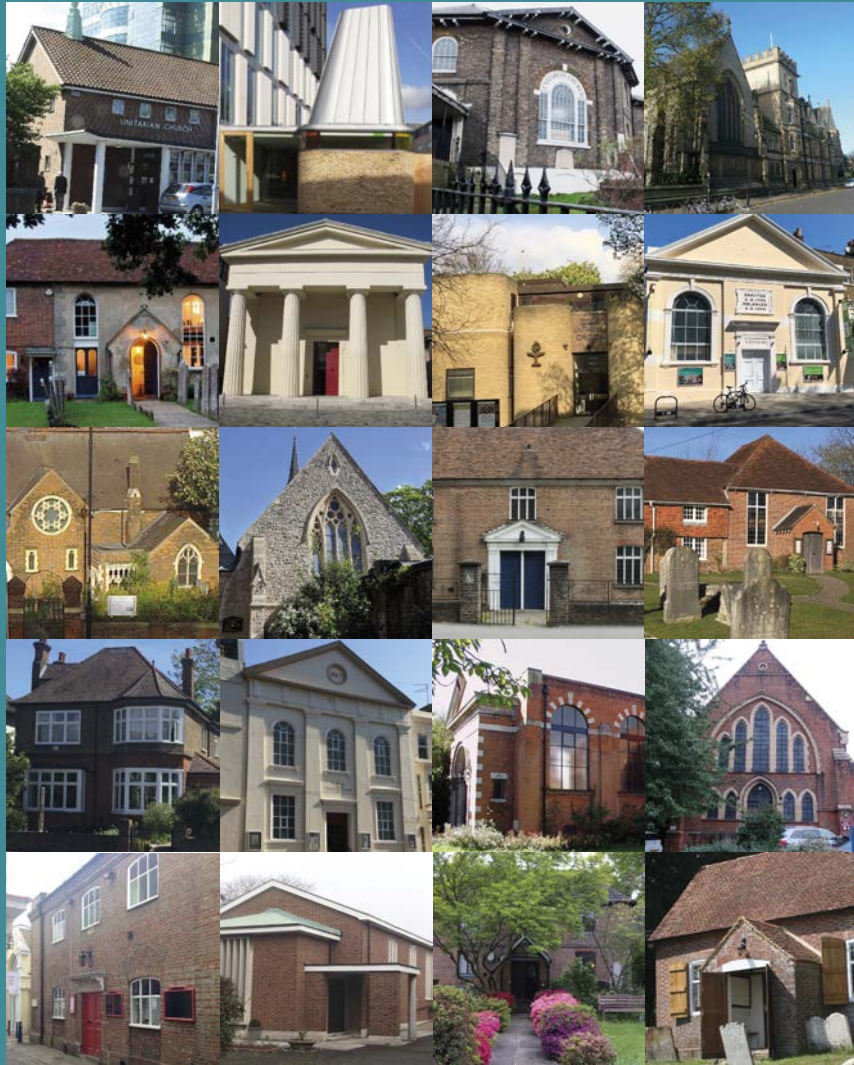




# LDPA

London District and Provincial Assembly  
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches



# Membership Reports 2022



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# Billingshurst

## BILLINGSHURST UNITARIAN CHAPEL

**Address** High Street, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9QS

**Website** [www.thechapelatbillingshurst.com](http://www.thechapelatbillingshurst.com)

**Facebook** Billingshurst Unitarian Chapel

**Worship Leaders** Stuart Coupe & invited preachers

**Services** First and third Sundays 10.30am

## BILLINGSHURST UNITARIANS

The Billingshurst congregation has come through the pandemic era relatively unscathed and we continue to meet and worship as a Unitarian community and to offer our building as a community space.

Sadly, this year we lost Susie Evershed, whose family name is connected back to the inception of our church in 1754. She had been on the committee for many years and until relatively recently played the organ for us.

Ashley Hills, who served our congregation as minister in the 1990's, also died. Both had suitably fitting memorial services where people remembered the contributions that they had made to congregations in the South East region.

We are blessed at Billingshurst at having some very committed members whose contribution keeps us our community alive and well. From folk clubs to Facebook to flowers to finance; from committee to coffee to crafting to chatting, each plays a part in building and sustaining our wonderful little community.



*Musicians who performed in the 'Folk in the Fall' concerts were: (l to r) Brian Skinner, Mike Reinstejn, Roy Nash, Reina James and Stuart Coupe.*



# Brighton

## BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** New Road, Brighton BN1 1UF

**Tel** 01273 696022

**Email** [buc@brightonunitarian.org.uk](mailto:buc@brightonunitarian.org.uk)

**Website** [www.brightonunitarian.org.uk](http://www.brightonunitarian.org.uk)

**Facebook** Brighton Unitarian

**Twitter** Brighton Unitarians

**Minister-Elect** Jennifer Sanders

**Services** Sundays 11.00am

## BRIGHTON UNITARIAN REPORT

There has been a lot of hard work done this year to maintain the vibrancy of our Church, our community and the business that supports it, without a permanent spiritual leader and sometimes without an administrator. It has been a year for losing and finding people.

At the beginning of this year we were still enduring Covid restrictions so had many discussions about when to relax the safety measures. Heart and Soul proved a popular online spiritual space twice a month, while many enjoyed meditation and prayer with Music and Silence on Wednesday lunchtimes.

A variety of Friday lunchtime concerts were held, including a fund raiser for Ukraine with pianist Ivan Hovurun with the Mayor in attendance, who made a heart-warming speech.

We have received huge benefits from The Unitarian General Assembly, with free legal advice in our searches for staff and minister, as well as the spiritual guidance of the wider Unitarian

community. We will be complete when we have our Minister. There were five applications for the post, and a rigorous interview process guided by Ruth Jones, a personnel consultant employed for us by the Unitarian General Assembly. Church members and congregation were included, giving their feedback in the final stages, following a service by the final candidates.

In September we were very happy to offer the post of Lay Leader to Jennifer Sanders, a long time member of our Church. Jennifer is training to be a Unitarian Minister and will join us at the end of March 2023.

