



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: March 2016

What's On...

Thursday 3rd March, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul'
'The Art of Affirmation'
with Jane Blackall

Sunday 6th March, 11am-noon
'Cultivating Joy'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 13th March, 11am-noon
'Messages from the Wise Ones'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
with Interfaith Minister and
Storyteller Christopher Corps

Sunday 13th March, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Jane Blackall

Thursday 17th March, 7.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 20th March, 11am-noon
'Palm Sunday'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th March, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Thursday 24th March, 7.00pm
Tenebrae Gathering led by
Sarah Tinker and Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 27th March, 11am-noon
'Easter Sunday'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th March, 12.30pm
Congregational Easter Lunch

Sunday 3rd April, 11am-noon
'Leftovers'
Led by Jane Blackall

Date for your Diary:

Sunday 12th June, 12.30pm:
Essex Church AGM

Time for a Spring Clean?

A Message from our Minister

What is it with cupboards? One minute, they're looking OK and even have a bit of spare space waiting patiently to be filled. Then when my back is turned they fill themselves to the brim and become riotously disorganised. Seemingly unrelated items find themselves crammed together. Empty space is all too soon filled and any sense of order can quickly turn to chaos. It's not just the cupboards. Similar problems happen with my desk where a mysterious force attracts every odd piece of paper to come and join the teetering papery piles. And this is just in my office where allegedly I have some control over both cupboards and paperwork.



Down in the church it's a much bigger problem. Last time Jenny our warden and I did the calculations we reckoned that over 500 people had come through our church doors in the space of a week. And they don't come empty handed. They bring stuff with them and a certain percentage of them leave some of their stuff behind when they go. Lost property is one of the more tedious aspects of work here at Essex Church. The people who ring to ask about a lost item generally find they haven't left it here, but only after we've engaged in a long and fruitless search for it. The ones who do leave property here never seem to want to reclaim it.

But just occasionally I witness a reunion – between a man and his large umbrella perhaps, a mother and her son's scruffy school cap, a yoga teacher and their precious notebook, a congregation member and their long lost plate – and my sense of hope for humanity is restored. We're clearing out all the cupboards this spring; taking every item out, deciding if we really need it and then putting stuff back in some kind of order. Chaos will return I know, probably far sooner than we'd wish. But at least we'll have made a bit of space for a while.

Julian Huxley, the great humanist, once wrote, "It is of the greatest importance that humanity now and then should take out its beliefs for spring cleaning." Our Unitarian community is an ideal setting for a bit of belief spring cleaning. Come to church and make a bit of space in your thinking. Hold your long cherished beliefs a little more lightly, open yourself up to the unknown, to an idea that has yet to emerge. Who knows what we might find at the back of our cupboards and in the recesses of our hearts? Just don't leave your umbrella or school cap here.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Report from FUSE 2016: Festival of Unitarians in the South East * Tenebrae Gathering * 'Help!' by Stephanie Saville * 'Leaving Things Better than you Found Them' by Jenny Moy * Film Reviews: 'The Danish Girl' & 'Room' by Liz Tuckwell * More Photos from Melody in India * SimpleGifts Unitarian Centre for Social Action * 'My Favourite Work of (Public) Art' by Roy Clark * 'Responding to Public Sculpture' reflection by Rev. 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
112 Palace Gardens Terrace
Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

London District AGM

Saturday 19th March, Croydon Unitarians,
1 The Flyover, Croydon CR0 1ER



The AGM of the LDPA (London District Provincial Assembly – our local Unitarian district association) will be held on 19th March at our Croydon Church. If you are travelling by car, there is access off the westbound carriageway of the flyover only. The nearest train station is East Croydon (approx. 10 mins walk). People are invited to arrive from 1.30pm. Rev Martin Whitell, our District Minister, will give a short spiritual inspiration at 2pm. The meeting is forecast to finish not later than 4.30pm, followed by tea. Each congregation is entitled to two delegates at the AGM. Do get in touch with Sarah if you might like to attend this event.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

