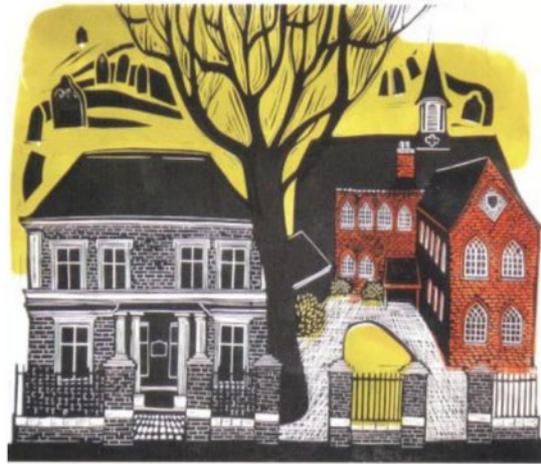




Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel, Leicester



DESCRIPTION OF CONGREGATION

Leicester Unitarians are seeking to appoint a minister following the retirement of the Rev. Dr Arthur Stewart after 33 years of outstanding ministry. We are a stable and active congregation of 30+ like-minded people who meet regularly for Sunday worship and social events such as lunches, outings and open days. We value a commitment to non-dogmatic liberal religion, inclusivity and social justice. Our diverse congregation includes liberal Christians, theists, religious humanists, agnostics, and those whose primary identification of faith is Buddhist or Hindu. We unite in our belief that we should accept each other as we are, that life cannot be measured in purely physical or scientific terms, and that there is a necessary spiritual dimension to human existence.

OUR HISTORY AND WHO WE ARE

The Grade II listed Great Meeting Chapel is the oldest complete brick building in Leicester. It was built in 1708 to house the joint congregations of Presbyterians and Independents who had originally met separately from at least 1672. The Chapel was extensively modified in 1866 with some internal modification since. Of particular note

are the 1796 plaster ceiling and a fine 1882 concert organ in working order. In 1995 a delightful Garden Room with kitchen and basement meeting room was added, enabling room lettings to a variety of educational and groups such as those providing refugee support. The graveyard, which was converted into a garden in 1945 and is one of the few green spaces in this part of the city, is an attractive resource for the congregation and room hirers. It is opened to the public several times per year. (See website for photos). The adjoining old school rooms have been restored and modified and are rented out by the Chapel to a NHS funded Health Centre for the homeless and asylum seekers. The Chapel has a city centre location and is close to the main shopping and recreational facilities of the city. An interesting development in the next 10 years will be the large number of flats to be built in close proximity to the Chapel, which is included in a conservation area.

We are more than half way through a fully funded £250,000 restoration programme which has been made possible by a determined congregational effort on fundraising and a heritage outreach programme, including school visits. Since the start of the pandemic we have operated zoom services, now as a live transmission directly from the chapel. We currently operate a weekly 'Soul Haven' meeting for meditation and short prayers. The chapel's offer to the public includes marriages (including same sex unions) naming ceremonies, and funerals, all of which can be conducted on a humanist, non-theistic basis if requested.

Since November 2021 we have employed a Congregational Support Lead on a 1 year contract at 10 hours per week, whose brief is to expand the activities taking place at the chapel. In 2021 we conducted a congregational consultation which has been very helpful in guiding our direction of travel.

The minister is supported by a well-established and fully functioning 8 person vestry management committee. Several members of the chapel's committee represent the chapel at district meetings, one being president of East Midlands Unitarians. The chapel's president is chairman of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and one of our congregation is a member of the Executive Committee of the General Assembly.



Members of the congregation after a 'bring and share' lunch to celebrate the end of Covid restrictions.

OUR CITY

With a visible history stretching back 2000 years, Leicester is a city which combines ancient and modern like no other. Culturally and happily diverse, with our Chapel right in the centre of it, Leicester offers everything you might wish for in a British city. A vibrant arts scene with the De Montfort Concert Hall, the superb Curve Theatre and the enlarging Phoenix Arts, top class professional sport, an impressive range of festivals, a compact and mainly traffic free city centre with ample opportunities for strolling, cycling, dining and shopping all combine with affordable accommodation to make Leicester an increasingly desirable location. Two established universities add essential intellectual and social stimulus. In addition, the city is close to the most attractive countryside of the Midlands, with rolling fields and charming villages. With easy connections in all directions, Leicester has every reason to be optimistic about the future.

CURRENT SERVICE PATTERN

Services are held every Sunday at 11am which follow the established pattern of prayers, hymns, readings and an address. We always meet for coffee after the service. There is a mid-week 'Soul Haven' meeting for short prayers and meditation, a weekly Lent discussion group currently running, and religious education courses have been held by the minister in the past. The Chapel frequently hosts the District Service and quarterly meetings.

BASIS OF MINISTRY

Full-time, with part time considered for the right candidate.

WHAT THE CONGREGATION SEEKS

- Sound spiritual leadership in line with Unitarian principles and ethics.
- Pastoral care of the congregation
- Thought provoking, insightful and challenging weekly worship, demonstrating a good grasp of Unitarian theology and comparative religions. The minister should be able to be flexible as to when worship takes place and if needed, be willing to offer supplementary worship each week.
- Rites of Passage ceremonies.
- With support from the officers and the congregation, a strategy to develop the congregation.
- Leadership and organisation of a range of activities such as a meditation group, discussion group, education, retreats, and explore the use of both virtual and zoom meetings.
- A familiarity with the use of a range of media, including social media, and an ability to use these to promote the chapel with an engaging writing style, e.g. by use of a blog
- A mid-weekly presence in chapel to welcome visitors. [Exact times to be discussed]
- A willingness to reach out to other faith groups in Leicester.
- A commitment to engage with Unitarian matters both at district and national level.

This list ranks the skills sought in rough order of significance, but the Congregation recognises all candidates will have different strengths.



Inside the Chapel in February 2022, after the internal restoration

REMUNERATION PACKAGE

GA scale with Manse allowance. Extra allowance for appropriate degree or postgraduate qualifications.

Applications should be made with covering letter and CV to sbland@unitarian.org.uk

Applicants can seek further information about the role by phoning the Chapel's Chairman, Mike Drucquer on 0116 2219685



The Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel, Leicester



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