In fact we would like to thank all the members of the church and our friends and supporters for stepping up this year - for doing teas and coffees, for bringing their craft objects and fund-raising for the church, for being on the welcome rota, for helping with congregational services, all those on the committee, for bringing flowers and decorating the church, for everyone who has stepped up. We couldn't have done it without you.





# Chatham

## CHATHAM UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** Hamond Hill, Chatham, Kent ME4 6AP

**Tel** 07712 289 845

**Website** [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/chatham](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/chatham)

**Facebook** Chatham Unitarian Church

**Worship Leaders** Beryl Payne, members of congregation,  
visiting preachers

**Services** First Sundays 10.30am, third Sunday 3.00pm

## CHATHAM REPORT

Despite the prolonged absence of the Lay Person in Charge, church life has continued with visiting preachers, one of whom did a child blessing. The average attendance was 5 with three newcomers becoming members. We were sorry to learn of the death of Jean MacPherson who had once been a chairperson of our committee.

Members and friends helped to keep the church clean and tidy and the garden relatively under control as well as host various community activities – a classical concert, art workshop, two

open days under the auspices of Heritage Open Days. Local organisations have made use of the church for meetings and consultations, and for rehearsal space. Awareness of our presence is growing.

Despite repairs to the flat roof water is still getting in from somewhere, and two of our new heaters are not functioning. Both are a great disappointment. However, we continue to be strong in love and friendship.

*Beryl Payne*



*Local organisations have made use of the church for meetings and consultations - above "Explore and Draw" - getting inspiration from many sources.*

# Colchester Fellowship

Website [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/colchester](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/colchester)

Services Meetings take place in members' homes in Colchester and East Mersea on Sunday evenings at 7.30pm



*Several members of the Fellowship are very actively involved in running our Charity, Camp Jojo, which only got off the ground in 2018, because of an initial grant generously made by the LPDA. Since then we have been supported by several congregations, and by Unitarians volunteering.*

## COLCHESTER REPORT

Our small, but very loyal, fellowship continues to meet monthly in members' homes. We occasionally welcome visitors, but the strength of our mutually supportive group provides a real and much valued sense of community and a space to share our ideas openly, which we all value so much.

Most of our meetings are run by members themselves, with topics ranging widely from a recent evening spent exploring what we mean by "belief", to evenings stimulated by books which are dear to our hearts, such as the fascinating insights provided by Tyson Yunkaporta's "Sand Talk". We also try to invite speakers twice a year, usually one from within the Unitarian movement, and one from outside it. Last Autumn for example, we had a wonderful evening led by a progressive Jewish speaker and were delighted to find out how much we had in common!

At Christmas, some of our members attended the Carol Service at Ipswich, which is our nearest meeting house, and it is lovely to keep the connection we have there.

During the summer, several of our members are pre-occupied with their involvement in Camp Jojo, the Charity which began five years ago with initial support from the LPDA, and which goes from strength to strength. Our traditional open-air service which takes place after the camps is always a wonderful time of quiet appreciation of the outside, which we all love.



# Croydon

## CROYDON UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** The Flyover, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1ER

**Tel** 020 8667 1681

**Website** [www.croydonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.croydonunitarians.org.uk)

**Facebook** Croydon Unitarians

**Minister** Rev'd Art Lester

**Services** Sundays 11.00am

## CROYDON REPORT

Report to come.



# Ditchling

## OLD MEETING HOUSE

The Twitten, Ditchling, East Sussex BN6 8UJ

**Website** [www.ditchlingunitarians.org](http://www.ditchlingunitarians.org)

**Facebook** Ditchling Unitarian Chapel

**Minister** Rev'd Duncan Voice (shared minister)

**Services** Sundays 11.00am

## DITCHLING REPORT

Ditchling Unitarians now gather twice per month for worship at The Old Meeting House. We continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic and attendance has returned to around what it was pre-Covid. Sadly however we have lost some older members of the congregation, including our chairman Brian Clutterbuck in 2022. He served the congregation, and the Old Meeting House Trust, for many years and is greatly missed. A new chairperson is being sought.

We continue to engage with the wider community in a variety of ways. Our meeting house hosts some community groups and we have been supporting our local foodbank in Burgess Hill through donations and fund raising. We have been represented at a number of village events including the summer fair. We also hosted a charity concert called *Folk in the Fall* featuring local musicians which was a lovely occasion.

We are grateful to the LDPA, and Paul Taylor, for helping us to develop a new

website. We think it looks good and that the information people need is easy to find.

In addition to leading Sunday services, our minister Duncan continues to run a meditation group which has a small but loyal following. We are also pleased that our Monday Meeting will be starting again in April 2023. The meeting caters for older members of the community and involves a talk followed by a hot drink and cake. It was popular before the pandemic and we hope it will be successful again.

Our summertime "Butterfly Service" returned in 2022 and was a great success. We were pleased to be able to welcome friends from other congregations and enjoyed tea in the church gardens on a glorious summers day. How lucky we were!

We are looking forward to welcoming some new members to our congregation at our AGM! We hope that this will be the beginning of new period of growth for the congregation.







# Dover

## DOVER UNITARIAN CHURCH

Adrian Street, Dover, Kent CT17 9AT

Website [www.doverunitarians.org](http://www.doverunitarians.org)

Facebook [Dover Unitarians](#)

Minister Rev'd Daniel Costley

Services First Sunday each month 11am

## DOVER REPORT

2022 was a year to emerge from the uncertainties of lockdown, and to assess where we are and where we might be headed. With ups and downs in equal measure, there remains a strong sense of commitment and drive to help build the Dover congregation, enabling more in the area to access a safe, spiritual place where we do not judge and we do our best to welcome all.

Despite stepping back from the pulpits in Sevenoaks and Tenterden, Rev'd Daniel Costley remains our Minister, and we have moved our services from a third Sunday afternoon to a first Sunday morning, hopefully enabling more to attend (and to better remember when we are meeting!). Attendance has ranged from 5 to 25, with a wonderful turn out for our Carol Service, including many from the local sheltered housing complex.

Our 200 year old building continues to cause our most pressing concerns, with

leaky roofs and rotting window frames reminding us of our differing priorities in providing a safe space. The Committee of Liz, Debbie and Sue have worked hard to ensure the most urgent repairs are completed, and a longer-term plan for the other essential works is being drawn up, with the help of local architects and Essex Hall. We are grateful to the District Minister for his support in this work.