6 th March:	Niall Doherty
13 th March:	Michaela von Britzke
20 th March:	Natasha Drennan
27 th March:	Veronica Needa

Coffee:

6 th March:	Heidi Ferid
13 th March:	??? (<i>can you help?</i>)
20 th March:	Jane Blackall
27 th March:	Liz Tuckwell

Greeting:

6 th March:	Brian Ellis
13 th March:	Liz Tuckwell
20 th March:	Carole Grace
27 th March:	Juliet Edwards

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

SimpleGifts – Volunteering Unitarian Centre for Social Action

Simple Gifts works in one of the most deprived boroughs in London and from its small beginnings it has rekindled the aspirations of the original Mansford Street Unitarian church to help the local community. We run ESOL English language classes, a Sewing Club, a lively Afterschool Club for children and a New Neighbours, Old Neighbours community lunch.

SimpleGifts has been running community programmes from its premises – generously donated by the Chalice Foundation – along with providing training at district and national Unitarian events. Dozens of children, parents, elders, new migrants and other local residents benefit from the supportive programmes run each week at the centre. Its future success is entirely dependent on donations from people like you, which is why we're asking for your support this spring!

As well as looking for donations, SimpleGifts is also very keen to recruit volunteers! Programmes run during the day Monday-Thursday so if you are available there are lots of different kinds of volunteer roles you could try.

For more information see: www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk
or contact Ann Howell at ann@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk

Tenebrae Gathering



Thursday 24th March, 6.45pm for a 7pm start
Led by Tristan Jovanović and Sarah Tinker

This small group worship focuses on the themes of Holy Week and the events leading to Jesus' death on the cross. Tenebrae means shadows or darkness in Latin. We will meet in candle light and hear a series of readings taken mainly from the Gospels. Readings will be interspersed with music and the candles are extinguished one by one until we are left in darkness and slowly and silently leave the room. The themes of Easter-time – betrayal, confusion, anguish, despair, humiliation, death – are often avoided or hidden in our modern society. Yet there is strength to be found in sitting with the unpalatable, as witnesses to that which is. This Tenebrae gathering will be followed by sharing a simple Middle Eastern meal here at the church, £4.00 per person, please let Sarah know if you would like to eat together.

London Playback Theatre

Performs at Clean Break Theatre



Clean Break, 2 Patshull Road, London NW5 2LB
(tube: Kentish Town; train: Kentish Town West)

A series of Thursday Evenings at 7pm

A theatre of your stories on the themes of...

- 17 March** – Women at the edge...
- 28 April** – Who's leading London...?
- 26 May** – Mental health – them and us?
- 9 June** – Stories of creativity and well-being

Tickets: £10 / Bookings: londonplayback@gmail.com

www.londonplayback.co.uk

Congregational Lunch

After the Easter Service on Sunday 27th March



We will be having a bring-and-share lunch after the service on Easter Sunday. Please sign up to let us know what food and drink you'll bring to share. Melody is going to be coordinating the lunch for us and she would be glad to hear from you.

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 3rd March 2016 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 will be followed by refreshments and fellowship.

Our February gathering will be led by Jane Blackall and has the theme of 'The Art of Affirmation'. We will ponder the way in which we can notice and appreciate the special qualities and gifts that those around us have (and the good this can do). If you would like to know more about our 'Heart and Soul' gatherings email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you, out of your own talent and understanding, out of the things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account.'

John Gardner

FUSE 2016: Festival of Unitarians in the South-East



I set off for FUSE with a very croaky voice and by the end of the weekend I'd diagnosed myself with laryngitis, a condition best resolved by not talking. But my name was down to co-ordinate the closing worship for this FUSE weekend. How useful then to be surrounded by 80 or so other Unitarians who between them possessed so many different talents. Lots of them stepped in to help and we were treated to an hour of great music, much of it original, meditation and spiritual exploration. The children's group touched me the most. They'd each designed a T shirt to convey a social justice message that they thought the world needed to hear about. And they each spoke, so clearly and coherently about their particular concern. The weekend was attended by various national figures in our movement, including Robert Ince, the Executive Committee convenor, and the Rev John Clifford, our current General Assembly President. I think they were impressed by the high standard of workshops and the sense of energy in our London and South East District. If we run FUSE again next year I recommend it to you. And so far I've not heard of anyone showing signs of catching this laryngitis. Hopefully the bracing sea air must have blown all the bugs away.

