

UNITARIAN ANNUAL MEETINGS

4-6 APRIL 2024



HANDBOOK

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Meetings!

We're so glad you're here – thank you for making the time and space to spend these days with your fellow Unitarians.

This Handbook has all the information you need about what's happening when and where. But do ask for any help you need – either from our staff and volunteers, or from another attendee. We have the whole hotel to ourselves, so anyone you meet should be a kindred spirit! And of course, if your question is about your room, the restaurant, parking, the pool etc please go directly to the hotel staff - they will be most able to help.

One of the reasons we have chosen this venue is the opportunity it offers for connection outside of the programmed events.

We are proud of everything that's on the schedule, but we also recommend that you take time for a chat over a cup of tea with a friend (old or new), or to take a look round the grounds, or to sneak off for a breather in the quiet room. This is your time, and we hope you spend it choosing the Annual Meetings experience that is right for you.

Thank you to the many many people who are making this event possible, behind the scenes or in front of a microphone – it really is a collective effort, co-created by our community, and everyone here will play a role towards this being a welcoming, stimulating, inspiring event.

We also encourage you to think of the members of our community who can't be here in person – whether the barrier is time, money, or health – and invite you to consider how you might bring the spirit of the meetings back to them.

Thank you for being here, and for all you do throughout the year.

**Liz Slade, Chief Officer,
on behalf of the GA team and Annual Meetings Panel**

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

The 95th Annual Meetings

Staverton Park Hotel, 4-6 April 2024

ARRIVALS:



LOCATION

The Meetings will be held at Staverton Park Hotel. Plenary sessions will be held in The County Suite with other meetings taking place in breakout rooms. All meeting rooms are within the same building. The Anniversary Service will be held in The County Suite.



PARKING

Free parking is available on site. There are disabled parking spaces near the front of the hotel. For those with mobility difficulties, we would recommend that you unload your luggage at the main entrance and then park your car in the car parks provided. Cars should be left at the main entrance for the minimum amount of time possible to avoid congestion. There are 4 charging points for electric vehicles on site.



REGISTRATION

Checking in for bedrooms is from the main hotel desk in Reception. You may check in to your room from **3pm** on the day of arrival. Luggage may be left, at the owner's risk.

Participants register for the Meetings and collect their arrival packages from the GA registration desk in the main entrance on the first day. GA staff and / or volunteers will be on hand here to help with registration and directions. The registration will open at 11am. Name badges will be issued at registration – please remember to use them.

Those arriving after the first day are advised to contact a member of GA Staff to arrange to collect their arrival packages.



ACCESS FOR THOSE WITH MOBILITY ISSUES

The venue benefits from all meeting rooms being in the same building. Floors are flat and there is a lift to all floors. Please note that there is only one lift for the hotel, so those without mobility issues are encouraged to use the stairs during the conference.



ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Participants will be accommodated in the main building – all rooms are under one roof. Be careful to keep your room locked when you are not in it.

Meals will be served in the Restaurant. All meals are provided via serving stations, so you can drop in during the mealtime rather than having to be there at the start of the mealtime.

Breakfast: 07.00 – 08.45

Lunch: 13:30 – 14:40 (DAY 2) & 13:00 – 14:00 (DAY 3)

Dinner: 18:30 – 19:45



BANNERS

During the Opening Worship on the first day there will be a parade of banners. Congregations, Districts, and affiliated societies with banners

are requested to bring them and to take part. Each banner should have a designated carrier and it is asked that these people assemble at the room 15 minutes beforehand, so that instructions may be given.



BAR

The Bar is by the entrance. A 20% discount can be obtained on drinks by showing your conference badge.



BOOKSHOP

The GA Bookshop will be in the Warwick Room on the ground floor.



BUSINESS MATTERS

We draw your attention to the following requests and hope that, if everyone notes and acts in accordance with them, the business will proceed fairly, efficiently and be interesting.

Please therefore:

- Be in your seat in good time before each meeting starts.
- Have with you all your documents, ballot papers and voting card; and please note that ballot papers and voting cards are not transferable.
- Acquaint yourself with Standing Orders (Document AGM05/24); they are designed to help us all cope with our AGM business procedures.
- Try not to leave during or before the end of plenary sessions; YOUR participation and vote are important.
- Note the use of “for” and “against” microphones and line up at the relevant microphone if you wish to speak. This gives the Chair an idea of the level of interest in continuing the debate. If you know in advance you wish to speak, we would suggest sitting on an aisle seat or other location where you can easily move to the microphones.
- If you have mobility issues which make it difficult to move to a microphone, please raise your hand, and a roving microphone will be brought to you when instructed by the Chair.



CASH

There is no cash machine on site, please bring some cash, as stalls, donations etc often require cash. The hotel bar and GA bookshop accept card payments, and there will be a facility to make Anniversary Service donations by card if you wish.