Our church hall continues to provide space for local craft groups to meet, and a new Zen Buddhism group is starting to grow. In 2022 we applied for authorisation to conduct same-sex marriage, and this approval has been received in early 2023.

We are not complacent, and there will be difficult times ahead, but we are united in our hopes for the future of our church, the congregation, and the support we might provide for the people in Dover.

*“With ups and downs in equal measure, there remains a strong sense of commitment and drive to help build the Dover congregation, enabling more in the area to access a safe, spiritual place where we do not judge and we do our best to welcome all.”*



# Godalming

## GODALMING UNITARIAN CHAPEL

**Address** Meadrow, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3JB

**Website** [www.unitariangodalming.org.uk](http://www.unitariangodalming.org.uk)

**Facebook** Godalming Unitarians

**Minister** Rev'd Martin Whitell

**Services** 11.00am with children's programme on the 2nd Sunday.

Intergenerational service bimonthly.

## GODALMING REPORT

Over the year we have been able to restart the majority of activities at Godalming Unitarians at the chapel and within our community. Unfortunately our part-time minister, Rev'd Sheena Gabriel resigned in October 2021 due to health reasons. We are so incredibly grateful for all the years of service that Sheena has put into the chapel and wish her well for the future.

As the year progressed we have benefited from a variety of visiting ministers and lay leaders to deliver a regular Sunday service and are very grateful to Nicola Young for taking on the task of coordinating as well as delivering many services herself. For the months from October to January, Sheena was able to conduct around two services each month – in chapel and online.

It has been wonderful to be able to re-open the chapel and see the majority of the congregation being comfortable to return to services in chapel. We have continued to try to make our services available online via Zoom and this seems to be working well despite the occasional technical glitch.

We are now offering a "quiet time" monthly session in chapel where anyone

is welcome to attend on the last Wednesday of the month and spend 45 minutes in contemplative reflection in the chapel. In November, a remembrance service took place from the chapel. In January, Edie Campbell led a Sunday service to mark Holocaust Memorial Day focussing on the inspirational life and writings of Etty Hillesum and in September Anna Lubelska led a service on Peace Building.

The monthly Community Art Café has been meeting regularly throughout the year. Surrey Pride this year was hosted in Camberley and we were able to support this event in person in late August with a stand and a colourful turnout in the parade.

We adopted "Send a Child to Hucklow" (SACH) as our Charity for 2022 as it was their 60th Anniversary. So far this calendar year we have raised over £1,300 for SACH.

Our activities groups help to create community. The Sunday walking group has continued fairly regularly (depending on the weather) - generally a moderate walk with pub or picnic lunch.

As always, we are very grateful to our members and friends for their generous support.



# Hastings

## HASTINGS UNITARIAN CHURCH

South Terrace, Hastings TN34 1SA

**Website** [www.hastingsunitarians.org](http://www.hastingsunitarians.org)

**Services** Sunday 11.00am

### HASTINGS REPORT

Reflecting back on the last year Hastings Unitarian Church (HUC) has seen many changes. It is drying out after a recent flood in the city centre. The reports on the news showed the whole street underwater. Thankfully due to the height of the steps into the building damage to the front porch and back of the church is relatively minimal compared to the friend's meeting place a few doors down.

With the ever-changing landscape of the world due to climate change, it is something HUC will be mindful of going forward.

Maintenance took a front seat this year with an opening up of our upstairs gallery, new carpet, reclaimed comfy chairs and the dismantling of an old disused room it now provides an open light space for working , small meetings and relaxing.

The kitchen was updated and there were external jobs on the roof that were completed. All of these improvements have been made possible by a legacy.

Like many others, there was hope that 2022 would see a settling post covid and overall our small and loving community have continued to grow and enjoy weekly hybrid worship, heart and soul and groups run by members. Newcomers have appreciated a relaxed friendly and warm congregation with a space a space to be themselves

Yet change is always round the corner and the death of Alan Larcombe, Chair

of the committee, in August was a huge shock to all in the congregation having welcomed him back only days before after post-op recovery.

Both Hastings Crematorium and our church were packed which reflected the wide variety of friendships Alan had and the respect and love all of us had for him. In many ways the church is still coming to terms with his death and the huge hole he leaves both in terms of personality and also service. The chair of trustees is carrying a heavy load and yet the congregation are pulling together to try to fill the gaps where possible.

The death of Queen Elizabeth shortly after impacted all in different ways at the church and the community as a whole. Doors were opened for those that wished to come and sit in reflection during the mourning period and it was as if the whole nation took a sharp intake of breath during that time.

Jennifer Sanders, the Lay Pastor at the church, ends her ministry with HUC in mid-February after servicing just over 2 1/2 years. Although saddened at her departure it gives the opportunity for the community to reflect on the last 7 years of led ministry, take stock and look at future plans for the church.

One may say that 2022 has been a year of 2 halves: a gentle settling from the ravages of Covid and enjoyment of participatory worship to a time of loss, reflection and gratitude, with 2023 offering the potential for new ministry for Hastings Unitarian Church.



# Horsham

## HORSHAM UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** Worthing Road, Horsham,  
West Sussex RH12 1SL

**Tel** 01403 256788

**Website** [www.horshamunitarianchurch.com](http://www.horshamunitarianchurch.com)

**Minister** Rev'd Duncan Voice (shared minister)

**Services** Sundays 10.30am

## HORSHAM REPORT

This year of release from Covid restrictions enabled us fully to profit from the work and ideas of our recently-appointed Minister, Duncan Voice, and to take a number of innovative steps in worship and in the work of the church. Among initiatives supplementing our Sunday morning services in 2022 have been a series of thought-provoking Mindfulness Sessions, conceived and organised by a leading member of our congregation. Reading and discussion groups began in February with a five week study and analysis of the book 'Spiritual Activism' by Alastair McIntosh and Matt Carmichael.

Creative introductions by our Minister have included a July Midsummer Meditation of appreciation and gratitude for our blessings through the miracles of nature, and a November Talking about Racism discussion group, aiming to increase awareness and promote greater understanding in debate and in behaviour.

