



Issue 13 - Spring 2026

The Associate Newsletter



Dear Friends and Associates of Unitarian College,

In this spring season of renewal and growth, Unitarian College is continuing to blossom, which was nowhere as well celebrated as at the General Assembly General Meetings earlier this month. All 23 former and current Ministry students who have been through our Ministry programme since 2019, were called up onto the stage, of which five have recently completed their studies and been newly ordained/inducted into their new chapels, and four others who have been newly accepted as Ministry students having begun their training in February.

Our Lay Leadership programme has also been buzzing with great energy, with a new group of Foundation students having just finished their assessments, and a new Foundation session starting up in September. An Intermediate residential at The Nightingale Centre will be held in July this summer, and an Advanced Course is starting in Jan 2027.

Our second UniYouth event held this past March is already bursting at the seams, as 51x children aged 7-15yo, some with their parents, descended upon The Nightingale Centre for a fun “Thrills & Spills” weekend. Look out for notices for our next session, “We Are All Made of Stardust” in October 2026.



As always, I thank you for your ongoing support to help *us grow our faith from the inside* as donations from individuals, congregations and districts are our only source of income, and we couldn't have grown as we have without you.

I wish you all a lovely spring season, and we hope to catch up with you soon.

Warmest regards,

Helen, Director, Unitarian College

07494 495743

General Assembly of Unitarians and Free Christian Churches Annual Meetings

The college was very much in the spotlight this year at the General Assembly Annual Meetings held earlier this month. Five of our Ministry students - Rev Tina Gandhi, Rev Kieren Mardle-Moss, Rev Robert Foreman, Rev Janine Sim and Rev Gavin Byrne - have completed their studies, recently been ordained/inducted into their new chapels, and were officially signed onto the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Roll of Ministers. Along with all the former and current Ministry students who have been a part since we started in 2019, we created quite an impressive line-up on the stage where over £15,000 was raised in that moment for the Ministry Fund.

Pictured: Eva Kortekaas, a Ministry student from the Netherlands, carries our newly updated Unitarian College banner.



Our special workshop was packed to the brim, with inspiring testimony from students and parents from our events and courses. Julie Page spoke as a parent and Youth Leader about UniYouth, Lay Leaders Maurizio Carolino-Rackett (Foundation), Emma Roberts-Jones (Intermediate) and Julie Wolstenholme (Advanced), along with Christina Coopland, a Ministry student in her final year of training, all passionately spoke about their personal journeys through the courses and into Unitarian leadership.

Rev Melda Grantham was given a tearful send-off as she retires from the college at the end of this month after more than two years of service with the college. [A word about what she is planning to do in retirement?? 😊]



A special mention goes out to our January Foundation group who had only met through the online meetings, so made a fantastic effort to attend the Annual Meetings to connect in person - what a wonderful group of new, young voices taking our beloved faith out into the world.

Pictured: Anje Neutel, ???, Josh Johnson, Maurizio Carolino-Rackett, Katie Teshla, Megan Daniels, Tomos Frere Jones, ??? and Sebastian Saenz de Santa Maria Aguilar.

Ministry Student Update



Our biggest news this spring is that our five newly ordained/inducted Ministers were recently accepted onto the Ministerial Roll pictured from L to R:

Rev Gavin Byrne had his induction/ordination just two weeks ago at Dublin Unitarians.

Rev Tina Gandhi was ordained last October at Walmsley Unitarian Chapel, where she will be serving as Minister starting this May, making history as the first Hindu Unitarian Minister in England.

Rev Kieren Mardle-Moss was ordained last November at Belper Unitarian Chapel where he is now the first Minister dedicated solely to the congregation since 1952.

Rev Janine Sim recently had her induction in January at St Mark's Unitarian Church in Edinburgh where she is now serving as Minister.

Rev Robert Foreman was ordained last November at Padiham Nazareth Chapel, which his third great-grandfather Eli Whitehead and his father Smith, helped to build as early followers of Joseph Cooke, the Methodist preacher who became a Unitarian. Rob will now serve as Minister to three congregations in the Merseyside Unitarian Ministry Partnership: Park Lane Unitarian Chapel, Bryn; Cairo Street Unitarian Chapel, Warrington; and Matthew Henry Chapel, Chester Unitarians.