CHAPLAINCY / PASTORAL SUPPORT

There is a team of experienced and caring ministers on call throughout the Meetings, for confidential face-to-face pastoral meetings.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the frenetic pace of the Meetings, or have other concerns which are weighing down on you at the moment, you are very welcome to be in touch. Speak to, call, or text one of the Chaplaincy team, at any time during the Meetings, to arrange a private, confidential meeting. The core team and their contact details are listed below. In addition, look out for other ministers wearing chaplaincy badges, who you are also welcome to talk to.

Core Chaplains:

Rev John Philip Carter - 07956 304 314

Rev Jeffrey Bowes - 07758 080 028

Rev Kate Brady McKenna - 07751 240 886

Rev Julio Torres - 07305 080 091



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Important note: All parents/guardians are reminded that the conference's youth programme ends at 4pm each day. During evenings and lunch breaks, parents/guardians are responsible for their children and young people.

The session times for all our provisions are as follows:

Day 1:

Session 1: 2pm – 4pm

Day 2:

Session 2: 8:30am – 1:30pm

Session 3: 2:40pm – 4pm

Day 3:

Session 4: 8:30 – 1pm

0 - 5 years, GA Crèche:

Due to demand, we're once again offering a crèche facility to help meet the care needs of babies and toddlers. This year's provider is All Events Childcare - a local registered childcare provider. If you require additional childcare outside of the times above, feel free to contact the provider directly and make your own arrangements (lisa@alleventschildcare.co.uk).

6 - 11 years, GA Kids (Junior Programme):

Our popular Junior Programme will once again be welcoming 6 to 11 year olds each day of the Meetings. The theme is, 'Who am I?' Activities will be rich, varied and engaging.

12 - 17 years, GA Teens (Inter and Senior Programme):

The Inters and Seniors, like the Juniors, will explore the theme, 'Who am I?' but in a way that works well for them. They are also encouraged to attend any workshops that appeal to them.

FREE family swim sessions:

The hotel gym offers a free family swim session from 4pm – 5pm each day which families are welcome to attend. This session is not organised or supervised by the General Assembly. If attending, participants are the responsibility of their parents.

Early family dinner slot (optional)

We have organised an early dinner slot for families with young children. It will start at 18:15 sharp in the main dining room.



DEPARTURES

Rooms must have been vacated, with keys returned, by 10am on the day of departure. Luggage may be left, at the owner's risk, with the

hotel reception.



DISPLAYS AND STALLS

Various activity/goods stalls will be in the Winchester / Gloucester Room, on the terrace above the hotel reception, and will ordinarily be staffed during the Tea / Coffee breaks.



EXTRAS

If you wish to book additional items, such as room service, you will need to leave credit card details with Reception.



GA ZETTE

The Zette Office will be in The Cambridge Room on the first floor. Items for inclusion can be emailed in advance or during the meetings to zette.editor@gmail.com or handed in to the Zette Office or the Zette sales team. There will also be a collection box for articles and messages in the stalls area during the day. Reports of meetings and events, and volunteers for production, are most welcome.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

GA staff and volunteers will be available to help. You will usually find assistance at our Welcome Desk.



HEARING LOOP SYSTEMS

Hearing loops will be fitted to selected areas in the main meeting room and the breakout rooms. The areas covered by the loop system will be marked on the floor. If you require the assistance of the loop system, please sit in these areas. Those who do not require the loop system, please ensure there is plenty of space in these areas for those who do.



IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

The telephone number of the venue is: (01327) 220 676 and there is a 24-hour switchboard service.



MEDICAL ATTENTION

If you have a medical condition that could possibly require attention during the Meetings it would be very helpful if you carried, in your wallet, handbag or other item that would usually be with you, a sheet of paper stating:-

1. The diagnosis
2. A list of your medicines
3. The name and telephone number of your own GP.

Participants are also asked to inform the Conference Manager of these matters when registering to enable us to have this on record during the Meetings.



MEDITATION ROOM

In addition to the Quiet Room (Lincoln Room), Room 29 on the ground floor has been made available as a room for meditation and quiet reflection for use during the Meetings. There are comfortable sofas, and you're welcome to bring your own yoga mat.



MEETING SPACES FOR GROUPS

Sometimes a group will want to take advantage of having so many of their people on-site, and want to get together for a meeting, or a chat about their activities. We've therefore arranged

for the Nottingham, Leicester and Buckingham rooms to be available – you don't need to book, just go and use them.



POSTAL ADDRESS

If you expect to receive post during the Meetings, please ensure that it is addressed appropriately: Unitarian Meetings, c/o Staverton Park Hotel, Daventry Rd, Daventry, NN11 6JT.



QUIET ROOM

The Quiet Room, prepared by the Kingswood congregation, will be in the Lincoln Room.



REFRESHMENTS

Extra tea and coffee serving points will be made available next to the exhibition space at break times. Aside from that, there are 'energy stations' with tea and coffee machines, and snacks such as fruits and cakes / biscuits, available free throughout the conference. Enjoy!



