



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2017

What's On...

Sunday 2nd July, 11am-noon
'Liberating Labels'
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 5th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 9th July, 11am-noon
'Home and its Absence'
Led by Jeannene Powell & Sarah T

Sunday 9th July, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 12th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 13th July, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul':
Now You See Me, Now You Don't
led by Brian and Sarah

Sunday 16th July, 11am-noon
'A Sense of Self'
Led by Sarah Tinker & Jeannene Powell

Sunday 16th July, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 16th July, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 19th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 23rd July, 11am-noon
**'Anniversary Celebration:
Our Unitarian Identity'**
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
**This will include a charity
collection for 'Action on Disability'**

Sunday 23rd July, 2.00-5.00pm
Inclusive Tea Dance
led by Rachel Sparks Dance

Wednesday 26th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 30th July, 11am-noon
'Modern Tribes'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Identity

A Message from our Minister

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those whose lives have been disrupted and destroyed by the Grenfell Tower fire, and by the recent terror attacks on London and Westminster Bridges, at the Manchester Arena and outside the mosque in Finsbury Park.



Most of us are fortunate enough to lead quiet and relatively uneventful lives. And we know that it is pure chance that can change a life forever: where we happen to live, what night we choose to go out, which route home we take. One of the aspects of these recent tragedies that has most affected me is the thought of not knowing what has happened to those I love, but fearing the worst. Emergency services need to be certain before they identify those who have died and the long wait is agonising for those involved. In the tower block fire there may be victims who will never be identified, perhaps because fire has destroyed their bodies beyond all recognition, perhaps also because their names were never listed as residents. London, like so many busy cities, is home to people who on paper do not exist. They cannot be identified. Their loved ones may never hear what happened to them.

Those who escaped from the fire have lost all their possessions. A friend who had survived a house fire many years ago, described the on-going sadness of recalling all that had been lost: the photos, little mementos, the treasured books, the clothes. Such losses may seem insignificant when compared with loss of life or health, but our possessions, memories and shared stories shape our identities. They help to explain who we are. Once a shocking event has happened in life, we are shaped by that; both as individuals and as a society.

My hope is that our society will change for the better. It is a disgrace that publicly owned housing has caused the deaths of so many people and has irreparably hurt so many lives. May this dreadful event mark a turning point in our living together. Let's work towards a world that cares for everyone equally, that values all lives equally, that recognises the unique identity of each and every person. Let's remind ourselves and one another that each and every life is precious.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'Mostly it is loss that teaches us about the worth of things.' - Arthur Schopenhauer

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Essex Church: Some Reflections on Its History' by Howard Hague * Jim's New Grandson * Poems by John, Brian, and Eliz * 'Working on our Welcome: LGBTQ+ Inclusion Training' Report * 'Grenfell Tower Service' reflections by Jenny Moy * Prayer for Grenfell Tower by Sarah Tinker * 'Ageing, Its Gifts and Possibilities' by John Hands * Inclusive Tea Dance * Mini-Wordsearch * Unitarian Women's Group * 'Not Just Bystanders' address by Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians are a community of kindred souls who meet each week at Essex Church in Notting Hill Gate to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey. We are proud to be part of a worldwide and historic liberal religious tradition.

Our main activity is Sunday worship and we hold a service each week at 11am. All are welcome. Services are usually themed and include readings from a variety of sources, prayers, music, singing, stillness, and a short sermon. Our children's leaders provide an alternative programme of activities for younger people.

Small-group activities are another key part of our programme. We offer courses and one-off workshops exploring spiritual and religious matters and considering life's meaning together with others on the spiritual journey.

If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell or suffering in some way and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please contact our minister.



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
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Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Essex Church Celebration Anniversary Lunch

After the Service on Sunday 23rd July



Make sure you've put July 23rd in your diary. That's the day we'll be celebrating the 40th anniversary of our church building's opening, with a special service and shared cold buffet lunch. To streamline feeding everyone, could we all **bring cold food only**, in a box or on a cling-filmed plate or bowl, from which it can be served. It would help to have all food clearly labelled in advance with its ingredients.

It would be good to have some named volunteers in advance - to help set up the table and display the food, to help serve food and drinks, and to help clear up afterwards. Please have a word with Melody (phone 0775 209 1501) or Sarah to put your name down as a volunteer. If anyone knows someone who would appreciate being paid to work on this day, we've had a kind donation for this purpose. Just let Sarah know.

Unitarians Marching at London Pride

Saturday 8th July 2017, 1.00-4.30pm



There will be a Unitarian group marching once again at London Pride this year (Saturday 8th July). It'd be great to have a few of us from Essex Church to join with fellow Unitarians from across the district and represent our LGBTQ+ inclusive religious community. Numbers are strictly limited and everyone who intends to march with our banner must have a special wristband (our organiser, Ed, only has 40 to distribute) so please let Jane or Sarah know ASAP if you definitely intend to come and we'll ask him to reserve one for you.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 nd July: | Heidi Ferid |
| 9 th July: | Michaela von Britkze |
| 16 th July: | Brian Ellis |
| 23 rd July: | Veronica Needa |
| 30 th July: | Alice Lambert |

Coffee:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 nd July: | Helena Coope |
| 9 th July: | ????? (can you help?) |
| 16 th July: | David Talbot |
| 23 rd July: | Juliet Edwards + ? |
| 30 th July: | Maureen Cummings |

Greeting:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 nd July: | Liz Tuckwell |
| 9 th July: | Gina Bayley |
| 16 th July: | Roy Clark |
| 23 rd July: | ?????? (can you help?) |
| 30 th July: | Veronica Needa |

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you are willing to be on the rota mailing list.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk



Rachel Sparks Dance Presents

Sunday Tea Dance

Sunday 23rd July, 2-5pm at Essex Church

With a waltz lesson for beginners at 2.15pm

Join us for a tea dance with social dancing and actual tea and cake! We had a lovely time at the inaugural tea-dance back in February so come and enjoy a gentle afternoon learning some basic social dancing steps with Rachel who can teach even the most left-footed people. This is an inclusive event for anyone including LGBTQI+ people and we ask that everyone is respectful to each other. The partnering at this tea dance is gender-neutral, meaning anyone can lead and anyone can follow, and we are completely body positive. The venue is wheelchair-accessible and has gender-neutral toilets. We ask you not to wear high heels as we need to protect the floor! You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to raise money for our nominated charity, Diversity Role Models.