The cycle continues as we welcomed four new Ministry students, **Jacqueline Woodman, Kyle McDonald, Sian Murray and Chamindra Weerawardhana**, following their successful interviews and applications last year. They began with their Residential Orientation last February and you may have seen them charging around in their new purple hoodies at the General Assembly Annual Meetings earlier this month, as they joined the other Ministry students as a huge part of the organisation. From welcoming and registration, all the technology support, to directing traffic amongst all the workshops and plenaries, they took it in stride with smiles, high energy and overall good cheer.

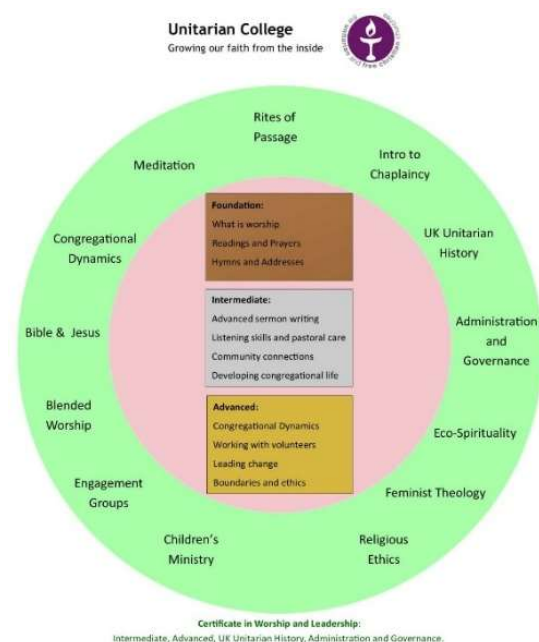
What is particularly pleasing is that Jacky, Kyle and Sian have come through our Advanced Lay Leadership course which is a significant moment not only for them, but for all those individuals and congregations who have supported them along the way - and is a moment for us to celebrate as a denomination.

All our current and new Ministry students will be attending Ministry Residential weeks in May in North Wales, September at Charney Manor in Oxfordshire, and their popular Carol Service Residential held at The Nightingale Centre in December. They will also attend *Ministry in the Making*, another Residential week held in July at The Nightingale Centre, created to bring together Ministry students and Ministers in their probationary years for collegiality, formation and mutual support. This year the theme is Conflict Resolution.

If you have heard the call to apply for Unitarian Ministry training, please join us for an online workshop being held on 1st July where we will review the application and interview process. Please write Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk to get put on the list and receive the zoom link.

We look forward to meeting you!
Rev Ant Howe Senior Tutor

Lay Leadership Update



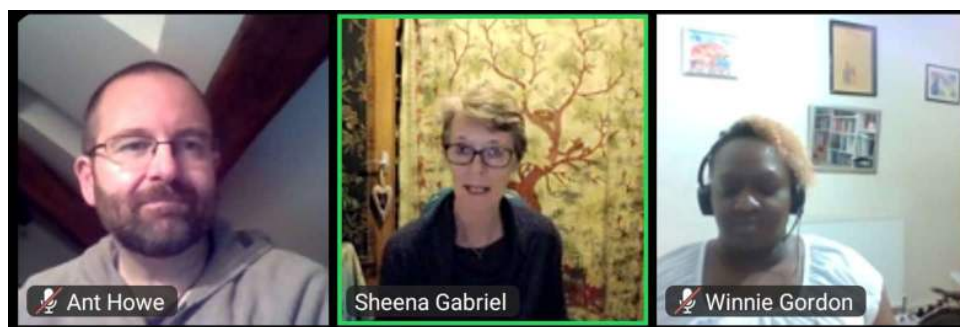
Unitarian College provides training for those just starting the process of worship leadership and provides a whole training pathway through to recognised Lay Leader status with the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches (GA). To become a fully recognised Lay Leader within Unitarianism students are required to complete courses at Foundation, Intermediate (by invitation) and Advanced level (also by invitation), to submit assignments, lead worship, and complete safeguarding training before applying for status.