Those contemplation and discussion groups have attracted a number of visitors from beyond our congregation, and interest in our church – including local press coverage – has also been stimulated by the continuing work of turning a large area of our gardens into a 'Wildlife Haven', with appropriate installations and vegetation.

Charity and outreach have, as usual, been an integral part of our annual activities. Funding for our designated charity Practical Action was substantially boosted by a 'Folk in the Fall' concert presented in November in our Church Hall, and particularly noteworthy among outreach activities has been the success of our weekly Wednesday morning 'Unity Café', offering a winter warm space to all comers.

A sadness of the year has been the loss of our greatly valued trustee, the Rev'd Ashley Hills. His wise counsel is sorely missed and we must hope he would have approved of the innovations being introduced.

*Patrick Wynne-Jones, Chairman*



# London Brixton

## BRIXTON UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** Effra Road Chapel, 63 Effra Road,  
Brixton SW2 1BZ

**Website** [www.brixtonunitarians.org](http://www.brixtonunitarians.org)

**Lay Person in Charge** Julian Smith

**Services** Sundays 10.30am

## BRIXTON REPORT

2022 saw us, once again, endeavouring to go deep (in the Liberal Christian tradition) and wide (drawing on world religions and secular sources) in our spirituality each Sunday. A rededication communion service and foodbank collection was held on the first Sunday of each month, with a mindfulness service on the last. The New Year began with a Hello 2022 / Epiphany Service with soprano. Lent was marked with much giving-up and taking-up and our use of Nick Fawcett's Daily Prayer. On Mother's Day daffodils were distributed in memory of our mums and second mums. On Palm Sunday we gave two palm crosses to each attender, one to be given to someone they would like to be reconciled with in the Italian tradition, with very promising results.

On a very bright Easter Sunday we were joined by a soprano and walked to a Moroccan restaurant in Clapham for a very nice long lunch. In the Summer we enjoyed a couple of highly successful congregationally led services. The Harvest Festival was followed by a walk in Brockwell Park, purchases of locally produced goodies at the nursery (including amazing honey) and a memorable outdoor meal at the Effra Social. On Remembrance Sunday we had a Hallowtide Service remembering all our loved ones departed, Ukraine (for which we raised £1000 earlier in the year), and all our armed forces via a short tune-in by radio to the service at the Cenotaph. We were joined by a soprano on the First Sunday in Advent, which was followed by our early Christmas meal in Soho (utilising the no 3 bus which stops across the road), at

which we celebrated our 60th anniversary in our current buildings, 30 years of Julian (our Honorary Minister) and Andrew (currently serving as Chairman) being with us (making Julian our longest-serving minister since our foundation in 1839), and Julian's and Andrew's recent civil partnership after an engagement of 33 years!

The year ended with our well-attended Hot Dogs Carols Service at which we sang some very ancient and moving carols and a Sheffield wassail, and a Goodbye 2022 Service, both utilising sopranos. A new order of service was introduced, expressing our inclusive theistic / religious humanist faith rooted in Liberal Christianity and including three positive news stories.

We were blessed with several new members, who very quickly have become part of our family. MD Jason and AMD Ricky introduced a very successful high-powered classical and folk music series of Sunday lunchtime concerts, which continues. We now have a grand piano to compliment our baby grand electronic organ / piano. She was born in Berlin in 1905, has had an eventful life, and is called Brunhilde. Julian conducted several special services, and led worship at Underbank and Fulwood, Sheffield. Jim, our District Minister, blessed us in leading two very enjoyable services. The hall remains a hub of community activity and our law centre, headed by Julian, remains as busy as ever. Perhaps the greatest highlight of the year was the publication of our Edwin Lerner's Jerusalem, available in all good bookshops.  
*Susan Young Administrator*



# London Golders Green

## GOLDERS GREEN UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** 31½ Hoop Lane, Golders Green, London NW11 8BS

**Website** [www.goldersgreenunitarians.org](http://www.goldersgreenunitarians.org)

**Tel** 020 8455 5000

**FaceBook** Golders Green Unitarians

**Minister** Rev'd Michael Allured

**Services** First and third Sundays at 11 am, with the facility to join online; the second, fourth and, where there is one, fifth Sundays on Zoom at 4pm.

## GOLDERS GREEN REPORT

Rev'd Keith Gilley, minister with Golders Green Unitarians (GGU) for 21 years (1967-1988), spoke of the mode of the changes in the congregation's practice and ethos during his ministry as 'gentle transitions'. GGU marked another transition on 30 September 2022 on the retirement of Rev'd Feargus O'Connor (GGU's minister 2001-2022) and the appointment of his successor, Rev'd Michael Allured. 2023 marks another milestone: the 120th anniversary of the founding of the congregation (then All Souls' Unitarian Church) in West Hampstead. It moved in 1925 to our current location in Hoop Lane, Golders Green, and so another anniversary approaches, this time a centenary of our present church building.

Like many other Unitarian congregations GGU is slowly recovering from the long tail of the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest accounts show a loss of income from lettings. Some groups hiring our space did not return post-pandemic, though the number of groups renting our space is now slowly improving. As a result one of the 'transitions' has been the continuation of the pattern of Sunday services adopted during as lockdowns were eased.

Other 'transitions' include exploring the place of meditative prayer and silence in services, ritual and singing of some of the chants in Sing Your Faith. Though we cherish the green hymnal, Hymns for Living, with whose production Keith Gilley was closely involved, we have recently been widening the repertoire of hymns from the purple book. For our in-person services we sit 'in the round' to encourage a greater sense of 'warm'

energy in the way attenders are able to experience a sense of connection and feel part of service features such as candles of joys and concerns.

GGU has always been a community for whom Sunday services provided an important rhythm to the chapel year. They do not, however, represent the entirety of our spiritual questing. Poetry and prose sharing has made a welcome return and now meets online monthly on a Saturday afternoon. The Film Club has also started up again. The monthly art workshop is back and we are now meeting again on the third Friday of each month to circle dance. There are slow dances and more energetic ones. Decorating our space according to the season of the year is an integral part of how we experience circle dance as a way of being intentional. As the light fades we dance by candlelight.