Tickets: £10 on the door (*free entry to members of Essex Church*)

For more information contact: rachel@rachelsparksdance.co.uk
rachelsparksdance.co.uk / www.facebook.com/rachelsparksdance

Save the Date: 22nd October will be the last tea dance this year but 2018 dates are being planned...



'Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

The passion for social justice that we see in the prophets is a protest against systemic evil. Systemic evil is an important notion: it refers to the injustice built into the structures of the system itself. Embedded in oppressive and exploitative social structures, systemic evil is a major source (perhaps the single greatest cause) of human suffering.'

Marcus J. Borg

A New Arrival Fynn Robin Blair

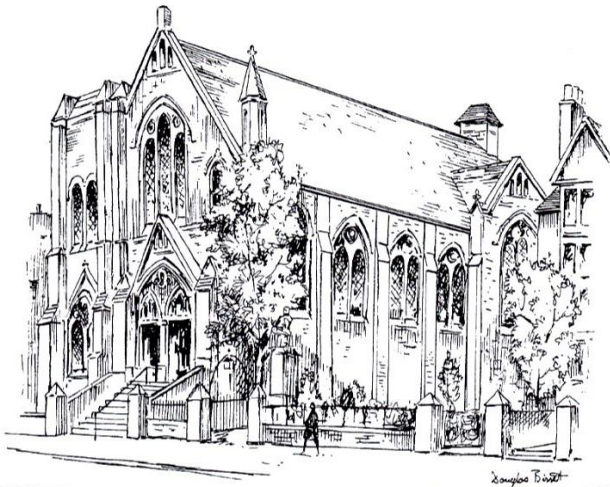
We were delighted to see these pictures of Jim with his second grandchild, Fynn, in South Africa. Congratulations to Iona and Mark on their new arrival.



'Compassion allows us to bear witness to suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal.'

Sharon Salzberg

Essex Church: Some Reflections on Its History



The old Essex Church building after the spire had been removed.

The name 'Essex Church' arises because the congregation we have in Kensington today is in part the successor to the chapel founded by the Rev Theophilus Lindsey in Essex Street, just off the Strand in central London, and opened on 17 April 1774 ('Essex Street Chapel'). It was the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in the country, at a time when the expression of Unitarian views was still illegal (and remained so until 1813). That opening service included such notables as Joseph Priestley, Benjamin Franklin and Baron Le Despenser (perhaps better known as Sir Francis Dashwood, who was Postmaster-General at the time but is still remembered as the founder, in his younger day, of the Hellfire Club. He gave generously to the chapel on its opening). Essex Street was built on the site of the former town house of the Earls of Essex, an area redeveloped after the Great Fire of London. The congregation remained in Essex Street until the 1880s, when the number of worshippers had decreased due to population changes. The decision was taken to move westwards and join the Free Christian Church that had been founded in 1867 and was then meeting in a temporary 'Iron Church' at Kensington Gravel Pits (later The Mall, now Palace Gardens Terrace), on land donated by Sir James Clarke Lawrence MP. Meanwhile it was decided that the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and the Sunday School Association, who were looking for new and larger premises, would take over the building in Essex Street (where in fact our national headquarters are still located today). The money from the sale of the chapel would be used to build a fine new church on the Kensington site.

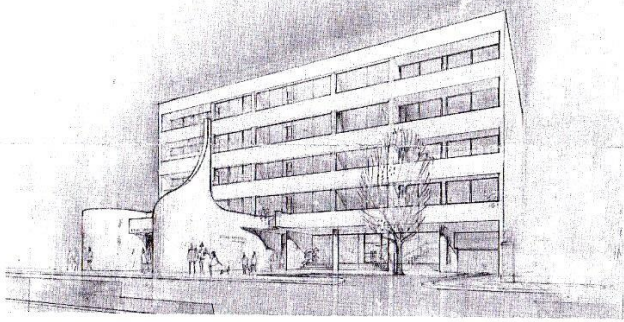
That building opened on 4 May 1887. It was a large neo-gothic structure, perhaps looking more like a parish church than a nonconformist chapel. I have a vague recollection of attending a youth event in the basement there during the 1960's when the GA annual meetings were taking place in London, and recall that it was rather dark and vast! However the church was noted for its fine Arts and Crafts interior woodwork. There is much more information about it, with photographs, in Raymond Williams' book *Essex Church in Kensington 1887-1987: History of a Unitarian Cause* (copy on the church website, under Resources/Library and Publications). The name Essex Church (changed from Essex Chapel) was chosen to show continuity with the congregation founded by Lindsey in 1774. However, by the early 1970's, it had become clear that the building was in need of major repairs (the

steeple had been removed in 1960 because it was considered unsafe). The decision was taken very reluctantly to demolish the building and redevelop the site to include a smaller church and other facilities more suited to modern needs. I have recently found again a sketch (which appeared in *The Inquirer* in April 1973) of what the site might have looked like. However due to planning objections and changes in the property market the original plans were altered considerably. During the interregnum (1973-1977) the congregation met in hired premises in Kensington, and I believe some committee meetings were held in the Mall Tavern. When I first attended the congregation in September 1976, they were meeting at the offices of the British Humanist Association, just off Kensington High Street.