SPA, POOL & GYM

Use of the pool, jacuzzi, sauna and gym is included in your delegate rate. There are designated times for children's swimming.



WI-FI

To use the hotel's Wi-Fi, please connect to the Staverton Guest network. There is no password. If you have problems connecting, please contact the hotel rather than GA Staff.



WORSHIP

- (1) Morning worship will take place at 07:30. Those attending are asked to be in their seats five minutes before the start, i.e. by 07:25. There will be two different options for the morning worship on both mornings. On Friday morning there will be : A) a meditational style (in the Durham / Exeter Room) led by Ewen Sim, and B) a devotional style (in the Canterbury / Stafford Room) led by Rev Stephanie Bisby.
- (2) The Communion Service will be on Saturday morning in the Durham / Exeter Room led by Rev Zsolt Elekes. There will also be a meditational style gathering at the same time in the Canterbury / Stafford Room led by Rosie Whiting.
- (3) The Opening Worship will start the Meetings at 2pm on the first day in the County Suite.
- (4) The Anniversary Service will take place in the County Suite at 7:45 on the second day in the County Suite.
- (5) The morning Plenary Sessions (II & IV) will start with devotions, as will Plenary Session III.
- (6) Various worship sessions will take place during the breakout sessions.
- (7) There will be worship in the latter part of the Closing Session at the end of Meetings.

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

SCHEDULE

2-2.30pm - Opening Worship (County Suite)



A time of celebration as we begin our time together. Our Opening Worship will give us a chance to sing, reflect, and pray as we seek a blessing on our Meetings and give thanks for our gathering. Our Opening Worship will include our Banner Parade.

2.30-2.40pm - Break

2.40-3.40pm - Plenary I (County Suite)

3.30-4.10pm - Tea (Winchester / Gloucester Room)

4.10-5.10pm - Worship Workshop A (Taylor Room)



“Worship Beyond ‘The Word’ “

How can we encounter one another in new and profound ways—and better yet, how can we do that in worship? As our systems and psyches fray, leaving us vulnerable and isolated, worship can be a realm for connecting people to one another and to their own tenderness. Embodied or participatory rituals—

carefully planned, gracefully led, theologically grounded—can sooth jagged nervous systems, equip people with meaning, and remind us of our connective power.

Rev Erika Hewitt (she/her) serves as the Minister of Worship Arts for the Unitarian Universalist Association, in the United States. Her work includes creating and curating worship resources, including the weekly spirituality series Braver/Wiser. Erika loved being with us for the 2022 Annual Meetings and is grateful to return this year.

Speaker: Rev Erika Hewitt, UUA Minister of Worship Arts

Note: this workshop is being offered twice. The teaching material will be the same, but the experiential segments will differ.

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

4.10-5.10pm - Hibbert Trust (York/Windsor Room)



Want to know more about how the Hibbert and John Gregson Trusts can financially help congregations and individual Unitarians? The number of applications for funding has reduced during and since the Pandemic. Come along and learn more about the priorities of the Hibbert Trust for the next seven years and also what we have been doing to address our legacy of slavery with notable partnerships developing. The John Gregson

Trust supports Unitarian and Free Christian buildings with survey and emergency grants and support for development projects. We are open to projects utilising funds from both Trusts that involve capital works to enable innovative activities in local congregations. All welcome.

4.10-5.10pm - Social Justice Network (County Suite)



“Mental Health in Children and Adolescents:
How proper treatment can improve outcomes for
patients and society at large”

Prof Dubicka trained in child and adolescent
psychiatry in London and Manchester and has
always worked as a clinical academic, with a
research interest in mood disorders, in particular

brief interventions in adolescent depression. As past chair of the
faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, she has been extensively
involved in national policy, media and public engagement, particularly
around mental health services, the environment, and technology.

Speaker: Professor Bernadka Dubicka

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

4.10-5.10pm - Lindsey Press Book Launch (Durham/Exeter Room)



Book Launch: for 'Soul Deep: Exploring Spirituality Together' by Michael Allured and Kate Dean

This new Lindsey Press book presents an eight-week course of spiritual exploration for small groups, designed to encourage personal reflection and shared insights. Each session plan includes readings and activities, with practical guidance for facilitators, to help participants find meaning and spiritual fulfilment in their daily lives. The launch will include a 'taster' session led by the authors. Michael is the Unitarian minister at Golders Green, and Kate is the minister at Rosslyn Hill Chapel (Hampstead).

