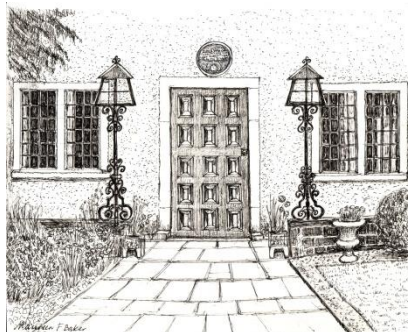


Founded 1662



Building 1694

Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel Chesterfield

Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel, Elder Way, Chesterfield S40 1UR
Tel: 01246 554506 Website: www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk
General email: info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk
Registered charity No.220091

In the light of truth and the warmth of love, we gather to seek, to sustain, to share.

Newsletter November/December 2025

Welcome to our Newsletter

Details of services and leaders for 2025

Services are usually held on the second Sunday of each month and start at 3pm. All are welcome.

9 November	Rev. Maria Pap	21 December	Rev Maria Pap
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***Please note that the Christmas Carol Service this year will be held on 21 December 2025.**

The January 2026 service will be on Sunday 12th January at 3pm.

Christmas Carol Service

This year's Chapel Christmas service has been moved one week later to December 21st due to a clash of dates with Maria. Unfortunately, this means the Aurora ladies choir are unable to muster sufficient singers to perform on this new date - however all is not lost! Cantiamo (who rehearse in the Chapel regularly) have kindly agreed to step in and sing. They are a brilliant group of 3 singers plus piano (Andrew) and will light up the service! Come along with family and friends and enjoy a great start to Christmas: Sunday December 21st at 3pm followed by seasonal refreshments.



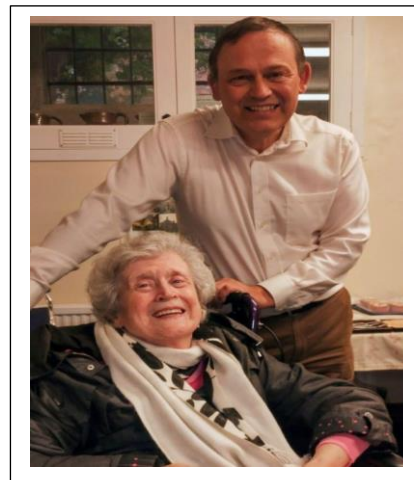
Lunchtime concerts in the Chapel

The popular Chapel Saturday lunchtime concerts continue on November 15th with a concert of chamber music featuring the Kell Wind Trio. The final concert of the year is the annual Christmas concert on December 20th performed by Cantiamo. The concerts run 11.45am to 12.30pm admission is free, with a retiring collection.

Don't miss MusicWork Vocal Ensemble: 'Carols by Candlelight' in the Chapel on Wednesday December 17th at 7.30pm. Admission is £10, including mulled wine and mince pies. See Andrew for reservations or further information.

Heritage Open Days at the Chapel

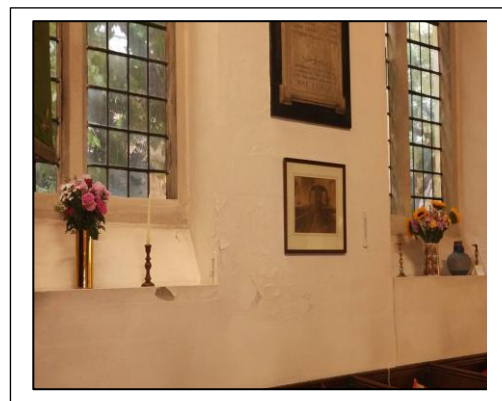
The Heritage Open Days on Friday 11th September and Saturday 12th September were a great success. with 85 visitors on the first day alone. New bunting and beautiful flowers bedecked our handsome chapel. Those who attended came to look around the chapel, and to ask questions about Unitarianism, about the building (this year's theme was architecture) and sometimes about personal connections they have to Elder Yard.



Elaine's welcome return at the heritage weekend service



Alan and Andrew



Elder Yard Trustee Meeting

The next Elder Yard trustee meeting has been postponed to w/c 17/11/25. If you wish to request an item for inclusion at the next meeting, please contact Ann on tillypretoria2@btinternet.com



Coffee Mornings

The last coffee morning of the year will be on 11th December at 10am with a Christmas focus to it. It would be lovely to see you there. We will have a stall of donated items for sale, to hopefully raise some more money for the chapel. If you have any unused gifts or barely used items for the stall, please bring them to the November Chapel Service or contact Sarah at sarah.sheila18@gmail.com or Ann at tillyprestoria2@btinternet.com

Any donations of baked or bought goods would be very welcome. Please contact Sarah on sarah.sheila18@gmail.com if you wish to donate or have any questions.