The first service in the new building took place on 24 July 1977. It was conducted by the Rev Robert Palmer from Boston (USA), who had been interim minister for several months. He and his wife Peggy were very good friends to the congregation, and I remember Bob saying later that the time spent at Essex Church had been one of the highlights of his ministerial career. I also recall that he remarked during his opening address about the tendency of flat roofs to cause problems for buildings! Some years later I visited Bob and Peggy at their home in Boston, and they were very hospitable. The following month our first settled minister in the new church, the Rev Frank Claburn, took up his post. Frank was a very talented musician and writer, and several of his inspiring hymns will be found in both *Hymns for Living* and *Sing Your Faith*. I am also grateful to him for introducing me to the music of Rachmaninov. He remained minister until October 1980. I can still remember him driving a minibus to Polesden Lacey in Surrey for a congregational outing. His tragically early death in 2000 when he was minister in Bristol was a great loss to the whole Unitarian movement. The Rev Francis Simons was our minister for twelve years (1981-1993) and he also was a hymn-writer of some note. Perhaps because he came from an Anglican background he was a great advocate of interfaith activity. One highlight from his time as minister was the publication of *Kensington Quest: Statements of Belief by Kensington Unitarians* (1987), following a 'Building Your Own Theology' course run at the church the previous year. This became something of a bestseller, and I recall being in the congregation at another chapel when my own contribution was read out as part of the service. This publication is also on the church website, along with several other more recent titles.

When the present-day Essex Church was built, a flat for the minister (as well as the warden/caretaker) was provided in the basement. However we became aware that some of our ministers found living in the manse flat there a bit difficult as it was rather dark. During the ministry of the Rev Art Lester (1996-2001) the decision was taken to convert the large manse flat in the basement into educational accommodation that could be rented out and so provide extra income for the church. This proved to be a wise decision as it now provides a substantial part of our funds. In 2001 it was decided after much discussion to create a smaller manse flat above part of the church, and building work started in September 2002, lasted several months and cost us £250,000. This used up most of our available financial resources at the time, and we needed special permission from the Charity Commission to liquidate some of our capital reserves, provided that we paid them back within a specified period, which we managed to do. Although many of our congregations have sold off their manses, there are clearly special circumstances in our very expensive location at Notting Hill Gate which makes it useful to still be able to provide accommodation for the minister (and of course the warden) on site.

Essex Church History *(continued)*



Artist's impression of the 1970s plan for redevelopment.

The Rev Sarah Tinker became our minister in 2005. I will always be grateful to Sarah for her great assistance in helping the committee and trustees with a difficult situation when she joined us. We are fortunate also that she has taken such a close interest in the well-being of our building, along with our warden Jenny and others. In a building that is so heavily used by many user groups as well as the congregation itself nothing stands still. In 2009 we undertook a major refurbishment of the toilets, including an accessible toilet, and also of the kitchen area. In 2010 the library was refurbished to include attractive new shelving. In 2016 a lot of effort was expended on a new heating system for the church and in covering the roof with a waterproof membrane, to try and solve the many problems we have had over the years with water ingress. So July 2017 will mark forty years in the 'new' Essex Church building, the congregation's third home if you include the original Essex Street Chapel. It is a very special place that has meant a lot to so many people. Although Gill and I left London for Hinckley in 2014 so as to be nearer family in both Leicestershire and Sheffield, we try to keep in touch with developments at the church through the newsletter and personal contact, and we try to visit when we are able. Certainly my membership of the congregation has meant a huge amount to me over the last forty or more years, and I was proud to serve it in various capacities during that time.

Howard Hague

Dreaming

The Dreamtimes:

Remember then, the dreams
we encountered when young:
Their intrinsic values held precious,
floating in through Psyche's windows
opened gently by sub-winds.
And now there's psycho's volumes turning pages,
various,
chasing our maturer minds.

Eliz Beel.

Retired

Billions
less than half your age would envy you. Your
neatly-furnished apartment, comfy chair and
balcony to sit on, plants to water, birds to feed,
television to frighten you, or make you laugh,
several times a week, mostly evenings: a newspaper
to tell you things you can't or would not dare to alter.
Cat for company.

Summer.
Several long evenings you sit out late, gazing into
The slowly emptying street, waiting for, waiting for
Something to happen.

John Hands
Schwabing, August 2nd 2015



Crows in Leinster Square

ancient reverend black
wings steadily beating
bearing sticks,
impelled by spring
to nest again
wind ruffled
in the tall trees,
raucous and crotchety,
arrogant in their
inaccessible belief
they will scavenge
another year around.

Brian Ellis
(Crow print by Jane Blackall)

Thematic Ministry in July: Identity



This month our focus will be on 'identity', with all its many possible meanings. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas about this month's theme for you to think about and do have a look at the themes for the months ahead in case there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer on a Sunday or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Thanks to everyone for the interesting conversations that we're having about these topics. Our Sunday conversations will start again on 24th September. Future themes:

August – 'Triumph/Disaster'
September – 'Purpose/Mission'
October – 'Generosity'

Here are some ways you might choose to explore this month's theme.

'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' Shakespeare's Juliet hoped that love would overcome the problems of her beloved Romeo belonging to the House of Montague, hated by her family. Hopefully your own name has not caused you so much distress. But names often hold great significance for us. Have a think about your own name and how you feel about it. Have you changed your name in life? How does it feel when someone remembers your name or forgets it, or a letter or an email arrives with your name misspelt? If you had the chance to choose an adjective for yourself what might you choose? Mighty Margaret? Harmonious Harold?

Put your name in the centre of a piece of paper and then add all the identities you associate with: your roles, your titles, your characteristics – anything with which you identify. Now experiment by crossing them out one by one and see how it feels to let go of your identity. What are you left with when all the labels disappear?

Identity within a group is an important survival tool for human beings. For most of human history we needed to be part of a tribe or extended family in order to live. In many modern western societies identity is becoming more fluid, more fragmented. What do you see as the pros and cons of such change? How are these societal changes reflected in your own life?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Poetry on a Summer's Evening with Brian, Carole and Sarah



Thursday 17th August, 6.45pm for a 7pm start,
finishing by 9pm, with refreshments.