Sarah Tinker



Photographs by Roy Clark

This was my 2nd visit to FUSE. As last year, there were lots of different workshops going on and many people I knew from different congregations, as well as some people I got to know for the first time. I helped co-lead two workshops this year, "A Sense of the Sacred" with Jane Blackall, and "A Reflective Walk" with Stephen Crowther, so decided to not pack too much into the weekend.

I took something away from the two workshops I did attend, "With the Ear of the Heart", and "Hear my Soul Singing". The first reminding me that purely listening to another, without trying to fix or give answers, can be one of the most useful and loving things one can do. The second, along with the delight of hearing Terri Quaye sing, inspired me to view the music used in worship in different ways, even simply by using a hymn as a reading.

There was a film-maker there, Sarah West, who was making a short film for next month's Annual General Assembly meeting. I took the opportunity to let her know about Heart and Soul, that we do at Kensington, and gave examples of some of the different themes various facilitators have chosen over the years. But what I enjoyed most about FUSE was meeting up with people I haven't seen in a while, and new people I hadn't met before, not just from within the district, but some from further afield. It really was a worthwhile weekend spent at the windswept sea-side in the company of so many Unitarians.

Jeannene Powell

This weekend was spent in Worthing. You might think this an odd place to go to when the weather was freezing and the wind was hurling waves up the shore and threatened to blow me over. Yet it was the FUSE weekend and inside the hotel it was warm and welcoming. People recognised me from last year and I felt I belonged. FUSE is the Festival of Unitarians in the South East and it was a feast and also a lot of hard work.

The workshops were excellent and thought-provoking taking as their subject of leadership and the future and using song, groups, meditation and discussion; so everything from 'Hear my soul Singing' to 'Discussing Dementia'. When we had worked up an appetite there was wonderful food to revive us.

I was so impressed by everyone, they all took their part to making this a warming, loving, caring community. I do think of them as being a huge happy family, which suggests some idealisation on my part, however there is still much truth in my faith regarding Unitarians.

The Festival seemed to be full of people who cared and showed that in their practical organising and their rich thinking. Most of them took the subject of social justice as a foregone conclusion, a tacit understanding of ethical and spiritual beliefs. These seemed to be spiritual and practical people who wanted to be actively involved in the world. Somehow they remained cheerful and optimistic, they felt that they could change things, we could use democracy to further our aims for a fairer world. It did not have to be politics versus morality it could be both.

Personally I was inspired by this community and hope to 'bring some of this home'. I want to do something to make the world fairer.....watch this space.

Carole Grace

FUSE 2016: A Weekend in Worthing



I have a bit of a confession to make. It was not the prospect of a Unitarian gathering alone that persuaded me to attend FUSE. It was the place. OK, Worthing in February may not be everybody's idea of a dream location, but the lure of an out of season seaside town, with its Victorian architecture (especially the Pier) and tones of grey above an unruly sea are collectively, to an artist-photographer, irresistible.

When I was asked to be the event photographer, I accepted due to the brief which was a loose one. What was required was not an exhaustive record of every event and workshop but instead for me to try and capture the joy, the fun, the comings together, the community. It was a delicate task of course photographing as unobtrusively as possible relatively small groups of people, often in quiet often meditative gatherings. I like to think this was largely accomplished and hopefully the results are pleasing.

I also attended several workshops as a participant. The highlight for me being "With the ear of your heart" led by Stephen Crowther. We explored 'deep listening' sharing the experience of both listening and being listened to. It was for me a profound and moving experience that I will never forget and hope to build on.

