

A visitor's guide to Bury Unitarian Church



We would be delighted to show you round our beautiful building, but if you'd rather wander around by yourself, this guide will help you make sure you see everything. Please don't hesitate to ask questions!

The worship area (sometimes called the sanctuary)

As you enter the building, you will see the worship area directly in front of you. This is where we hold our Sunday services, and where rites of passage take place.

Your attention will probably be drawn to the sculpture above the dais: this is called 'People Praising' and was designed for us by sculptor Liz Mulchineck: it represents a congregation joining together.

The table below the sculpture is not an altar, as it might be in some churches: it is occasionally used for communion.

You will also see a textile on the pulpit: the chalice design is an international symbol of Unitarianism and you will find it in many Unitarian meeting places.

The banner, designed and made by congregation member Rene Hollos, shows our stained glass windows and the sculpture on one side, and the People Praising sculpture on the other.

Our piano (once described as 'the best piano in Bury') and organ are both fine instruments, and are wonderful assets for our worship, as well as being used in concerts.

Moving back towards the main doors, you can see the bell which hung in the first building on this site (1719) and a plaque from the pulpit in the same building.

In the worship area during Heritage Open Days, you can also see booklets containing three years' worth of 'Bygone Times' articles from our monthly newsletter, compiled by Betty Kenyon: these are a fascinating record.

If you want to read more about the history of Unitarianism and where it fits in the religious framework of the UK, you can flip through an MA dissertation on that subject.

And if you want to know what we talk about in our weekly worship, you can see Orders of Service from the last few years: you may find some of the subjects intriguing.

At the back of the room you will see an exhibition of photographs by members of our Camera Club.

The worship area is also available for quiet prayer and reflection, or to light a candle

The vestibule

Sometimes an overlooked space, the vestibule is where we greet people who enter the building. Of note in the vestibule is the list of ministers of the three churches which have now combined in this church, from 1662 to the present day.

You can also see our hymn books: known to everyone as ‘the red book’, ‘the green book’ and ‘the purple book’, you’re welcome to browse through these and get an idea of what we sing about on Sundays.

You will also see a display of various leaflets about our faith and our church. These are helpful and informative, but please do feel free to ask for more details: Unitarianism is home to people of many beliefs and none.

You can also pick up a free copy of our national newspaper “The Inquirer”: the world’s oldest non-conformist newspaper.

If you’d also like to sign the visitors’ book, we would love that.

Upstairs

Whether you make your way upstairs using the lift (installed in 2017) or the stairs, you will find yourself in our spectacularly light and airy hall. Over the years this room has been used for youth activities, ballroom dancing, football, yoga, parties and receptions, quizzes, concerts, plays, meals, various other gatherings.

At the near end of the room you will see display boards with various historical documents.

Remembrance.

At the far end of the room you will see one of our prized possessions: the roll of honour naming all of the members of Bury Unitarian Church who served in World War One. Their names are also to be found in the Book of Remembrance, which stands near to the Roll of Honour.

You may also like to visit the war memorial in the garden, as you leave our church.

Back downstairs

If you leave the hall by the door at the back, you will pass the kitchen, and the 'primary' which we use for our children's activities.

Downstairs in the corridor you will pass the side doors to the worship area, the vestry, and the toilets, and you will be able to see photographs (by Alan Foster) of our sibling churches at Ainsworth, Rivington, Stand (Whitefield), Walmsley, and Padiham, and a watercolour of our building in 1998.

You can then make your way into the lounge, where, on a Sunday after the service, and on various other occasions, we share tea, coffee and conversation. The lounge has an oil painting of the third church to stand on this site.



You are welcome at our church.

You are welcome here whatever your age, your gender, your ethnic or religious background, or your sexuality.

You are welcome here with your doubts, your fears, and your questions.

You are welcome here whether you have come alone, or with friends, family, or with another group.

You are welcome here wherever you have come from, and for however long you wish to stay.

You are welcome here no matter what.

You are welcome to join us for worship on Sunday mornings at 11.15am.

You can find out more about us by speaking to someone, by phone on 0161 761 3785, by email at buryunitarianchurch@gmail.com, on our website at www.bury-unitarian-church.org.uk, or on our Facebook page (Bury Unitarians).

If you would like to know more about Unitarianism in general, there is excellent information available online at www.unitarian.org.uk.