Come and join us for a gentle evening of seasonal poetry reading. Let us know if you have a favourite summer poem you'd like to read so we can print copies for the evening. All are welcome.

Sarah Tinker

UNIFEST: Play, Create, Explore, Believe

A Long Weekend of Unitarian Family Fun
26th-29th October 2017, Great Hucklow

Unifest will take place from Thursday 26th until Sunday 29th October 2017 – two whole days deep in the countryside at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. It is family-friendly and **kids go free**:

- Workshops for adults on the spirituality of parenting, creative sessions for children, and activities for all ages
- Intergenerational worship
- Time to explore Unitarian values and ethics
- Trips out to local attractions
- Enjoy the great outdoors
- Opportunities to share our talents and gifts

The cost per adult for 3 nights and all meals is £140 (reduced fee due to generous grants from the Hibbert Trust and Foy Society). If you have any questions contact John Harley, Unitarian Youth Officer: jharley@unitarian.org.uk. To book your accommodation for UNIFEST please contact Stella at the Centre: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk.

'Working On Our Welcome': LGBTQ+ Inclusion Training

I felt proud of our congregation for hosting the recent London District quarterly meeting in June and particularly proud of Jane for all the work that went into the workshop she co-led with Quaker Fred Langridge on improving our welcome to LGBBTTQ+ people. The workshop was primarily educational. Most of us had lots to learn and the handouts we got to take away are going to be useful to look through in more detail. Thirty people from 15 different congregations, some having travelled long distances on a hot day, all helped to create a learning atmosphere. Thanks to everyone in the congregation who helped with refreshments and to dear Gitana who helped clear up afterwards.

I've long understood that people's experience of gender lies upon a continuum rather than in a simple either / or of female or male. But I still have lots more to learn about people's identity as non-binary. The most important realisation that I took away from the workshop was that our assumptions about people's gender and sexuality get in the way of real understanding of real, individual people and their experiences and their choices. We can't stop ourselves from making assumptions about other people. That's what the human brain does. But we can start to be more aware of some of the false assumptions that get in the way of communicating and relating.

Sarah Tinker

Simple Changes for Inclusive Worship

The LGBTQ+ workshop was really interesting and informative. As well as having wonderfully colourful handouts to take away, Jane and Fred had divided the workshop into manageable sections. First, we looked at terminology. Although I was familiar with some of the terms, it was really useful to get a more in-depth understanding.

The exercise we did on empathy involved having a fictional character to think about in groups, and ponder not only the blocks they may have to coming to our church, but also some of the solutions we could come up with to be more inclusive - from what we show on our website, and unisex toilet/s, to giving thought about attendees to church-run "Women's" or "Men's" Groups.

One of the suggestions of how to be more inclusive in worship services, was to adjust the gender terminology of hymns and readings, such as, "He" and, "She". In our worship service after the workshop, it was so helpful to see an example of this. "We'll build a land" was our closing hymn. A hymn with the chorus line, "Come build a land, where sisters and brothers...." which for its time was probably very inclusive, stating, "Sister" and not just, "Brother." But in this worship service, the hymn was made even more inclusive of all, with the new chorus line, "Come build a land of people united.....", which includes non-binary people as well. Such a simple change, but what a difference, showing how easily further inclusivity can be done.

Jeannene Powell

If anyone who couldn't make it to the training would like copies of the handouts please get in touch with Jane...



Warden's Column

I just printed out the calendars for July and August to go on the office door - which was mainly a task of deleting most of the regular bookings, because they take summer breaks.

The skeleton timetable that remains is

Monday night - Sufi chanting in the library

Tuesday lunchtime - Alanon lunchtime support group

Wednesday - Sonya's lunchtime Nia class, Alanon again from 6-7pm & evening classes in Qi Gung, Tai Chi & Kung Fu by the Tse Centre

Thursday - potentially no bookings at all, though La Leche League hold a drop in breast-feeding support group one morning a month

Friday - morning Tai Chi for elders organised by Kensington & Chelsea Forum

Saturday night - Seicho No Ie a Japanese Buddhist / Christian group based in Brazil



Normally, I would hugely enjoy the peace and quiet this sparse timetable represents, but this summer I've asked for special leave to join a dance project in the south of France (which I'm hoping I'll enjoy even more :-)) so you may spot my regular relief cover, Arda, around on Sundays during July and August. He'll be staying in my flat to check all is secure at night, water the garden and generally keep things running smoothly.

Looking again at that skeleton timetable, I feel touched by the amount of spiritual energy it still represents - nurtured by our building & nurturing it. There are:

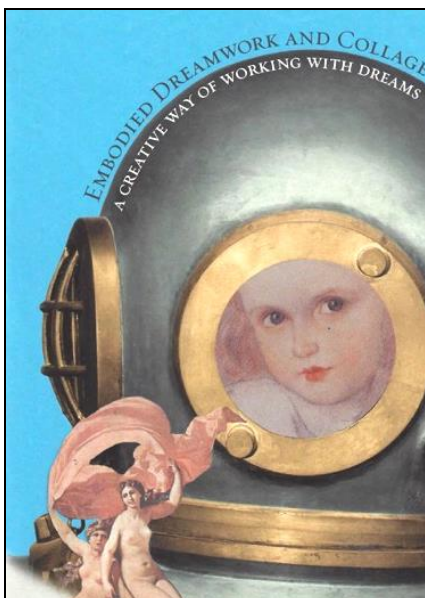
- Religious groups - the Sufis & Seicho no Ie
- Support - for mothers, elders & people affected by addiction
- and care for the soul through the body - ancient Chinese energy practices & the modern synthesis of Nia Dance

It may only be a skeleton, but it feels like a strong one! Enough to carry us through until September fleshes it out again . . .

See you again then.

Jenny Moy

Jenny will be away on extended leave in July and August with her dance community, this year in southern France, and her work onsite will be covered by our friend Arda Ohnessian. Jenny will still be handling lettings and finances.