5.10-5.30pm - Break

5.30-6.30pm - National Unitarian Fellowship (NUF) (Taylor Room)



The Social Action Officer will be telling us of her vision for this role and how she intends to represent the public face of the Unitarian Movement and also inspire and support the member congregations to become actively involved in a social responsibility programme

Speaker: Ann Howell, GA Social Action Officer

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

5.30-6.30pm - The Ethnic Minorities Heritage Spiritual Space (York/Windsor Room)



This meeting welcomes all those who self-identify as ethnicity diverse people of heritage from the black, African, Caribbean, Asian, Latinx, Indian, Pacific diaspora, (as defined under the UK protected status) and provides a space to explore and share our Unitarian and world experiences, receive support, validation, and healing from peers. We are unapologetic in recognising the need for People of Colour, of Mix/Multiple-Heritage, of White Passing, and

of Ethnic Minorities to create and hold spiritual space where they can be and participate in conversation in their whole authentic self. Sometimes it's about challenging the status quo to make the world better, and sometimes it is just about understanding our own internal struggles and sharing practices.

This year our guest facilitator is Rev Alicia Forde, the UUA International Office Director. Alicia was born and spent her formative years in Trinidad and Tobago. She identifies as an African descent queer, cis-gender female with deep roots in Tobago. She considers herself bi-cultural and is grateful that her formative years enabled her to cultivate a global perspective. Alicia is a certified Spiritual Director and has a strong interest in health and wellness. When she's not hiking, you can find her reading, working-out, or podcast-walking. (www.uua.org)

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

5.30-6.30pm - Unitarian Renewal Group (URG) (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



“Embrace the Transformation: Commemorating 50 years of Unitarian Renewal”

Join us for an inspiring presentation celebrating inclusive worship and authentic welcome. With gratitude, we will be honouring the dedication of past and present members of the Unitarian Renewal Group, whose tireless efforts have paved the way for positive change over the past half-century. We also recognise that there is still work to be done. Current members of the Unitarian Renewal Group committee will host a presentation and discussion incorporating their experience, vision and insights for what lies ahead.
Speaker: Christina Smith, URG Chair

5.30-6.30pm - Unitarian Christian Association (UCA) (Durham/Exeter Room)



“Joseph Priestley: radical roots and new beginnings”

What can we learn when we return to our beginnings? How does knowing where we came from help illuminate the way forward? In this gathering, Lizzie Kingston Harrison will contextualise the emergence of our Unitarian and Free Christian movement as a radical answer to a specific set of urgent cultural and personal questions. Reflecting on the work of Joseph Priestley, Lizzie invites you to examine how our roots inform our current practice and future directions. Drawing parallels between the Eighteenth Century and our own sacred time of change and crisis, this workshop also gives you a chance to reflect on our collective future.

Speaker: Lizzie Kingston Harrison

DAY 1 - THURSDAY 04 APRIL

6.30-7.45pm - Dinner

7.45-8.45pm - Keynote: 'How can we become good ancestors?' (County Suite)



Credit: Kate Raworth

Roman Krznaric will draw on his 2020 book "The Good Ancestor: How to think long term in a short term world", and his forthcoming book "History for Tomorrow" to help us think creatively about our past and our future.

Roman Krznaric is a social philosopher who writes about the power of ideas to create change. His latest book is the international bestseller 'The Good Ancestor: How to Think Long Term in a Short-Term World'. His previous books, including 'Empathy, The Wonderbox' and 'Carpe Diem Regained', have been published

in more than 25 languages. He is Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University's Centre for Eudaimonia and Human Flourishing and founder of the world's first Empathy Museum. His new book, 'History for Tomorrow: Inspiration from the Past for the Future of Humanity', will be published in July 2024.

Speaker - Roman Krznaric (pronounced kriz-NAR-ik)

8.45-9.00pm - Break

9.00-9.30pm - Peace Vespers (County Suite)

Led by the Unitarian Peace Fellowship

9.00pm onwards - Social Time

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

7-8.45am - Breakfast

7.30-8.00am - Morning Worship: Meditation (Durham/Exeter Room)

The meditation will be a gentle welcoming start to the day to get back in contact and bring awareness into the body

Led by: Ewen Sim

7.30-8.00am - Morning Worship: Devotional (Canterbury / Stafford Room)

Daybreak - A short exploration in words and music of how we find light in difficult times.

Led by: Rev Stephanie Bisby

8.45-10am - Plenary II (County Suite)

10-10.45am - Break - Choir (County) or Visit Stalls

10.45am-12.10 - Plenary III (County Suite)

12.10-12.30pm - Break

12.30-1.30pm - Unitarians for Climate Justice (U4CJ) (Taylor Room)



U4CJ invites you to take part in the Unitarian movement's first-ever climate-focused People's Assembly. Using a process of true participatory democracy, we'll identify actions for a more climate-conscious movement. The session will

focus on three key themes: Food, Buildings, and Investment. Together, we'll explore impactful actions that we can take now to protect our planet into an uncertain future. The crowdsourced actions, voted on by all participants, will lay the foundations for a shared climate charter for individuals, congregations, and the wider movement. Please bring ideas, enthusiasm, and the willingness to make a change.