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches – National News & Views. The General Assembly explains “Our congregations are autonomous democratic organisations, led by the members. Each elects its own leadership annually and decide their own vision and plans. The culture and ethos of each congregation is unique, while belonging to our larger family.” The national website address is <https://unitarian.org.uk> and the information in their regular electronic newsletter.

At the moment the website does not seem to be as up to date as it used to be and I am unclear about the reason for this.

Innovation Fund – do we want help in developing the role of Elder Yard in the community?

Development grants, through head office, have been awarded to Unitarian communities who have a desire to make changes that will contribute to sustaining their fellowship, and their role in the community. The grants are £5k or less and are aimed at Chapels/Churches running pilot projects or undertaking more research. We can get support in thinking about change and development, by attending a workshop run by the Programme Manager. He uses the Three Horizons Framework as a model of imagining the future we want and how we might get there. Coming up with ideas can sometimes be easy, but are they feasible... or not ambitious enough?

A Letter from Liz Slade – Chief Officer

In the news section of the national website there is a letter from Liz Slade in which she provides a summary of what she has been up to, including attending meetings, conferences and podcasts. The last paragraph of the letter strikes a chord with how we all can sometimes feel, and it is particularly resonant in the unsettling times we are experiencing globally and nationally. It also links with the update from the Innovation Fund above.

“I think often of the tensions our movement is inhabiting. That it’s easy in a tiny congregation to feel that we are trying to do something that people are no longer interested in, but that it’s simultaneously true that the appetite for communities and practises of meaning, depth, and belonging is greater than ever. Our free inquiring religion means we are primed to adapt

to the needs around us without letting go of our core ethos, and I'm glad to be alongside everyone who is bravely entering into this work that has no right answers!"

GG, or 'Making somewhere better than it was before'

Guerrilla Gardening or, as I prefer to call it, 'making somewhere better than it was before'. Anyone can do this. You just find a neglected place rather than starting from scratch. All you need is a trowel, fork, secateurs, some green sacks & perhaps something to kneel on! Sadly, the weeds must go. You can scatter seeds such as country garden, butterfly & and bee seeds or plant bulbs such as daffodils or snowdrops. Hebe plants are good as you can cut a bit off and plant it in a pot at home and it will soon develop roots. Water is an issue without a car. I buy those larger cheap containers of water so the nearer the project to home the better as they are quite heavy!

I enjoy doing this as I get a sense of satisfaction. When I go back to Essex, I often check on the Hebe plants that I started off as cuttings. Most of them have survived & are doing a good job. I have my sight on a few places in Chesterfield!

Kindly submitted by Philip Mansbridge



Unitarians of note

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810 to 1865)
Author, biographer, social campaigner

Elizabeth Gaskell was born Elizabeth Stevenson in Chelsea on 29 September 1810. Although she was born into a comfortable middle-class family her observations of how others lived in poverty, the principles of her Unitarian faith, and her political awareness meant that through her later writing she stirred the conscience of others who lived a more affluent life and who had the power to influence positive change. In total she wrote 65 published short stories and 11 books, which include a biography of her friend Charlotte Bronte. If you haven't read any of her books (I haven't), you may still be aware of her work through the BBC series adaptation of Cranford, and an ITV series adaptation of North and South.

Going back to the beginning, her father was a treasury official and journalist. Her mother Elizabeth sadly died when Elizabeth was three years old and she was sent to live with her mother's sister, Hannah Lumb, in Knutsford, Cheshire. In spite of this life changing event, Elizabeth appeared to thrive and she referred to her aunt as "more than a mother".

The family were Unitarian by faith and Elizabeth married William Gaskell in 1832. William was the assistant minister at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel in Manchester. Elizabeth taught at the Sunday School, both scripture and reading and writing and helped with supporting the poor. They had three daughters and then a son, but their son sadly died when he was nine months old. After having some short stories published her husband encouraged her to write a novel, mainly as a distraction to her grief.

Elizabeth could see the terrible working and living conditions of many in Manchester and the high cost of food. The city was at the forefront of industrial development where the mill owners and business men became extremely wealthy, at the cost of the well-being of their workers. Elizabeth was also influenced by the political context of Manchester, including the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 (referred to as the bloodiest political event on English soil in the 19th century) and the Chartist Movement in the 1830s and 1840s, which was the first working class movement for political reform. Although digressing a little, we know that Emma Holmes, who was born in Chesterfield in 1839 and who was baptised at Elder Yard, used to walk miles with her ropemaker father to attend Chartist meetings. She eventually emigrated to Australia and under her married name of Miller was a well-known activist for universal suffrage and social justice, and is still referred to as the mother of the Australian Labour Party. Back to the UK, there was also the Anti Corn Law League 1838 to 1846, which was an influential middle - class pressure group that campaigned for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

It is reported that Elizabeth's first novel, *Mary Barton* (A Tale of Manchester Life) provoked widespread discussion as it highlighted the poverty of the Northern cities and was sympathetic to the plight of the families. Charles Dickens contacted her and invited her to write for the periodicals he edited. She wrote varied fiction for these periodicals, including *Cranford*, and was known as Mrs Gaskell.