We will be hosting a Leadership Inquiry Event on 3rd June via zoom where you are encouraged to ask any questions about the various forms of Unitarian leadership and understand the difference between Ministry and Lay Leadership. Please write Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk to get put on the list and receive the zoom link.

Foundation Course

We have just completed our online winter Foundation Course with a roster of 15x students sharing their unique voices and starting to lead worship across the country. Many from this youthful and dynamic group

decided to attend the General Assembly Annual Meetings, so that they could meet each other in person and what a stir they caused! If you missed this last round, we will be going straight onto our next Foundation Course starting 14th September 2026.



Intermediate Course

We will be holding an Intermediate Lay Leadership Course in July, the first Residential long weekend held at The Nightingale Centre. Attendance to the Intermediate level is by invitation only, going to those who show the most promise in completing and continuing onto the Advanced Course. As we held two Foundation Courses in the past eight months, the July course will be over-subscribed, so we have added a second Intermediate Course in December this year.

Advanced Course

Attendance to the Advanced Lay Leadership Course is also by invitation only and our current Advanced Course students continue to write their assignments and deliver ever more professional services around the country. We hope to see several of these bright sparks sign onto the General Assembly Lay Leader Register by next spring. Our next session at the Advanced level, will begin in January 2027.

Children and Families Update



Our second [UniYouth](#) “Thrills & Spills” event was held this past March where we welcomed 51x children aged 6-15yo, with several of their parents. They shared The Nightingale Centre with meals, an excursion to Alton Towers and an Intergenerational worship in the Great Hucklow Unitarian chapel, but had separate evening programmes for two age groups, 6-11yo's with their parents/carers, and unaccompanied 11-15yo's housed in a separate wing.

For the past three Youth Programmes, we have had an Advanced Lay Leader student lead the Intergenerational Service as one of their assignments. This past March, Julie Wolstenholme, led a fantastic service about facing our fears, and all the children were engaged to help. This is how we strengthen our Unitarian denomination together by bridging groups and generations.

Save the date: “We Are All Stardust” *UniYouth* weekend, 2nd - 4th October 2026.

Transylvania Trip for Unitarian Teens

The Religious Society of Czech Unitarians and the Hungarian Church in Transylvania have organised a three-way trip this summer in Transylvania. Transylvania is a minority Hungarian speaking region of what is now politically Romania and is also, arguably, the birthplace of Unitarianism. In 1565 Ferenc David first started expressing his doubts about the validity of the trinity.

The trip will take place between Sunday, 23rd to Saturday, 29th August, flying from London Luton to Cluj-Napoca (known as Kolozsvár in Hungarian). We will gather in Kolozsvár and spend the first night in dormitory accommodation in the Theological seminary where we will be joined by nine young Unitarians from Transylvania and nine from the Czech Republic. The following day we will head by bus into the (stunningly beautiful) mountains in the north of Transylvania (journey time 2.5 hours approx) to stay at a hostel for five nights returning to Kolozsvár to fly home to UK. We will have a full programme - worship, outdoor activities, cultural sharing, touring the area, undertaking some voluntary work for Unitarian communities. For more details, get in touch via Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

International Work



In March, College Director, Helen Mason, travelled to Cape Town, South Africa for a meeting of the Pan African UU leadership conference. Helen was working with leaders from Unitarian congregations in Cape Town, Durban, Burundi and Kenya to consider the development needs of Unitarian leaders in Africa and make exciting plans for the future. We were also pleased to attend the ordination of Rev Gur Mouamba as a community minister in Cape Town.



Our Senior Tutor, Rev Ant Howe, also travelled to Prague in March where he has been helping to offer Ministry Training and Lay Training to students of the Unitarian Academy there - the training facility of the Religious Society of Czech Unitarians (NSCU). The students learn together, cook together, and engage in times of deep sharing and learning. All of their training is offered in both Czech and English. Ant was able to share some sessions on the inner life of the Minister, general theology, and Unitarian theology. He also had the great privilege of leading a joint Sunday Service for the two Unitarian congregations in Prague, plus students of the Academy, where he shared a sermon entitled 'Is there a right and a wrong way to be religious?'. Ant has visited Prague many times and cherishes our links with the Czech Unitarians.

Upcoming Events & Courses

Have You Thought About Becoming a Unitarian Leader?