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

12.30-1.30pm - International Collaboration (York/Windsor Room)

"Nourishing & Sharing Our Global Faith: A conversation on exploring how we remain connected as a global Unitarian/Universalist and Free Christian Church community, and the power of our connection to bring more Love into the world."



The Reverend Alicia Roxanne Forde serves with the Unitarian Universalist Association as the Director of the International Office. Alicia is passionate about engaging individuals and communities in discerning what they most care about and working alongside others as they seek to enact Love and Justice in this world. Alicia was born and spent her formative years in Trinidad and Tobago. She identifies as an African-descent, queer, cis-gender woman with deep roots in Tobago. She is a graduate of The Iliff School of Theology (MDiv '03) and currently lives with her partner in Boulder, Colorado.



Zsolt Elekes is a school chaplain at Transylvania's oldest still active educational institution, the János Zsigmond Unitarian High School. He recently became the Hungarian Unitarian Church's Officer for International Relations and is also a member of the Leadership and Design Team, the new initiative for international U/U and Free Christian collaboration

Speakers: Rev Alicia R Forde, UUA International Office Director & Rev Elekes Zsolt, Transylvannia

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

12.30-1.30pm - Collaborative Session (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



In this fast-paced session, you'll meet a bunch of Unitarians one-on-one in conversations of just a few minutes each. Use this time to discuss your own experience as a Unitarian/within your congregation, learn about challenges that other Unitarians are facing, and exchange contact information if you'd like to stay in touch to talk further. Within this fun and fast-paced format, you'll be pleasantly surprised by how many new contacts, resources, and common experiences you'll collect! Please note that, due to space constraints, the session will be limited to 48 people.

Facilitator: Adam Slate

12.30-1.30pm - Torbay Project (Durham/ExeterRoom)



"Torbay: An emerging spiritual community"

In this session I'll tell the story of how this new group has evolved over the past two years as well as comment on its relationship with other local spiritual communities. This session might be of interest to fellowships, other small groups and those wishing to adopt a more emergent approach to community work.

Speaker: Gavin Howell, Project Officer

1.30-2.40pm - Lunch

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

2.40-3.40pm - Executive Committee (Taylor Room)



“Bringing our future into being: EC workshop”

This is a chance to get to know your EC members, and for them to hear more about your dreams for the future for your congregation and our wider movement.

Over the last couple of years, the thoughtful reflections we’ve heard in this workshop have led to new developments in GA activity, so do come and be part of the conversation.

2.40-3.40pm - Coastal Connections (York/Windsor Room)



“Spirit of Land and Sea”

Join Gavin Howell and Lizzie Kingston Harrison as they begin a conversation around the opportunities presented by our unique coastal landscapes. This workshop will be a time for connection,

sharing and reflection and is open to anyone from a coastal congregation. You will have a chance to share your experiences and come away with new ideas and inspiration.

Speakers: Gavin Howell & Lizzie Kingston Harrison

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

2.40-3.40pm - International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) – British Chapter (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



The International Association for Religious Freedom held its Global Conference in Transylvania, Romania last September. We shall hear from the new President George Williams on the exciting plans for the future of IARF (online message) and from a representative of the Hungarian Unitarian Church on the significance of the event (in-person). We hope to give a flavour of the Congress. Looking ahead we will be promoting the forthcoming European and Middle East Conference in 2025 which will be in-person in Germany and online.

2.40-3.40pm - Unitarian Music Society (Durham/Exeter Room)



““For the Love of Hymns”

We all sing hymns at Unitarian services and events but what do we know about the lyricists and composers? We will choose hymns that link to a theme, and then in small groups research those hymns. Please bring smart phones or tablets with you.

3.40-4.00pm - Break

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

4-5pm - The Inquirer (Taylor Room)



The Inquirer invites you to a reception where members of the Board will update you on the changes to monthly issues and answer your questions, and will share further news.

4-5pm - Together in Meditation (York/Windsor Room)



You are warmly invited to join Richard Bober from The Meditation Fellowship, Rob Oulton, Rev Sheena Gabriel, and Lizzie Kingston Harrison for a time of meditation and fellowship. This will be a good chance for rest and contemplation during a busy few days. You can also find out more about our Thursday evening online meditation sessions and how we are working to connect and support leaders of meditation across the movement.

4-5pm - The Women's League (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



At this year's GA Meeting the Women's League will hold their AGM and the presentation of the financial accounts for 2023. It has been decided that the Women's League Project Fund for 2024-25 will be the Unitarian Ministerial Fund, which is used for the training of our future ministers. A talk will be given by Rev Ant Howe on how this money would be used and how our contribution could be of benefit to everyone commencing in their training for the ministry.

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

4-5pm Worship Workshop B (Durham/Exeter Room)



How can we encounter one another in new and profound ways—and better yet, how can we do that in worship? As our systems and psyches fray, leaving us vulnerable and isolated, worship can be a realm for connecting people to one another and to their own tenderness. Embodied or participatory rituals—carefully planned, gracefully led, theologically grounded—can sooth jagged nervous systems, equip people with meaning, and remind us of our connective power.