Embodied Dreamwork and Collage

**A One-Day Workshop, co-facilitated by
Sandra Elsdon Vigon and Cynthia Anne Hale**

Saturday 15th July, 9.30am-4.00pm, Here at Essex Church

A creative way of working with dreams. By entering the dream landscape through the method of embodied imagination, participants are guided to intuitively create and engage related images with SoulCollage®. This is a unique way of accessing inner wisdom, developing self-awareness, and learning to play with the imagination. The cost of this workshop is £100 – all materials are included.

**For more information or to book contact Sandra Elsdon Vigon
Mobile: 07913 821 626 / Email: svigon@sandravigon.com**

A Prayer for Grenfell Tower

In our service on Sunday 18th June we held a silence for all those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire and Sarah offered this prayer.

Let us call on the spirit of love,
the God of our hearts and our understanding
to be with us now and with all people;
may we be comforted by a divine presence
within and beyond us, encompassing us,
and all of existence, in the mystery that is life.

Let us pray for the people who lived in Grenfell Tower,
just down the road from here,
whose lives are forever altered by this terrible incident.
May those who live on receive all
the support they need to rebuild their lives,
may those who died rest in peace,
may those who are injured recover safely.

Let us pray for all the emergency services
who risk their lives to save others,
who witness terrible scenes,
who start the ghastly work of clearing up after disasters.
May they be valued for all they do
and helped to come to terms with all they have witnessed.

Let us pray for organisations that now have so much to do,
to uncover the truth, to make amends,
to ensure that such fires can never happen again.
May the anger and distress that people are now expressing
be the driving force for change, for valuing all lives,
for improving the conditions in which all people live.

Our country has had a number of disturbing incidents
to deal with in recent weeks.

Let us remember that such disturbance is
a daily occurrence in many parts of our world.
May we find the strength of courage, of love
and of community connections
to join us together rather than tear us apart.
Let's remember that real love and real life are
messy, discomfoting, challenging
and rarely go the way we wish they would.

In the days ahead may we find ways to settle ourselves,
to align ourselves with simple principles,
to guide us along paths of love and justice,
compassion and courage...

In a few moments of silence now
let's each send our thoughts and prayers
to those we know to be in need...
and let us value the precious gift of life we have been given
and determine to use our lives well
and for the greater good of all,
this day and all days. Amen.

'There is no possibility of a mature spiritual life without humility. Nor is it possible to be a successful human being without it. Humility is also, most fundamentally, a relationship of truth with ourselves. Humility begins with self-honesty about our actions, attitudes, and speech. It compels us to accept the fact that we are capable of being wrong, perhaps even when we are convinced we are right. It means that we acknowledge our mistakes, not years from now, but when they are made. We must be willing to own up to these mistakes before others and not simply ourselves. Such humility is a basic operating principle of ordinary life. Without it, we can hardly move at all, since the mystical process is based on honesty and humility of heart. Search your experience and examine if humility is at work in you.'

Wayne Teasdale

Opera: 'Suor Angelica'

Directed by Lucy Elston from our Choir



**At St Mary Magdalen, Enfield, on 4th July &
Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead on 8th July**

Lucy Elston, who sings with our choir, will be directing her first opera! They will be performing at Rosslyn Hill in Sat 8th July. Opera in the Meantime is a brand new opera company based in Greenwich. A small group of talented young singers and musicians present 'Suor Angelica', one of Puccini's best-loved operas. 'Suor Angelica' begins by painting a beautiful picture of the quiet life lived in a rural convent. There is mystery surrounding one nun in particular, Sister Angelica, whose sad past emerges as the plot unfolds. 'Suor Angelica' runs for approximately one hour, originally written to be performed as part of Puccini's trio of operas 'Il Trittico'.

Tues 4th July - St Mary Magdalene, Enfield, EN2 7AJ
Sat 8th July - Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, NW3 1NG

Performance - 7.30pm / Tickets - £10 / £5 students
Director - Lucy Elston / Musical Director - Sam Jewison

Facebook - [fb.me/operainthetime](https://www.facebook.com/operainthetime)

'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops



**Sundays 16th July, 20th August and
17th September after the service
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm**

Margaret has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability.

London Playback Theatre 'How do you take your coffee?'



**Thursday 6th July, 7.30pm at The Trunk,
The Artworks, Elephant Road, SE17 1AY**

A performance of Playback Theatre welcoming stories on this theme. What is your relationship to coffee? For some their first coffee is the essential kick-start to the day. For others the aroma is irresistible but its effect on the nervous system is intolerable. Others won't buy it unless it's fairly traded. How has coffee ... searching for it, drinking it, avoiding it ... held stories of meaning and significance for you?

Entry by donation - See londonplaybacktheatre.eventbrite.com

Veronica Needa

World Congress of Faiths (WCF) Autumn Conference



Familiarity and Alienation:

Interfaith encounter under a different spotlight

**Thursday 7th September 2017,
9.30am to 4.30pm, Goldsmiths University**

**A cross-disciplinary conference exploring the
difficult questions and seeking fresh answers.**

It is no longer unusual for different faiths to find common purpose, and to enjoy dialogue. But what are the difficult questions in such encounters in the light of the human tendency to create insider and outsider groups? What is the relevance for current life and integration policy? This cross-disciplinary day conference promises new perspectives for interfaith relations.

Conference fee of £40-60 includes buffet lunch.

For more information and to register see:

www.wcfconf2017.eventbrite.co.uk



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 16th July, 20th August...**

Midweek class on Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

An hour of whole-body conditioning, done barefoot to diverse music. Delivering a cardiovascular workout for any level of fitness. Specific routines allow you to experience - the power of the martial arts, the stillness of the healing arts and the joy of movement through dance.

Cost £10 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a three month period.

