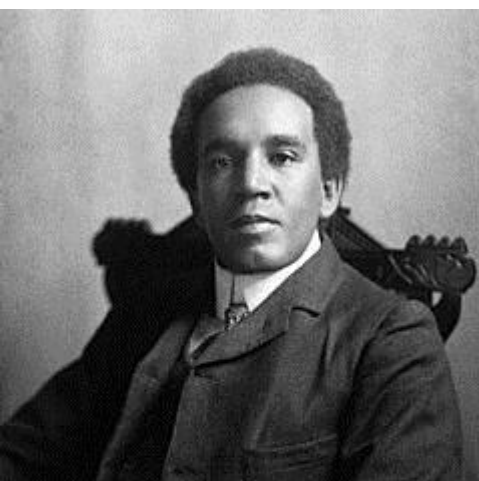
4 October – Maurice Large

Maurice presented our annual Fellowship Sunday live on Zoom, including Bill Darlison's

United We Stand, plus music from Enya and Vaughn Williams.

11 October – Anne Mills

The General Assembly Vice President Anne Mills presented our annual NUA weekend



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (15 August 1875 – 1 September 1912) was an English composer and conductor.

service on Zoom. We were joined by Stockton Unitarians for this special worship.

18 October – Diana Bebb

Diana presented a café church service on the subject of black composers as part of marking black history month.

25 October – Tom and Brigitte McCready

Tom and Brigitte joined us from Doncaster Unitarians for a service of reflections on the pandemic and compassion. With readings from Jewish scripture.

1 November – Diana Bebb

Diana presented a Café Church service on the topic of Being Lost, with discussions and

an episode of Something Understood by Anita Rani.

8 November – Louise Reeve

Louise presented our annual Remembrance Sunday service on the topic of the War of the Roses.



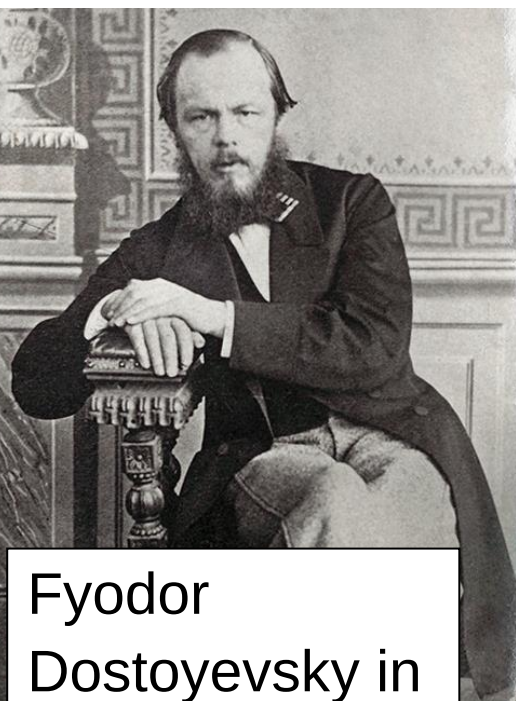
15 November – Rev. Paul Walker

Paul led us in worship exploring generosity and selfishness, including Dostoyevsky's story The Onion.

22 November – Stephen Jackson

Stephen gave us a very moving service entitled 'Time's Arrow, Bede's Sparrow: Living a life before death', looking at how we would like to be remembered and how we can appreciate the life we have.

Fyodor
Dostoyevsky in
1863



The Tyneside Memorial Plaque at Great Hucklow



The Nightingale Centre

In November 2020 we were asked to contribute the names of those from Tyneside Congregations and Schools who had died in the First World War to Ed Fordham, who was putting together a Remembrance Day service at the Old Chapel in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. Great Hucklow is the home of the Nightingale Centre, the Unitarian conference and holiday centre, and a former convalescent home for ex-servicemen - it is named for Florence Nightingale. The photograph shows a set of plaques on display at the back of the Old Chapel which is adjacent to the Nightingale

Centre, and it is thought that these would once have been on display in various rooms in the Centre. The plaque for Tyneside Congregations and Schools can be seen in the bottom right-hand corner of the photograph.

At the time the Tyneside Congregations would have consisted of

Newcastle and Gateshead (other North East congregations included Choppington in Northumberland and Sunderland.)