Rev Erika Hewitt (she/her) serves as the Minister of Worship Arts for the Unitarian Universalist Association, in the United States. Her work includes creating and curating worship resources, including the weekly spirituality series Braver/Wiser. Erika loved being with us for the 2022 Annual Meetings and is grateful to return this year.

Speaker: Rev Erika Hewitt, UUA Minister of Worship Arts

Note: this is the repeated workshop from Day 1. The teaching material will be the same, but the experiential segments will differ.

5.00-5.30pm - Tea (outside Winchester Room)

5.30-6.30pm - Unitarian Voices (LGBT+) (Taylor Room)



Join Rory Castle Jones, Lizzie Kingston Harrison and Kate Alderson Smith for a workshop exploring the power of sharing our Unitarian stories and archives.

This is your chance to find out more about the successful LGBT+ Unitarian Voices

project and how to host the exhibition in your own place of worship. If you have taken up our invitation to bring your own archival material to the Annual Meetings, you can share it with others during the workshop and hand it over to Kate for careful preservation and storage.

Please come along to celebrate our stories to find out how we can shape future projects together to preserve our unique and moving voices for generation to come.

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

5.30-6.30pm - Associate Members' Reception (York/Windsor Room)



All Associate Members attending these Meetings are invited to their own Reception before dinner. Associate Members? Who are they, I hear you ask. Briefly, they are Unitarians who are interested in the way the General Assembly is governed and

what their congregational quota payment pays for. They are prepared to pay an annual subscription, for which they receive early notice of some formal work of the GA, the Annual Report, two Newsletters per annum, speaking rights at the Annual Meetings, and this invitation to the Reception. If you are interested/curious, come and meet us – we look forward to meeting you and hope to persuade you to join us!

5.30-6.30pm - Safeguarding (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



“Safeguarding: Making purposeful safe space”

Guided by the GA Object and thirtyone:eight’s 10 safeguarding standards, I’ll show how GA HQ plans to develop our current arrangements. This

session might be of interest to GA member groups wishing to review their approach to safeguarding.

Speaker: Gavin Howell, GA Safeguarding Officer

DAY 2 - FRIDAY 05 APRIL

5.30-6.30pm - Unitarian College (Durham/Exeter Room)



“Unitarian College – Five Years On”

Staff and students are thrilled to share how Unitarian College has, over the past five years since our reincarnation, met the primary Strategic Aim to “develop a broad and balanced curriculum that

all Unitarians can access”. Not only has the college succeeded in maintaining 20 Ministerial Students at different stages across the nation, but we have also grown our hugely popular Lay Leadership programme seeing over 150 participants. We are also helping to ignite our Leaders of Tomorrow with inspiring Children & Families residential weekends and, together with the GA, will be offering a new Youth Leader Training course for adults who share our vision in seeing our Youth base grow. We are honoured to be able to continue serving into the next five years to help further your personal spiritual learning and provide the greater Unitarian community with profound leadership.

6.30-7.45pm - Dinner

7.45-8.45pm - Anniversary Service (County Suite)



“Tell everyone that this is your song:
Life calls us on!”

Preacher: Rev Ant Howe

8.45pm - Social Time

DAY 3 - SATURDAY 06 APRIL

7-8.45am - Breakfast

7.30-8.00am - Morning Worship: Meditation (Durham/Exeter Room)



“Taize and Sacred Singing - a meditative experience

Led by: Rosie Whiting

7.30-8.00am - Morning Worship - Communion (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



Zsolt Elekes, a Transylvanian Unitarian minister will lead this morning's Communion Service, offering the opportunity to think together about the transformative power of a value-based community and to embrace in a traditional

Transylvanian communion, a non-formal water communion, soul-communion or no communion at all. Come as you are, leave as we are!

8.45-10.10am - Plenary IV (County Suite)

10.10-10.40 - Coffee (don't forget to ensure you've checked out!)

DAY 3 - SATURDAY 06 APRIL

10.40-11.40am - Thriving Congregations (Taylor Room)



Thriving Congregations - a workshop on how we can help our congregations to grow, develop and thrive as centres of spirituality and community. How do we help, support and encourage great leaders, resilient congregations, and thriving communities to face the challenges in our world today?

Facilitated by: Simon Bland, Lizzie Kingston Harrison & Rev Dr Rory Castle Jones.

10.40-11.40am - Our Social Action Future (York/Windsor Room)



What do we care about and what do we want to do about it? We'll dive into results of the recent Social Action Audit and get inspired to take the next steps in Unitarian Social Action. See which issues are at the forefront of our minds, how much capacity we have within our congregations and the movement as a whole, and how we might best combine our efforts to have the most impact.