Unitarian Leadership Inquiry Session
Wednesday, 3rd June 2026, 7pm-8:30pm
 Want to learn about various forms of leadership in Unitarianism, the difference between Lay Leadership, professional Ministry and what a Unitarian Minister does? Join us for this online zoom session held by The General Assembly to chat with their staff, the Ministry Interview Panel and Unitarian College staff. For people who are at an early stage of considering ministry or other leadership possibilities.

Ministry Application Workshop
Wednesday, 1st July 2026, 7pm-8:30pm
 Have you heard the call to apply for Unitarian Ministry? Join us for this informative online zoom session, held by The General Assembly, for people who are hoping to make an application this year. Chat with representatives from General Assembly staff, the Interview Panel and Unitarian College staff, to review the application and interview process, and take a more detailed look at the training schedule and financial support.

To book your place on either or both sessions, please contact us at: Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

 www.unitarian.org.uk


Lay Worship Leaders Training Day

Saturday 13th June 2026
Walmsley Unitarian Chapel, Bolton BL7 9PR
10am to 4pm


What the day will cover...

- Questions that inspire
- What draws us to this work, why do we do it?
- Grounding – How do we stay rooted in Unitarianism and connected to our source?
- Changing Worship – How is our witness evolving, how do we meet new needs?
- Belonging – How can we build teamwork and a deeper sense of community?
- Growth – What pathways exist for training, courses, and paid roles?
- Challenges – What obstacles do we face?
- Sharing Strength – How can we pool resources and collegiality to keep improving?

Training will be delivered by the Unitarian College.
 If you wish to attend please email:
Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk and
annemills2019@yahoo.com
by 31st May 2026 at the latest.
 The training includes lunch, is free and is kindly being funded by the North and East Lancashire Unitarian Mission (NELUM).

Unitarian College
 Growing our faith from the inside 

Lay Worship & Leadership



Are you inspired to lead Unitarian communities with your unique voice and want to improve the quality of your worship? The Lay Worship & Leadership pathway (formerly WSC) is led by experienced Unitarian Ministers over three courses, starting with:

THE FOUNDATION COURSE covering the following topics:

- Exploring theology & elements of Unitarian worship
- Writing sermons and addresses
- Choosing hymns and music
- Improving creative storytelling for all ages

Held via eight, 2-hour (19:00-21:15), online zoom sessions as follows:

- 16th Sept 2026
- 23rd Sept 2026
- 30th Sept 2026
- 7th Oct 2026
- 14 Oct 2026


BREAK

- 28th Oct 2026
- 4th Nov 2026
- 11 Nov 2026

BREAK

- 5th Dec 2026 - Final Assessment & next steps

The cost of the course is £150 and participants are encouraged to approach their chapels and districts to help with funding. Please contact to register: Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

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"We Are All Stardust"

uniYouth weekend

2nd - 4th October 2026
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

"UniYouth" welcomes children of all ages 7-14yo. They will share The Nightingale Centre with meals, excursions and worship, but will have separate programmes for two age groups: 7-11yo's with their parents/carers and unaccompanied 11-14yo's housed separately.

ALL UNDER 18'S ARE FREE OF CHARGE FOR FULL BOARD!
 Accompanying parents/carers Full Board cost is £220.

Please register your interest at:
Admin@unitarian-college.org.uk

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How You Can Help



Unitarian College could not function without the generous financial support given to us by individuals, congregations, districts and Unitarian trusts. Donations from individuals, congregations, districts and small funds are our only source of income as we do not receive any overall grant funding.

We are very grateful for all those who support our work and who believe in our vision of 'growing our faith from the inside'. The work and scope of the college has scaled and, with that, our costs. We continue to be extremely grateful to the anonymous benefactor who match funds all your donations, so everything you can give is worth double to us.

If you feel you could support our work with a one-off or regular donation, below are our details:
Bank Account: 00032558
Sort Code: 40-52-40

Our Objective

Unitarian College is a national College providing training, education and development for all Unitarians, including Ministry Students, Lay Leaders, Adults and Young People. Our College is not based in one place as our training and courses take place in variety of locations and online, so that all of us can access them. ***Thank You For Your Support!***