"Mrs Gaskell" had another daughter, and was busy with her family, social life and charity work. The Gaskell Society note:

"Elizabeth was an active humanitarian; her novels convey many messages about the need for social reconciliation, for better understanding between employers and workers and between the respectable and the outcasts of society. Her writing was carefully researched and she took particular care in reproducing northern dialects accurately."

What she wrote about didn't always go down well with her husband's Unitarian congregation, partly because of her depiction of illegitimacy and prostitution and also because of how she challenged the traditional view of women's roles in society.

The Gaskell Society explain “She was at the same time, a caring wife and mother, attractive and well-liked. As was in any company, she was chatty, sociable and a prolific writer of letters”. Sadly, Mrs Gaskell died suddenly on 12 November 1865 and she was buried at Brook Street Chapel, in Knutsford, Cheshire, where you can still visit her grave. There is also Elizabeth Gaskell’s House, her restored historic house and museum at 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester, that celebrates the life and literature of this important Victorian Writer.



Portrait of Elizabeth as a young woman in 1832, by William John Thomson

Did you know?

In November

1936, 12 November. Production started at the Coalite Plant in Bolsover. The Plant was commissioned by the Derbyshire Coalite Company. It aimed to produce a smokeless fuel designed to combat air pollution and smog. It was the largest smokeless fuel manufacturing plant in the world, employed 200 people and helped secure the jobs of 400 miners at the neighbouring Bolsover colliery. Unfortunately for staff and locals, the processing and the product had a powerful “chemically” smell, clinging to clothes etc. The plant closed in September 2004, which was the end of an era for the communities around it. The regeneration of the location started in 2016, with decontamination of the land.

In December

1962, 6th December town centre Redevelopment Plans. Proposals were announced for a new look pedestrianised Chesterfield town centre, costing over £4 million. It would turn the centre into “one big department store”. The local Chronicle said that the changes between High Street and New Beetwell Street would spell “the end of the ancient Shambles, the present Market Hall, and the narrow streets between Low Pavement and High Street”. It seems the plans weren’t very popular and thankfully most of the old streets, features and buildings remain.

Community Support in Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire

Community Services that can help you and the community.

*-If Philip's interest is not exactly for you, but gardening in a more conventional setting could be, here are three **Community Gardens** in and around Chesterfield. They provide inspiration, and contribute to physical and emotional well-being.*

- **Inspire Community Garden on Alexandra Road West S40 1NP.** Go to www.transitionchesterfield.org.uk for more information or email inspirecommunitygarden@gmail.com

- **Hunloke Community Garden, Church Street North S40 2TF.** Tel 01246 234739.

- **Holme Hall Unite Community Garden, Wardgate Way, Chesterfield S40 4UY.**

Go to www.holmehallunite.co.uk for more information or email holmehallunite@gmail.com

***Chesterfield Litter Pickers**

"A volunteer run community group helping clean the streets, greenspaces, parks and waterways of our beautiful town." The group has a facebook page or alternatively email Chesterfieldlitterpickers@outlook.com

To suggest a Community Service for inclusion contact: sarah.sheila18@gmail.com

Events Coming up in Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire

In November

From Saturday 15/11/25 to Sunday 30/11/25

*Chesterfield Parish Church Christmas Tree Festival

Free entry. Go to www.crookedspire.org.uk to check the times each day.

From 23/11/25 to 24/12/25

**Santa's Grotto* at The Assembly Rooms above the Chesterfield Market Hall.

Please check chesterfield.gov website for dates and times of opening

Sunday 23/11/25

*Christmas Lights Switch On.

The big reveal occurs at 5.15 pm.

In December

21/12/25

*Ashgate Hospice Santa's Fun Run at Queen's Park

Go to www.ashgatehospice.org.uk for more details.

On 31/12/25, 9.15 am to 4.20 pm

*Derbyshire Archaeology Day at The Winding Wheel in Chesterfield

Book tickets at www.chesterfieldtheatres.co.uk/shows/derbyshire

Reflection and Inspirational Thoughts

Quotes from Mahatma Gandhi

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony”

“Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment”

Any contributions for the newsletter may be sent by email to: sarah.sheila18@gmail.com

Continued thanks to our chapel officers:

Chairman: Alan Shutt Secretary: Ann Shutt Treasurer: Martin Barrett

Organist and Building Manager: Andrew Marples

Please see any of the above if you need help, have news or require information about the Chapel.

Contact Numbers

Andrew Marples: 01246 211655

Ann & Alan Shutt: 01246 554506

Martin Barrett: 01246 567674

Website: www.chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk

General email: info@chesterfield-unitarians.org.uk

Holy and beautiful is the custom which brings us together in the presence of the most high; to face our ideals; to remember our loved ones; to give thanks; to confess and forgive; to be enlightened and to be strengthened.