Speaker: Ann Howell, GA Social Action Officer

DAY 3 - SATURDAY 06 APRIL

10.40-11.40am - Youth (Canterbury/Stafford Room)



“Youth: supporting local provisions”

In this session I’ll showcase some of the new youth initiatives that have emerged over the past 12 months with an emphasis on how they came into being and my role in the process. I’ll also touch

on the new youth leader training – a collaboration between the GA and Unitarian College. This session might be of interest to those already running youth and family provisions as well as those groups that aspire to do so.

Speaker: Gavin Howell, GA Youth Officer

10.40-11.40am - Historical Society (Durham/Exeter Room)



“Essex Street Chapel in the Later Eighteenth Century”

The year 2024 marks 250 years since the founding of the Essex Street Chapel in London, the first avowedly Unitarian

congregation in the country, founded by Theophilus Lindsey. In this presentation Professor Ditchfield will be looking especially at the chapel’s members, adherents and supporters, including a number of women who were involved. He will also look at the work of Hannah Lindsey in providing much of the chapel’s pastoral work. He will examine the social make-up of the chapel’s membership, its regional diversity, and its ability to attract unlikely visitors and casual observers. Finally, he will comment on the nature of worship at the chapel and its importance in the nascent Unitarian movement. All will be welcome at this presentation.

Speaker: Professor Grayson Ditchfield, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Kent

11.40am-12pm - Break

12.20-1pm - Closing Session (County Suite)

1-2pm - Lunch

2pm - Departures

PLENARY SESSION AGENDA

President: Vince McCully

The detailed agenda for the Plenary Sessions will be distributed separately.

MOTIONS FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2024

The following motions have been submitted for consideration at the GA Annual Meetings 2024. Amendments may be submitted at any time prior to the final vote on a motion. However, it is in the best interests of clarity for amendments to be advised as far in advance as possible.

1. FROM TWELVE FULL MEMBERS

That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches recognises the rapidly growing significance of automation, algorithms, and artificial intelligence (AI) and encourages a balanced response mindful of both substantial benefits and threats. In particular it:

- i. calls upon individuals and congregations to study AI, algorithms and their societal impact, encourages Unitarian bodies to host and/or facilitate wider societal and philosophical conversations, and instructs the Executive Committee to urgently launch an AI Response Task Group to oversee this process and develop a study framework for it;
- ii. recognises that injustices, often affecting the already disadvantaged, are occurring through automation (AI based or otherwise), and calls upon Unitarians to challenge such injustices either directly or through support of organisations like the Just Algorithms Action Group.

2. FROM THE FOY SOCIETY

This General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches:

- a) Affirms its strong support for the NO MORE DEATHS campaign, promoted by the charity Inquest, which urges HM Government to establish a National Oversight Mechanism for

England and Wales – a new independent public body responsible for collating, analysing and following-up on recommendations arising from inquests, inquiries, official reviews and investigations into state-related deaths.

b) Instructs the Executive Committee to add the Unitarian General Assembly to the list of supporting bodies for this campaign.

c) Urges Unitarian churches, districts and individuals in England and Wales to support this worthwhile campaign by writing to local Members of Parliament, sharing information about it wherever possible and donating to the Inquest campaign appeal.

3. FROM LEWISHAM UNITARIANS

This General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches grieves and deplores the recent events in Israel and Gaza, notably the actions of Hamas in killing and abducting hundreds of people on 7 October 2023, and the subsequent responses by the Israeli Government which have resulted in huge destruction in Gaza and great harm to innocent civilians.

The Assembly resolves to:

- extend heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by occupation, terrorism, and violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories and appeals to Unitarian congregations to support the humanitarian relief efforts of medical and other charities (such as the Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and the Palestinian Red Crescent)
- call upon the UK Government to suspend all military cooperation with Israel throughout the conflict, including the cessation of arms sales by UK companies.

- oppose the continuing establishment of illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories, the institutionalised discrimination against Palestinians, and any attempt at ethnic cleansing within the Territories.
- urge political leaders to pursue an immediate halt to the conflict and a peaceful resolution based on principles of justice and the equal human rights of all the inhabitants of Israel and the Palestinian territories and an end to the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza in accordance with United Nations’ resolutions.

4. FROM STOCKTON UNITARIANS, CHORLEY UNITARIANS, FOY SOCIETY & NORTHERN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

That Clause 10 of the Constitution of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches be amended as follows:

Delete the following two paragraphs:

“There shall be a maximum of four ordinary motions accepted for debate by the Assembly. There shall be a maximum of one Emergency Motion (except in exceptional circumstances) accepted for debate by the Assembly.

In the event that more than four ordinary motions and/or more than one emergency motions are received a vote shall be taken at the beginning of the business meetings to determine which four ordinary and one emergency motions shall be accepted for debate.”

As per the Resolution at the 2018 Annual Meetings, the following administrative motions are not considered to be part of the maximum 4 ordinary motions.