Sharing food and eating together are at the heart of our hospitality to one another after circle dancing and before the first service of each month with breakfast, over which we each choose a 'strength card' on which is printed a word (e.g. practical, purposeful, relaxed, thoughtful, reliable) and associated picture. Everyone who wishes can share the significance to them of their word.

Maintaining our building is, as ever, an ongoing project. We have decided to invest in new external noticeboards. In the year ahead we have plans to create more opportunities for our existing community and newcomers yet to discover us. In this way we aspire to make deeper connections as we explore together the things that matter in building a life full of purpose and meaning.



# London Hampstead

## ROSSLYN HILL CHAPEL

**Address** 3 Pilgrim's Place NW3 1NG

**Tel** 020 7433 3267

**Facebook** Rosslyn Hill Chapel

**Website** [www.rosslynhillchapel.org.uk](http://www.rosslynhillchapel.org.uk)

**Minister** Rev'd Kate Dean

**Services** Sunday 11am and 6pm

## ROSSLYN HILL CHAPEL HAMPSTEAD REPORT

The Omicron Covid-19 variant surge in December 2021 caused us to move services online and during the beginning of 2022 we gradually reopened for Sunday services, in a cautious response to the developing situation. The summer season was dominated by a major project to replace the slates on the main Chapel roof and install insulation.

Throughout the year, Sunday morning services have been available on the Chapel's YouTube channel most Sundays followed by an online social meeting 'Virtual Side Aisle' for those who were not able to attend services in person. Attendance on Sunday mornings has gradually increased although it has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Attendance at Sunday afternoon workshops and events as well as the Sunday Evening Gatherings have remained steady with a number of newcomers joining these events, for varied forms of meditation and worship.

A rolling programme of weekday evening spiritual development sessions led by Rev'd Kate continued during the year. Online Soul Deep sessions, co-led by Rev'd Michael Allured, took place in January and February. A Lent course following the book *Hearing God in Poetry* was co-led by Rev'd Winnie Gordon in collaboration with her congregation in Birmingham. In October, we began a sermon-writing course *The Shared Pulpit*, running over eight monthly sessions. This has been a collaboration between Unitarians in London, Edinburgh and Bury, Lancs., co-led by Janine Hurley.

Monthly gatherings which were first introduced in 2021 also continued. The toddler group, Saturday Club, hosted 12 - 26 children and their parents each month. The Death Café attracted a group of regular attendees who have formed friendship bonds. Soul Fuel evening gathering of acoustic singer-songwriters, poets and storytellers has thrived with a variety of participants offering their contributions. Rev'd Kate organised nine workshops, roughly once a month which were led by her and invited guests. They ranged from creative writing inspired by personal family histories led by Holly Maples, to managing conflict led by Sara Wilcox.

The Chapel's communications consists of a monthly newsletter and regular posts on Facebook and Instagram. We also send printed services to off-line members. After a period of hibernation, the Social Action Group was reconvened. The group is responsible for selecting monthly Good Causes as a focus for our collections, liaising with other community groups on joint ventures and managing the Cold Weather Shelter. The group held a community lunch to discuss future initiatives including a discussion on how to support food banks.

December brought a return to in person Christmas services, with a very lively Carol Service which featured the Chapel's Choir and the UU minister Rev'd Emilie Boggis. The historically popular Christmas Eve candlelight service attracted an estimated turn out of 160 people.



# London Kensington

## ESSEX CHURCH

**Address** 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

**Tel** 020 7221 6514

**Twitter** essexchurch

**Website** [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

**Facebook** [www.facebook.com/KensingtonUnitarians](http://www.facebook.com/KensingtonUnitarians)

**Services** Sundays 11.00am

## KENSINGTON REPORT

Report to come.





# London Lewisham Unity

**Address** 41 Bromley Road, Catford, London SE6 2TS

**Website** [www.lewishamunity.org](http://www.lewishamunity.org)

**Facebook** Lewisham Unity

**Twitter** @LewishamUnity

**Minister** Rev'd Julio Torres

**Services** Sundays at 11.00am

## LEWISHAM UNITY REPORT

Lewisham Unity is based in Catford, London with a membership of 12 sustaining members and a community of both online and local attendees. In person services resumed in March 2022 with most services being hybrid through Zoom to continue connecting with people who had found us online during Covid. The Committee has maintained monthly quorate meetings and members met during the summer to refresh the premises and add a new painting that uses the congregation logo to welcome visitors. Communications have continued with an online website and weekly newsletters. Our Treasurer has worked on a forecast for the next year and we are now preparing for the AGM.

In the summer of 2022 we ran a successful Crowdfunder campaign and managed to reach our fundraising target of £1,500 and with matched funding had a total of £3,000 to invest in the future of our community. Members contribute their time to the interior and to the garden upkeep, and work to maintain the Meeting House estate is ongoing.

Our long held dream of a disabled toilet in the Meeting House was realised in February 2023 thanks to a grant from The National Lottery Commission Fund.

Lewisham Local has helped fund our new "Warm Wednesdays" initiative, in partnership with The Living Centre. This project will have us opening our doors every Wednesday from the 11th January to the 28th March. We provide hot drinks and snacks, with a soft play area

for children, as well as puzzles and games for grown-ups.

The online Poetry Circle started during Covid and helped its attendees to cope with the many stresses of lockdown. It continued throughout 2022 but has now taken a break inspiring us to now hold a Poetry service once a month. The Creative Lights group also continued, offering a chance for attendees to bring anything that was 'lighting them up' creatively.

We secured Unitarian funding from the Wood Green Trust for "Warm Weekends" this winter. These are an opportunity for us to build community and offer a warm space for people to gather, while cutting down on their home heating.

Our visiting Minister Rev'd Julio Torres is from the U.S. and been in the UK since 2018. He and his wife Chandni both work in London. Julio's passion for ministry is centred on the Poor People's Campaign. Julio believes Lewisham Unity can have a part to play in the local area as a sanctuary of spirituality and justice. It has many strengths as we support each other as a religious community and also the wider neighbourhood.

Rev'd Claire MacDonald served as our minister from October 2017-July 2022. She continues to be a part of our community as our "Minister Emeritus". In this respect, she takes services approximately once per month, joins some of our special events, and is very much still part of our spiritual family.