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

Unitarian Women's Group 'Our Stories'



20th – 22nd October 2017

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

A weekend of interactive sessions on Unitarian women in history, placing ourselves in the story and a look at the UWG itself and its development over the course of nearly four decades. Serious and hilarious by turns and always warm and friendly. Led by Ann Peart and Celia Midgley. Further details of the weekend programme will be sent out with the confirmation of registration.

Join us at the annual autumn weekend gathering of the Unitarian Women's Group, to be held at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, near Tideswell, in the wild and wonderful Derbyshire countryside. Non-members are welcome too. Book early to ensure a place!

Accommodation costs start from £124 with supplements for ensuite or single occupancy. A UWG conference fee of £10 is also applicable.

Accommodation Booking: Stella Burney
info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk or 01298 871218

Conference Registration: Margaret Robinson
margaretrobinson81@gmail.com or 01642 782219

Death ?

there was neither herald:
(no footstep, knock,
touch or voice).
nor presence:
(no warmth, coolness,
caress or scent).
but death was all
in the instant between
her being everything
she was,
and being everything
she was not.

Brian Ellis

Good Cause Collection of the Month

Action on Disability

Collection on Sunday 23rd July



Action on Disability is a local charity, based in Hammersmith and Fulham, working towards an inclusive society, free of disabling barriers, where all individuals are equal. It is a user-led organisation managed and controlled by disabled people which campaigns for the rights of disabled people and aims to influence local and national policy and practice. Action on Disability delivers high quality professional accessible activities which promote independent living and give disabled people the knowledge and confidence about their rights enabling them to access opportunity, make choices and live independently.

For more information see: www.actionondisability.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

April – Migrants Organise – £226.82

May – Christian Aid Week – £82.49

Special Collections for Grenfell Tower Appeal – £391.28

Inclusive Communion

Sundays 9th July, 13th August
at 12.30pm down in the Church Library



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

9th July – led by Sarah Tinker / 13th August – led by Jane Blackall

Grenfell Tower Service

Sarah wasn't free, so I just attended the Multi Faith Service for the Victims, Survivors and Community of Grenfell Tower - held underneath the Westway in Maxilla Gardens - in the open air, with a clear view of the Tower and clouds, planes and pigeons passing by. After a two minute silence for the victims, the service was opened by a local councillor who began

*"I was born in another corner of the world, but I had to leave
my home to come here & change my name
I was born here & raised children & grandchildren here
I had to teach my children my religion, so they could keep
their culture
I am Muslim
I am Christian
I came here to keep my family safe
I am a cab driver
I am a nursery teacher
A primary school teacher
A secondary school teacher
A secondary school student
An elder
No - I am a baby . . ."*

Although it had rapidly become clear that this was a poem, a compilation of statements from different residents of the building, he said each one with such conviction that it seemed totally believable. The poem finished

*"I have a name. We all have individual names
but now we are one
I am Grenfell Tower
We are Grenfell Tower"*

I wish I could quote you the whole poem accurately - I stupidly assumed I'd be able to find it on the web, but he may even have written it for the occasion. I can't even tell you his name, though the next speaker did name him & credit him with the idea of organising the gathering.

There followed a succession of speakers representing different local and national faith communities. Some of the most moving for me, were

- a local vicar - who talked about anger & the limitations of human anger in achieving justice because it makes us feel too strong in ourselves to need to work with others

- 2 women (the only female speakers!) from a Jewish/Muslim friendship group who spoke of the importance of building bridges between people living in their own bubbles, not just in the aftermath of disasters like this, but ongoingly

- a young black man, who had grown up in a neighbouring tower and started to speak by saying "I am no-one. I am everyone" in contrast to most people who started with their name and who they were speaking for

My left-hand neighbour whispered to me that this young man was called Melvin Atkins and posted very good things on Facebook. What very much impressed me about what he said



was that although he was a local and had lost people he knew in the fire - he didn't turn his anger outwards towards a "them" who should have prevented it. Instead he said with great sincerity that we all have a duty to take better care of each other and the tower behind him would always be a reminder that he'd been too late, he hadn't done enough for the friends and neighbours there.

After one more speaker - who struck a slightly awkward note by speaking of how his faith reassured him that Christians who perished in the blaze had hope of eternal life - the original councillor returned and asked for a show of hands for who felt the local tube station should be renamed from Latimer Rd to Grenfell Tower. I raised my hand, along with many others. The idea hadn't occurred to me before, but it felt right - and he said "motion carried" provoking general laughter. It was good to be invited to laugh together after the generally serious tone of the other contributions.

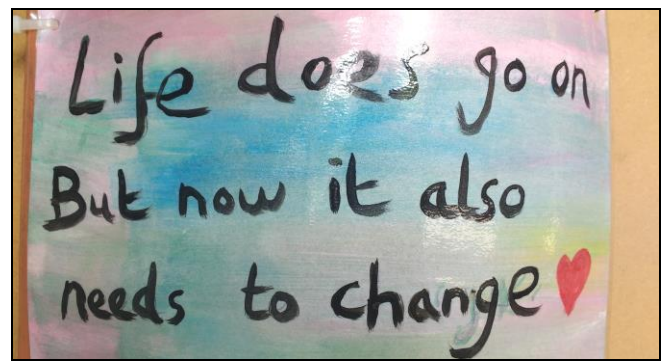
Then we stood and held hands to listen to the recent fundraising recording of "Bridge over Troubled Water". It was the first time I'd heard it and standing looking at the Tower listening to the opening rap by Stormzy was very moving - especially after just having heard Melvin talk about playing in and around and under the tower in his childhood.

*Yeah, I don't know where to begin so I'll start by saying I
refuse to forget you
I refuse to be silenced
I refuse to neglect you
That's for every last soul up in Grenfell even though I've
never even met you
That could have been my mum's house, or that could have
been my nephew
Now that could have been me up there
Waving my white plain T up there
All my friends on the ground trying a see up there
I just hope that you rest and you're free up there
I can't feel your pain but it's still what it is
Went to the block just to chill with the kids
Troubled waters come running past
I'mma be right there just to build you a bridge yo*

Living in South Kensington, I feel so near, but yet so far from the community directly affected by the fire. I felt like this service was an opportunity to make a connection between the site of the disaster and my home and workplace, without feeling I was intruding on others grief. I'm very glad I went and feel strengthened in the commitment to do whatever I personally can to counteract the forces that made this tragedy possible.