Unfortunately, we have no records of any of those from the Gateshead congregation who died in the First World War, but we sent

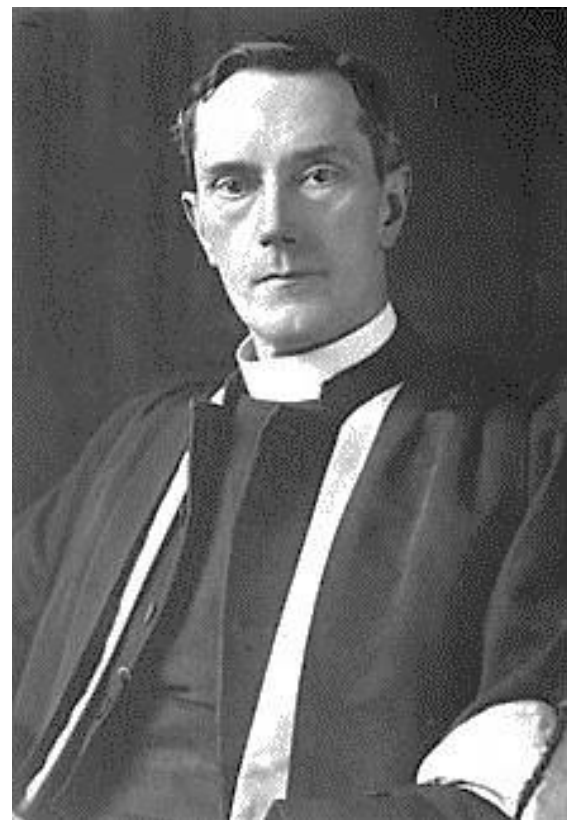


through the names of those from our own Newcastle upon Tyne congregation to be part of the Great Hucklow service.

- Louise Reeve

History of the Church: Dean Inge

Our good friends Kathryn and David Garratt have sent me an extract from the diary of Dean Inge, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral from 1911 and sometime known (unfairly) as the Gloomy Dean, an epithet bestowed on him by those whom he attacked as peddlers of what we would nowadays call "fake news". In reality he was much in demand as a public speaker for his erudition, fluency, humour and passion.



In his diary for 5th February 1934, Inge records,

“Dining with the Brotherhood I found that Herbert Henson (*Bishop of Durham*) was annoyed with me for approving of the invitation to a Unitarian to preach in Liverpool Cathedral. I have never read better sermons than those of J. H. Thom, a Unitarian divine, and Martineau’s books are of great apologetic value. I have never found much to differ from in my talks with Jacks, though he goes too far, in my opinion, with Loisy about the historical Christ. Surely there are many subjects on which an Anglican congregation might profit by sitting under a devout and thoughtful Unitarian, or a Quaker. I am all in favour of trying to close schisms, if it can be done without sacrifice of principle. I think an earlier Henson would have agreed with me. Mr. Redfern, the minister to whom the invitation was sent, came to see me; we talked for half an hour.”

L. P. Jacks (1860 – 1955) was a Unitarian minister, and sometime Principal of Manchester College (now Harris Manchester College) Oxford. Alfred Loisy was a French Roman Catholic priest whose works were introduced to British readers by Jacks. Lawrence Redfern (1888 – 1967) was also a notable Unitarian minister while John Hamilton Thom (1808 – 1894) was an Irish Unitarian minister. Both Jacks and Thom served as ministers at Renshaw Street Unitarian chapel, Liverpool, as at one time did our own George Harris before he came to Newcastle in 1845. Renshaw Street chapel closed in 1899 when the congregation moved to Ullet Road, Liverpool where Lawrence Redfern was at one time the minister. Their present minister is Philip Waldron, who was the recipient of our Barnes Award in 2015.

- Thanks to Maurice Large
and Kathryn and David Garratt



JAMES ALEXANDER “ALEC” BURNS 1907 – 2003

A UNITARIAN OLYMPIAN

Alec Burns (often also known as Alex) was a regular attender at Divine Unity during the '60s and '70s and possibly into the '80s, although I cannot be sure. I only remember him as a tall (he was 6' 3”), craggy man who



Alec (R, as I remember him) with fellow Elswick Harrier Olympian Mike McLeod

always sat on the right hand side of the church, about two-thirds of the way to the back.

It was a time when

communication across the generations was a lot more formal than nowadays and I cannot recall ever saying much more to him than, “Good morning”.

He was born in Scotswood on 5th November 1907, the son of a shipyard labourer. He began running for the local YMCA in 1919 before joining the famous Elswick Harriers. In 1928 he showed his potential by winning the

annual Saltwell Harriers 10k road race. He won the AAA 4 miles title in 1931 and took second place no less than eight times in the AAA Championships at various distances from three miles to ten miles. He won the English Cross Country Championship in 1932, and represented England six times in the International Cross Country Championships, taking a silver medal in 1934. He also won a bronze in the 1934 British Empire Games. His last race was a Newcastle to Gateshead race in 1972 to raise funds for the 1972 Munich Olympics (an event marred by the terrorist attack on the Israeli team).

But it was as an Olympian that Alec achieved his greatest success. He was selected for the Great Britain team in 1932, during the great depression when, because of financial constraints, only 20 competitors were able to go, and Alec doubled up in the 5000 and 10,000 metres events.