# London New Unity

## NEWINGTON GREEN MEETING HOUSE

**Address** 39a Newington Green, London N16 9PR

New Unity Upper Street, 277a Upper Street, London, N1 2TZ

**Tel** 020 7354 0774

**Email** [info@new-unity.org](mailto:info@new-unity.org)

**Website** [www.new-unity.org](http://www.new-unity.org)

**Minister** Rev'd CJ McGregor

**Services** Sunday 11am at Newington Green Meeting House,  
39a Newington Green, London N16 9PR

## LONDON NEW UNITY REPORT

Over the last year, New Unity has focused on renewal. Our Search Team worked hard and invited The Rev'd CJ McGregor as our Minister in September 2022. We've been bringing back programmes and events lost during Covid and our in-person Sunday attendance is soaring. We've made a commitment to holding hybrid services which allows many to join and participate in our gatherings and meetings. Our Social Action Team has been revived and is quite busy as we've partnered with and become members of Hackney /Islington Citizens and Citizens UK.

The congregation was surveyed in November 2022 and, based on the results, the issues the Social Action Group will work on are Climate Change, Migrant and Refugee Rights, and Equity (to include poverty, racial equity, homelessness and others). We've developed a Membership Team who have created a Path to Membership. We now welcome all who visit us in-person and online using a Visitor Card. The Membership Team and the Minister follow-up with each visitor personally and the Team guides each person in getting to know our congregation, to participate and serving the congregation to becoming a member of the congregation. We will begin formally welcoming new members during a Sunday gathering each month.

We've updated our website to make it user friendly and more attractive. Many find us through our website. We have recently taken a look at our Young People's programme and have developed strategies to increase the number of families that find New Unity

and have revamped our programme to improve how we deliver programming.

Our Board of Trustees held a retreat where they and staff developed goals and strategy for this year and five years into the future. We've added two new staff. We brought on a new Music Director who delivers a wonderful programme and has brought us talented musicians nearly every Sunday. We've also brought on a new Property Manager to help us maintain our buildings – a task that requires our constant attention. The Property Manager is also an experienced marketer who will help us market the wonderful rental spaces we have to offer. This generated income is needed to support our mission and ministry. Not unlike other congregations, we do have our challenges. Financing such a large congregation, its staff, programmes and buildings is always on our mind. We also know that we may be the best kept secret in our community and we need to change that. In our final year of our grant of £1.8m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and others is now complete and our programme manager for the associated activity plan, Banu Aydinoglusil, has done a superb job in delivering innovative activities and engagement events. This builds on the history of rational dissent and spiritual enquiry that is embodied in the Newington Green Meeting House and its roots in the English 'enlightenment', to provide educational and cultural activities to local and national communities.

Finally, we are excited to strengthen our relationship with the Unitarians and the district. New Unity has a lot to offer and gain from this endeavor.



# London Stratford

## STRATFORD UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

**Address** West Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15 4PH

**Website** [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/stratford](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/stratford)

**Facebook** Stratford Unitarian & Free Christian Church

**Lay Person in Charge** Julian Meek

**Services** Sunday 10.30am

### STRATFORD REPORT

Our first big turnout for the year 2022-23 was our Christmas Carol Service. Traditional carols and readings attracted a congregation of over fifty. And with familiar faces and new it really felt like we were moving on from the constraints of the pandemic era.

But the highlight of our year was a naming ceremony for the two youngest members of our Congregation. This was a significant event in terms of numbers and celebration and an occasion of great joy and happiness for all. With over sixty people we tested the physical limits of our building, but not the spiritual reach of our community.

In addition to the great events, we continued with our varied programme of Sunday services. These always involve sharing and we feel very strongly that this participation is central to our worship practice. All shades of opinion are heard respectfully, and lead to discussion and spiritual reflection as different points of view and fresh perspectives are opened up.

We are pleased to note that our services have continued to attract new members to the congregation, including children.

Outside of the services we continue to offer our community engagement, with pastoral care, counselling and a variety of outreach projects to local people and those further afield. As part of this we held a well attended Ukrainian refugee welcome party and we have continued to contribute to a nearby food bank.

During the week we provide an important space for quiet reflection. We also offer space for groups such as our lively “knit & natter,” a cheerful and welcoming afternoon well spent!

Our Meeting House also functions as an Art Gallery. This forms an important part of our own unique worship practice. Here we connect with a wider community on many levels: culturally, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. In our ever evolving exhibitions we offer fresh perspectives on life and the spiritual predicament of being. We are currently holding our eighth exhibition, and there are more in the pipeline.

We would like to give thanks to our team of volunteers who help out with housekeeping and with making teas, coffees and cake; and not to mention the washing up! Everything you do is much appreciated.

Also, lastly and by no means least, a big thank you to our Minister Julian and his partner David. Everything runs smoothly at the Meeting House; and there have been some important improvements during the year, including a new floor in the lobby. It is sometimes easy to forget the very considerable effort that goes into ensuring that everything works as it should.

Thank you to Julian as you enter your 18th year of Ministry here at Stratford. May you long continue.  
*Kathy Brown and Philip Tyrer*  
(Co-Chairs, Stratford Unitarians)



# Maidstone

**Address** Market Buildings, Earl Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1HP

**Website** [www.maidstoneunitarianchurch.org](http://www.maidstoneunitarianchurch.org)

**Facebook** Maidstone Unitarians

**Services** Sunday services 11.00am

No service 5th Sunday of a month

## MAIDSTONE REPORT

We continue in Maidstone with our very small congregation. We send our appreciation, and commiserations, to the families of Alan Larcombe and Rev'd Ashley Hills, both of whom passed away in 2022. We were blessed to have them visit our church and lead services on numerous occasions over many years. Both had very individual preaching styles and their services were ones not to be missed. Their positive, uplifting and clear messages will be treasured, and remembered, by us all.

Vivienne Darbon and Pat Preece lead the majority of services. We are very grateful for the time and expertise of visiting service leaders who make the effort to come to Maidstone despite the lack of people in the congregation.