Jenny Moy

Posters on the Railings around Grenfell Tower – Photographs by Jenny Moy





Ageing: Its Gifts and Possibilities

The first thing to recognise about ageing, I think, is that it is only a process of degeneration if we allow ourselves to think it so. Of course as the body ages it is less supple, less able to allow us to be energetic as we were in our youthful years. And of course many of us have had to endure much infirmity and illness which makes it difficult to go on enjoying our lives. But the body, important as it is, is only our vehicle. Over the years we ourselves as persons have lived through so much experience which has deepened and matured our understanding of life and of other people. How could this have been acquired if our lives had been – in Thomas Hobbes' disdainful, memorable, phrase: 'nasty, brutish, and short'.

So old age is indeed a gift in the way which Lewis Hyde, in his splendid, thought-provoking book, helps us to understand the philosophy of gift-giving: that advancing years have been granted to us in order to live through a lengthy period of 'soul-making'. And this is indeed something to celebrate and be glad about. This was the poet Keats' conception of what life is about. As we know he was a man young in physical years, but as his marvellous, insightful letters reveal to us, he was indeed an 'old soul' who had perhaps lived through many incarnations in order to be able to reap such a rich harvest of poetry and wisdom in his twenty six chronological years.

But what is it which so often prevents us from recognising and experiencing for ourselves this spiritual and emotional benefice of age? I suggest it is none other than that ancient foe to our growth, which can hold us back through all or most of our lives. I mean, of course, our ancient enemy Fear. Fear it is which weighs upon our hearts and minds, and prevents us from recognising and developing our full creative potential. Fear of exploring this creative potential, and opening ourselves to the gifts of the spirit.

In my work as a dramatherapist and psychodramatist, I held to two main objectives in the therapy I had to offer. The first was to help my clients in any way I could, to identify and work upon their emotional and developmental difficulties. My second objective was to help them to discover their creative potential. This might take any one or more of a considerable number of possibilities. They might decide to take up painting, writing, music, dancing, cake-making, embroidery – or any of the other arts or creative activities which they might have begun when they were in primary school, then not pursued further. Whatever the activity, if I was able to encourage them to persevere in practising and developing it, they soon came to see it as their particular gift, which they could share with and give to others. And this sharing and giving of our creative energies to others, both strengthens and empowers our gifts and ourselves as persons.

In conclusion, I think that our creative energies are the gifts of the spirit, and major attributes of our nature as human beings. They can only be developed through our relationships with other people; our relationships feed and nourish them. We become fuller, richer in spirit as we work at our creative tasks; so that we are able to advance in age hopefully, joyfully even, and grateful for our gift of years.

John Hands

Mini-Wordsearch: Ministers of Essex Church

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | N | Y | T | N | A | L | L | A | B | N | H | O | J | N |
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| O | U | U | I | O | E | X | B | K | E | N | Q | H | A | S |
| B | M | B | R | O | K | M | R | R | W | A | Z | M | N | E |
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| N | R | A | O | E | I | P | A | N | H | D | M | P | I | R |
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| H | H | K | T | E | A | L | A | R | L | K | G | Y | I | N |
| O | I | N | R | L | R | P | K | A | R | L | S | M | M | A |
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| E | L | R | B | R | S | F | Y | C | H | Q | G | P | N | F |
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| V | W | S | R | E | T | L | A | W | Y | E | R | A | C | V |

Can you find these ministers of Essex Church in the grid?

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Charles Howe | (1874-1883) |
| Carey Walters | (1887-1891) |
| Frank Freeston | (1893-1914) |
| John Weatherall | (1915-1930) |
| Robert Bloor | (1931-1934) |
| John Ballantyne | (1935-1957) |
| Graham Short | (1957-1964) |
| Eirion Phillips | (1965-1976) |
| Frank Clabburn | (1977-1981) |
| Francis Simons | (1981-1993) |
| Johanna Boeke | (1994-1996) |
| Art Lester | (1996-2001) |
| Mark Shiels | (2001-2003) |
| Sarah Tinker | (2005-present) |

'Not Just Bystanders'

Address by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Address from the service on 11th June.

This address is also available online as a podcast.

I know it's wrong to blame people. I've been on courses that told us - we must take responsibility for our own lives. But I am now going to blame various people in this congregation, the people who've introduced me to a love of birds and particularly garden birds. You are to blame for this being an even more stressful week than it was already shaping up to be.

This week the blackbirds in the church back garden have hatched their second nest of babies, having lost all of the first brood to the marauding magpies and crows. And I think several wrens are nesting in the garden this year and there are some fledglings that have just appeared, being watched over by anxious parents. What I've learnt from the baby birds this spring is that sometimes in life we can only be bystanders, witnesses to the joys and troubles of others. I tried to scare off the nasty magpies but I couldn't stand at the window 24 hours a day waving a tea towel. We've all tried to be as supportive as possible of the wren family nesting in the hose pipe reel but in the end it's out of our hands.

So as we consider this week's theme 'not just bystanders' let's hold the reality that at times all we can do is watch, bear witness, perhaps observe so that we can pass the story on to others. For those of us who sometimes feel the responsibilities of the world weighing so heavily on our shoulders it can be worth doing a reality check about what we can and cannot control.