ADMINISTRATIVE MOTIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5. The GA Executive Committee, in its capacity as Trustees of the General Assembly, proposes a motion to the General Assembly meetings in 2024:

That we make preparations for the General Assembly to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, subject to a Special Meeting to be held in late 2024.

6. The GA Executive Committee, in its capacity as Trustees of the General Assembly, proposes a motion to the General Assembly meetings in 2024:

That the Executive Committee and General Assembly staff proactively develop a matched-funding scheme to invest in local leadership.

7. That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches recognises the considerable contribution of Dorothy Hewerdine to Unitarians in the United Kingdom by naming her as an Honorary Member.

8. That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches recognises the considerable contribution of John and Celia Midgley to Unitarians in the United Kingdom by naming them as Honorary Members.

9. That the Report of the General Assembly Executive Committee and the Accounts of the General Assembly be received and adopted.

- 10.** That Shaw Gibbs be appointed as Auditors.
- 11.** That John Bates be appointed Honorary Treasurer for the year 2024-2025.
- 12.** That the thanks of the Assembly be given to Rev Dr Rob Whiteman for his service as Honorary Treasurer during the year 2023-2024, and to district association and local officers for their invaluable services.
- 13.** That greetings be sent to kindred churches and societies abroad.
- 14.** That the thanks of the Assembly be given to the members of the General Assembly staff and to all volunteers for their inestimable help in organising the Meetings.
- 15.** That Geoff Levermore be appointed President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches for the year 2024-2025.
- 16.** That Rev Jeffrey Bowes be appointed Vice-President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches for the year 2024-2025.
- 17.** That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches expresses its gratitude for the services provided by Vince McCully as President during the year 2023-2024.

DAY 1

THURSDAY 4 APRIL

UNITARIAN
ANNUAL MEETINGS
2024



| | | | | |
|--------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 2.00pm | Opening Worship (County Suite) | | | |
| 2.30pm | Break | | | |
| 2.40pm | Plenary I (County Suite) | | | |
| 3.40pm | Tea & Exhibitions (Winchester) | | | |
| 4.10pm | Worship ¹ Workshop A | Hibbert ² Trust | Social Justice ³ Speaker (County) | Lindsey ⁴ Press |
| 5.10pm | Break | | | |
| 5.30pm | National ¹ Unitarian Fellowship | Ethnic ² Heritage | Unitarian ³ Renewal Group | Unitarian ⁴ Christian Association |
| 6.30pm | Dinner | | | |
| 7.45pm | Keynote Speaker (County Suite) | | | |
| 8.45pm | Break | | | |
| 9.00pm | Social Time | | Peace Vespers (County Suite) | |

Room Colour
Code Key:

1) Taylor

2) York /
Windsor

3) Canterbury /
Stafford

4) Durham /
Exeter

YOUR NOTES

DAY 2

FRIDAY 5 APRIL

UNITARIAN
ANNUAL MEETINGS
2024



| | | | | |
|-------------|--|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 7.00-8.45am | Breakfast | | | |
| 7.30-8am | Morning Worship A: Meditation | | Morning Worship B: Devotional | |
| 8.45am | Plenary II (County Suite) | | | |
| 10.00am | Break – Choir (County) or Visit Stalls | | | |
| 10.45am | Plenary III (County Suite) | | | |
| 12.10pm | Break | | | |
| 12.30pm | Climate Justice ¹ | International Collaboration ² | Collaborative Session ³ | Torbay Project ⁴ |
| 1.30pm | Lunch | | | |
| 2.40pm | Executive Committee ¹ | Coastal Connections ² | IARF ³ | Music Society ⁴ |
| 3.40pm | Break | | | |
| 4.00pm | The Inquirer ¹ | Together in Meditation ² | Women’s League ³ | Worship Workshop B ⁴ |
| 5.00pm | Tea (Outside Winchester Room) | | | |
| 5.30pm | Unitarian Voices (LGBT+) ¹ | Associate Members ² | Safeguarding ³ | Unitarian College ⁴ |
| 6.30pm | Dinner | | | |
| 7.45pm | Anniversary Service | | | |
| 8.45pm | Social Time | | | |

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YOUR NOTES

DAY 3

SATURDAY 6 APRIL

UNITARIAN
ANNUAL MEETINGS

2024



| | | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 7.00-8.45am | Breakfast | | | |
| 7.30-8am | Morning Worship A: Meditation | | Morning Worship B: Communion | |
| 8.45am | Plenary IV (County Suite) | | | |
| 10.10am | Coffee (Outside Winchester Room) | | | |
| 10.40am | 1 Thriving Congrega- tions | 2 Our Social Action Future | 3 Youth | 4 Historical Society |
| 11.40am | Break | | | |
| 12.00pm | Closing Session (County Suite) | | | |
| 1.00pm | Lunch | | | |
| 2pm | Departures & Coaches (from outside the hotel) | | | |

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Windsor

3) Canterbury /
Stafford

4) Durham /
Exeter