The meeting house was built in 1736 and was extended in 1921. Between us we ensure the building is maintained and remains fit for purpose.

We hold two services a month for the congregation. Also, we are delighted to continue to welcome three groups of Cocaine Anonymous every week and by doing so we feel that the church and its building remains a community asset for those who have need of a peaceful meeting place.

We are very pleased with our website, which was created with the help of the LDPA. Especially useful is the ability to put records on it that ensure research done on the church will remain in the public arena long after the authors have moved on. We have photographs and records relating to the nine men named on our commemorative windows who were lost in World War 1. To know their histories, their careers/jobs, their families and their last resting places means that we can truly remember them. More records for the church will be uploaded in due course.

Freedom of belief and doubt, and a fellowship within which to explore spirituality is important to us in Maidstone. Supporting each other as Searchers for truth, liberty and honesty is a significant factor for us all here in Maidstone Unitarian Church. We continue to do our best to keep a Unitarian presence in Maidstone, the county town of Kent.

*Pat Preece,  
Chair of the Committee*



# Oxford

## MANCHESTER COLLEGE CHAPEL SOCIETY

**Address** Harris Manchester College

Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TD

**Website** [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/oxford](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/oxford)

**Facebook** Oxford Unitarians

**Services** Sundays 11.00am plus services via Zoom

### OXFORD REPORT

We meet weekly, both in the beautiful Chapel of Harris Manchester College, Oxford and online. We do not have a permanent minister so our services are taken by a combination of visiting preachers and our own members. Our services are planned by a small worship group and we try to have a variety of style and content to suit all our members.

Because the College trains students for the Unitarian Ministry, we have often been able to offer placements to student ministers. Late in 2021 we were pleased to welcome Rev Julio Torres to take monthly services for us as part of his introduction to UK Unitarian ministry, having been ordained as a UUA minister, and this continued until June 2022.

With services in 2021 mainly on-line we were delighted to successfully launch hybrid services in March. Services take place in Chapel and are live streamed, they are also recorded, edited and made available online. Our hybrid services allow our online community to remain part of our Sunday morning services. We continue to experiment with ways of involving the on-line attendees actively in the service: currently they participate in candles of joy and concern, can share music choices via you-tube, and have recently been able to read for the service using a TV monitor in Chapel.

Initially attendance in-person was low, with numbers on-line regularly

exceeding in-person, but gradually numbers in Chapel are recovering. After many months of bringing our own flasks and shivering outside after the service, it was with great joy that we re-introduced the serving of refreshments, indoors, in October 2022.

We were pleased to have a congregational lunch for our Anniversary service on 30th October, 2022 with our visiting speaker, Rev'd Sue Woolley, the President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. We were delighted to welcome friends from Cotswold and Swindon groups who had travelled long distances to hear Sue.

We continue to run our weekly online coffee morning and have plans for a monthly online spiritual gathering. We have resumed our monthly walking group and our theatre/film group. We look forward to joining with friends at the GA in April and FUSE in June.

A highlight of our year was our AwayDay, postponed from 2020 and held, in August, at the beautiful St Ethelwold's House in Abingdon. We enjoyed lunch in the lovely garden which leads down to the Thames. Our day was ably facilitated by LDPA Chair Rev Jim Corrigan and by the end of our day we had produced a sheet of ideas, which the committee was able to refine into a list of actions, setting out priorities for 2023.



# Reading Fellowship

**Meets at RISC:** Reading International Solidarity Centre,  
35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

**Email** sarah.benfield2@btinternet.com

**Worship Leaders** Rev'd Dr Peter Godfrey, Jeff Teagle  
and visiting speakers

**Services** Second Sunday at 3.00pm

## READING REPORT

Reading Fellowship has continued to thrive, although we remain a small group. We do not have our own premises, renting a meeting room at the Reading International Solidarity Centre. We have had a full year of monthly services, both in person and with some people attending via Zoom.

In March 2022 we were delighted to have the LDPA District Minister, Rev. Jim Corrigan, take one of our services. Our April service had an Easter theme. Also in April 2 members of the congregation attended the General Assembly meetings in Birmingham, Peter Godfrey as a retired Minister and Honorary life member and Sarah representing Reading as a non voting member. In our May service Sarah discussed some of the events which had taken place at the GA and used some of the devotional material.

In June Sarah was to be able to use the material collated for a celebration of 60 years of *Send a Child to Hucklow* for our service.

In July Peter led the service with the theme of "More Light than Truth". 3 of us were pleased to be able to attend an event at the Reading Minster in which Karen Armstrong discussed her new booked called Sacred Nature.

In August we had been due to have an outing to the Vyne in Hampshire, but because of the unusually hot weather it was agreed that we would instead meet in Sarah's garden for a bring and share lunch. It went very well and we hope

could become an annual tradition.

In September Peter led our service, taking the theme of Karen Armstrong's book *Sacred Nature* and others brought contributions on the theme of nature.

Our October service was a Harvest service. Members brought things from their gardens and local areas and we made a good display of autumn flowers and leaves/nuts etc.

For our November service we welcomed Rev'd Martin Whitell for Remembrance Sunday and our AGM.

In December we met at the home of 2 of our members for an informal service including readings, Carols and music, as well as mince pies and Sloe Gin!

Our January 2023 service was again on the theme of New Year.

For our February service we were delighted and honoured to welcome the General Assembly President Rev'd Sue Woolley who took the theme of *Living Our Values*.

Since retiring Sarah has had a little more time and has been able to link with the Reading Interfaith group. It is good to be able to learn about other faiths and to be able to share information about Unitarianism.

We have a full year of monthly services planned and hope to continue to thrive and to welcome new members and visitors to Reading.



# Richmond

## RICHMOND AND PUTNEY UNITARIAN CHURCH

**Address** Ormond Road, Richmond, Surrey TW10 6TH

**Website** [www.rpuc.org.uk](http://www.rpuc.org.uk)

**Twitter** @RPUnitarian

**Facebook** Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church

**Minister** Rev'd Simon Ramsay

**Services** Sundays at 11.00am

### RICHMOND REPORT

In 2022, we achieved status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church CIO.