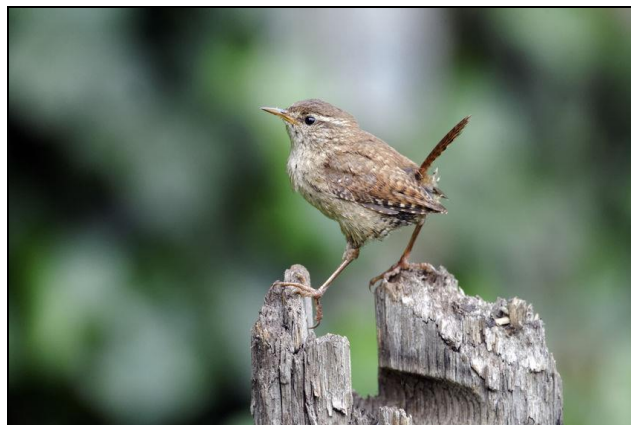
But the main message of today's service is the opposite - that we can and do matter, that our actions can and do make a difference. I talked a bit last week about our fears and the fact that we cannot get rid of fear. It is an instinctual response that bypasses the brain altogether and takes us straight into fight or flight responses. Fear is a very useful survival tool.

Once fear has activated us we can observe it; we can start to think our thoughts about our fear response, we can choose to behave in one way or another. I'm grateful to Jeannene for finding the quote we've used for the front of today's order of service.

'Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than one's fear. The timid presume it is lack of fear that allows the brave to act when the timid do not. But to take action when one is not afraid is easy. To refrain when afraid is also easy. To take action regardless of fear is brave.' – Ambrose Redmoon

After last week's attack on London Bridge we know that a number of people could have saved their own lives by running away but chose instead to move towards danger to help others. At least two people lost their lives for their bravery and others are hopefully now recovering from their injuries in hospital. We might also recall the actions of two men in Portland in the United States who went to protect two young women who were being racially abused on a train and who were then attacked themselves. They lost their lives protecting others and I want to honour them for their bravery.

Have you ever asked yourself that question of how you might react in such terrifying moments? I suspect I'd freeze. Psychologists describe our fight or flight response in scary situations but of



course there is the third possibility – the scared rabbit response that stays stock still, unable to move. I pray that none of us get to find out how we respond in dramatically frightening situations. They are thankfully still very rare.

Most of us will never have our courage tested in such dramatic circumstances but rather by the small everyday choices of life: the times when we might speak out if something has us feeling uncomfortable, noticing wrong doing or injustice and choosing to step forward rather than retreating. As bullying in schools and workplaces becomes more commonly spoken about, instead of being hidden as though its existence is too shameful to admit – as the existence of bullying is brought more into the light of day, it's being made clear that if someone speaks out in the early stages against the bullying words or behaviours it is far less likely to continue. Bullies rely on the complicity of bystanders. Bullies are strengthened by the existence of bystanders. There's something quite subtle and tribal going on in bullying. It's about power and groups and belonging. It needs courageous individuals to dare to speak up and say 'I am not comfortable with what you have just said or what you have just done. I am prepared to speak to others and let them know what has just happened. I will not be silenced.'

Courage is not the absence of fear, it's finding something stronger than our fear, which will empower us, embolden us. Courage is a way of being, a place to stand. Courage reminds us that life is precious and that life is worth stepping forward into. As I've thought about this topic during the last week I've come to realise that there are areas in my life where I've allowed fear to hold me back, where I've been a bystander in life rather than a full participant. I wonder if that rings any bells for you? Are there aspects of your life where with courage you might step forward – be more fully yourself, allow new parts of you to emerge perhaps, start courageous conversations, take relationships to a new level, ask for support perhaps in a way you have never dared ask before?

We are living in disturbed and disturbing times. Life's complexity and uncertainty and confusion are well and truly showing up. In such times we have choices. We can choose to feed our fears, we can hide away, batten down the hatches as they say and hope the storms pass. Or we can choose to face the world, to step towards life rather than away from it. We can choose to live according to the values we hold most dear – letting love and justice and hope guide our pathways, our actions and our words. Let's choose to be courageous in the face of all that is. And so may we in the week ahead face our lives with courage: courage to be who we truly are, courage to accept others as they are, courage to view our world with loving compassion – accepting all its complexities and uncertainties, yet aligning ourselves with all that we know to be decent, kindly, and just. And may this be so for the greater good of all. Amen, go well and blessed be.

Services at Essex Church in July

Sunday 2nd July, 11am
– ‘Liberating Labels’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Some people are wary of being labelled, and of labelling others, for fear of being boxed in or stereotyped as a result. In this service we will consider some of the ways in which labels can be liberating, helping us to know ourselves and understand others better.

Sunday 9th July, 11am
– ‘Home and Its Absence’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As more people have to leave the places of their birth, how can we help one another and ourselves to feel ‘at home’ wherever we are?

Sunday 16th July, 11am
‘A Sense of Self’

Service led by Sarah Tinker and Jeannene Powell

What helps us create a clear sense of self and how can we hold this both firmly and fluidly?

Sunday 23rd July, 11am
– ‘Anniversary Celebration’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Honouring our Unitarian identity both at home and abroad. With our musical quartet and followed by shared cold buffet and tea dance

Sunday 30th July, 11am
– ‘Modern Tribes’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Where do we feel we belong? How do we identify with others?
What matters most to us? How does our sense of belonging help shape our actions in the world?



‘Heart and Soul’

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 13th July (irregular date),
3rd August, 7th September from 7-8pm

Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library
Followed by social time and refreshments



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This month's gathering will have the theme of 'Now You See Me, Now You Don't' and it will be led by Brian Ellis and Sarah Tinker. This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Causes and effects assume history marches forward, but history is not an army. It is a crab scuttling sideways, a drip of soft water wearing away stone, an earthquake breaking centuries of tension. Sometimes one person inspires a movement, or her words do decades later; sometimes a few passionate people change the world; sometimes they start a mass movement and millions do; sometimes those millions are stirred by the same outrage or the same ideal and change comes upon us like a change of weather. All that these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in hope. To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on the future, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty are better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk.'

I say all this to you because hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. I say this because hope is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency; because hope should show you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal. Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope.'

From "Looking into Darkness" by Rebecca Solnit