The journey to Los Angeles was not the best preparation. After a train journey to Southampton he embarked with the team on the RMS Empress of Britain for a five-day



Winning the
5000m heat

journey to Quebec (the ship was taking future PM Stanley Baldwin to the Ottawa conference). Their training facilities consisted of runs around the promenade deck, perhaps better than on their journey from Canada to Los Angeles (another five days) on the Santa Fe Railroad where they were limited to training sessions on the platforms of stations when

they stopped!

Less than 24 hours after arrival and in sweltering temperatures, Alec found himself running his heat of the 5000 metres. He won easily, but this was an era of Finnish domination of distance running, and he

finished fifth in both the 5000 and 10,000 metres finals, setting a new British record in the process.

Following the Games, Lord Burghley, the team Captain, took the team on a tour of Los Angeles, including the film studios and the houses of Mary Pickford and Lon Chaney.



Alec Burns leading the pack in Berlin. Jesse Owens is sitting on the inside of the track

Four years later, Alec was again selected. These were the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympics.

When Alec met Adolf Hitler at the athletes' reception his immediate thought was that Hitler had an inferiority complex. Alec admired the discipline and good health of the German

athletes, although the British team were oblivious of the concentration camp that was only 9 miles away from the stadium, and at that time knowledge of Hitler's plans was non-existent.

As in 1932, the Finns were dominant, although Alec finished in 5th place in the 10,000 metres, setting a British record time of 30 mins 58.2 secs in the process. During the Games Alec became friends with Jesse Owen who won four gold medals, so infuriating Hitler that the records were excluded from Goebbels' newspaper.

After the Games Alec won the Senior Club Championship in 1937 and again in 1938 and finished his career the same year by winning the Northumberland and Durham One Mile Championship. He continued to be



involved in promoting Elswick Harriers, but during and after the war, his employment with Anglo American Oil Company left him little time and his day to day involvement with athletics gradually died away. By the late 1980s he had lost all interest in first class athletics, explaining, "In my time we ran just for the love of the sport and money or prizes were never a consideration, and the greed for money is why athletics today does not interest me". As a philosophy for life, that would take some beating.

Alec Burns is commemorated with a blue plaque on the wall of the Black Bull public house at the corner of Barrack Road and Stanhope Street, (just past and opposite St James's Park), where Elswick Harriers had their headquarters.

I am hugely indebted to Harry Matthews, the Chairman of Elswick Harriers for most of the information in this article.

- Maurice Large

October-November Committee Meeting (via Zoom) notes

Sale and Use of the Building: The sale is ongoing but the church is not being used.

NUA: Ben MacLeod is now NUA Chair. Brian Robson continues to represent us; meetings online.

Publicity: We continue to update our website, YouTube and Facebook pages. We are placing update posters outside the church building. We will shortly start a blog. Diana has restarted the Uplift.

Friends of Newcastle upon Tyne

Unitarians: We are starting a 'Friends' group for those with a connection to our congregation but not in a position to be full members, to be kept informed about services and activities, and may attend and speak at our AGMs and any Special Meetings (though not vote).

Services: We are back online with recorded videos and live Zoom meetings. Worship is prepared until the end of January 2021.

Standard items: We discussed the treasurer's and secretary's reports, pulpit supply, correspondence and the reading group.

**Next committee meeting will
be Sunday 7 February at
12.45pm on Zoom.**



Sunday Services



**December and January Services are
back online due to COVID-19
restrictions. See updates on our website
and Facebook, or email or call us:
info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk
07506 255 731**

YouTube: tinyurl.com/NUnitarianYouTube

Facebook: facebook.com/NewcastleuponTyneUnitarians

Website for services and events:
www.newcastleunitarians.org.uk/events

Alternatively, you can join another Unitarian
congregation online :
www.unitarian.org.uk/online-services

Date	Service	Leader
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December 2020

6	Toy Service	Diana Bebbby
13	Christmas Miscellany	David Venus
20	Carol Service	Maurice Large
Friday 25 1030am	Christmas Day Celebration	Diana Bebbby

January 2021

3	New Year Service	Louise van der Hoeven
10	Café Church	Diana Bebbby
17	Anniversary Service	Louise Reeve
24		Margaret Robinson
31		Maurice Large

Pulpit supply: Diana Bebbby

diana.bebby@newcastleunitarians.org.uk

**WISHING EVERYONE A VERY
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

Flower Dedications

Our regular flower display will be suspended while the church is closed.

If you would still like to dedicate some flowers to a loved one in the future, please email

info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk



Articles for the August-September calendar to be submitted no later, please, than **Sunday 24 January 2021**. Thanks to Rev. Roger Tarbuck, Louise Reeve, Maurice Large, Kathryn and David Garratt and Ben MacLeod for their contributions to this calendar.



Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians



All are welcome here

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,

PRIDE

our current building in Ellison Place
opened on Sunday 21 January 1940.

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Facebook: facebook.com/NewcastleuponTyneUnitarians

Website: newcastleunitarians.org.uk