The change in our constitutional make-up does not reflect any change in our mission as a community: to foster the principles of liberal religion based on personal conscience rather than dogma, to provide an inclusive space of spiritual exploration for people of all faiths and none, to strive for social justice. We continue to provide non-discriminatory rights of passage ceremonies such as same-sex weddings.

This year saw us work through the long tail of the Covid era and consolidate a more normal life back in the physical space of our church (while maintaining our online presence to enable accessibility for those unable to attend, such as the continuing Zoom broadcasts of our Sunday services). In-person Sunday gatherings began to become the norm again. Other church activities – our journaling group, our weekly meditation – continued in a mixture of

online and offline formats. It was a great joy not only to reinstate our monthly creche after the Covid-induced hiatus but also begin a new monthly Sunday School, greatly enhancing accessibility to our services for families with young children.

Interfaith initiatives are an important part of our culture at RPUC, and we continued our longstanding relationships with the Turkish Muslims of the Dialogue Society and our partners from the Southwest Humanists, as well as other outreach events, such as the excursion to a Hindu temple in north London. In the autumn we set up a new forum called Connections to explore outreach into our wider community, and our first initiative – a monthly 'Warm Space' to provide support for people struggling with heating costs during the winter – was initiated just before Christmas.

We have also cultivated our connections with the wider Unitarian community, especially at local level. In March our minister, Rev. Simon Ramsay, joined the LDPA council, and in the spring we hosted the LDPA quarterly. x

*“our mission as a community: to foster the principles of liberal religion based on personal conscience rather than dogma, to provide an inclusive space of spiritual exploration for people of all faiths and none, to strive for social justice”*



# Sevenoaks

## SEVENOAKS UNITARIAN MEETING HOUSE

**Address** 5 Westerham Road, Bessels Green, Sevenoaks,  
Kent TN13 2PX

**Website** [www.sevenoaksunitarians.org](http://www.sevenoaksunitarians.org)

**Facebook** SevenoaksUnitarians

**Temporary Minister** Rev'd Oscar Sinclair (until June 2023)

**Services** Every Sunday 10.30am

Children's chapel 1st and 3rd Sundays, 10.30am

## SEVENOAKS REPORT

We started the new year thankful that we were able to gather together again in The Old Meeting house. Early in the year our services were still "distanced" as we followed the guidance to reduce the risk of Covid 19 infections but we relaxed as the year progressed and all such measures were removed from public life. We welcomed back the community groups who hire the Meeting House for their activities including a Pilates class and historical society.

Our minister of 12 years Rev Daniel Costley resigned in March 2022 and our AGM held the same month at the meeting house and was an opportunity for us to discuss next steps for the coming year. We welcomed Simon Bland, Ministry and Congregational Support Officer from Essex Hall in June to support our search for a new minister. Simon's guidance was so helpful and we followed his suggestion to take some time to reflect on our community ministry and the type of minister we would like to appoint in the future.

Following Daniel's final service in July 2022 we were able to welcome back visiting ministers and readers to lead two services each month; for the Sunday services we introduced a

congregational service lead by one of our members involve as many others as possible to take part in chalice lighting, readings, meditations and prayers and a discussion group we call Kindle a Flame where again a member contributes with a reading from a book, news item, video, piece of music or object to promote conversation and discussion.

In late summer Simon Bland introduced us to Rev'd Oscar Sinclair, a minister from Lincoln, Nebraska who was seeking a five month sabbatical assignment where he could be a part time guest preacher and have time to complete his doctoral thesis. The Bessels Green members gathered to watch one of his services on YouTube and discussed this interesting opportunity to welcome an interim minister in January 2023. We decided that this would be an interesting and enriching experience for us all and the later part of the year was taken up with planning to prepare the Manse for Rev'd Oscar and his family.

We held our traditional Carols by Candlelight service in December led by Rev Martin Witell which was a wonderful celebration and ended the year planning for our visiting minister's arrival.





# Tenterden

## THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

**Address** Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6LL

**Website** [www.tenterdenunitarians.org](http://www.tenterdenunitarians.org)

**Facebook** Tenterden Unitarians

**Minister** Vacant

**Services** First Sunday 3pm

Third & fifth Sunday 11am

## TENTERDEN REPORT

We were sorry to say goodbye to our Minister Rev'd Daniel Costley who took his last service for us on 3rd July, 2022. Since then we have kept up the regular schedule of services with visiting ministers and lay preachers and, increasingly, three members of our own congregation. So special thanks to Peter Cheeseman, Renee Neilson and David Wood, and to Renee our Pulpit Secretary.

We were also saddened at the death of our Chairperson Alan Larcombe who died in August.

Our congregation remains small but dedicated, and what we lack in quantity we make up for with enthusiasm. Although we only have our organist for the third Sunday in the month, on the first Sunday our CD player is much used both for hymns and a wide choice of recorded music appropriate to the theme of the service.

Maintenance on the ancient building never stops, and in addition to repairing storm damage, Chris Daynes has overseen painting of windows, the removal of pigeons (or were they doves?) from the roof space and also continual work on the upkeep of the churchyard.

Thanks to a generous donation from Nigel Walsh we have been able to have the ladies lavatory completely refurbished. The Walsh family has always had a connection with the Old Meeting House and there is a war grave marking the death of Lieutenant H. Walsh (RNVR) who served on H M S Daedalus and died on 12th September, 1945. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is going to install one of their signs on the church railings in 2023 to highlight this fact.

The website has been updated – thanks to the LDPA – and is regularly maintained. Our Facebook page has also been revamped and service and events added to it well in advance.

The church recently opened up the church on a Saturday evening for the Marlowy Album launch and SKEP Arts Social. This was a great success with over 80 people attending and it was an excellent opportunity to talk to people about the history of the church and about Unitarianism. SKEP are coming back for another event and it's hoped that other organisations and events can also use the church and so spread the story of Unitarianism in other ways and on other days than Sundays.

*“Our congregation remains small but dedicated, and what we lack in quantity we make up for with enthusiasm”*



# Watford

**Meets at** Friends Meeting House

150 Church Road, Watford WD17 4QB

**Website** [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/watford](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/watford)

**Facebook** Watford Unitarian Fellowship

**Services** Monthly First Sunday 3.00pm

## WATFORD UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Report to come.