It was great also to meet up again with folk who I had met previously at the GA and in Unitarian gatherings elsewhere such as here at Essex Church. I also met some wonderful new friends too. So... roll on to FUSE 2017!

Roy Clark



'Life is Rhythm'

Experiential Drumming Course

Fridays 6.00-7.30pm from 10th June to 15th July 2016
Spiral Centre, 2 Shelburne Road, London N7 6DL

Rhythm permeates our lives and affects how we live and relate to others. Everything, from our fundamental biology, to our relationships, through to our community and external environment has a pulse. This 6 week personal development course will give you the opportunity to explore your own rhythm in conjunction with others in a relaxed and collaborative environment. You are invited to participate in and experience this profound, dynamic phenomenon and discover new and exciting ways to approach life and relationships. Through experiential learning, using African drums (djembe), this workshop will give you the opportunity to:

- Experience rhythm within your own body
- Discover different ways in which rhythm can help us to connect with ourselves and each other
- Explore the changing pulsation of yours and others' unique rhythms as they are influenced by the group
- Explore the impact of external rhythms that surround us in everyday life
- Discover how to restore balance by attending to your own natural, internal rhythms

No prior knowledge or experience of drumming is required. Drums will be provided. Cost: £120. Maximum participants: 12. For more information about this, or to book a place on the course, please contact Bernie on: 07903771097 or at: berniebane@hotmail.com (*information from Jeannene*).

FOY Conference 2016

'Grief and Bereavement'

**A Supportive Space – Time for Reflection
Challenging Conversations**

**29th April – 2nd May at the Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire**

Bereavement is both intensely personal and a shared, social experience. We aim to talk about what can happen, what resources we can draw on, our personal histories, and many different ways of responding to death. We will explore different types of grief, whilst learning how bereavement affects people in many different ways. Speakers will include a representative from CRUSE, the national charity for bereaved people, as well as from A.W. Lynn, a family funeral director. During the weekend there will also be free time for local walks, worship/meditation, and other activities. The conference begins on Friday evening and ends with lunch on Monday.

Standard cost for adults is £192. There is a £10 discount for first-timers, ministers, students and unwaged people.

General conference enquiries should be made to Joan Partington: 01228 670 565 / partingtons@gmail.com

Photos from Melody in India



'Finding Our Voice' Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



**Sundays 20th March and 17th April
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

Margaret Marshall 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 our 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 these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

Unitarian Christian Association AGM

'Who are Our Spiritual Heroes?'
A Dramatic Presentation given by Local Actors

Saturday 12th March, 12.00-4.00pm
Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, Cheshire

Knutsford is a picturesque town with a very interesting history. If you are attending the AGM and would like to visit Knutsford a guided walking tour will be arranged at 10.30am. There will be lunch at noon, worship at 1pm, the AGM at 1.45, the presentation and discussion at 2.30, and afternoon tea at 3.30. For those interested in Elizabeth Gaskell, the Victorian novelist, a short talk is offered after afternoon tea.

Please contact Rev. Jean Bradley for further information about the morning tour or to indicate your interest in attending the AGM. Telephone 01565 754 465 or email chattyministerjean@gmail.com.

For more info see: www.unitarianchristian.org.uk

Help!

We had a week-long workshop on Compassion some time ago and we have thought about Forgiveness and Gratitude. Is it time to consider Helpfulness, which was the subject of a sermon by the Dean of St Martin-in-the-Fields which I heard before Christmas on the radio? St Martin was the chap who gave away half his cloak. Not all of it – half. That has always puzzled me.

Our church in Dublin (where Bill Darlison introduced podcasts) puts the following few lines in the monthly newsletter: “If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell, or who has suffered a bereavement, and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please email the minister.”

We may want to help others but do we ourselves need to learn how? Being a good listener is a start. It is important not to pry. And it helps to make it clear that nothing said will be repeated. We used to have a meeting on Sunday afternoons along those lines. Revealing personal difficulties in confidence becomes easier when someone else has similar problems.



I am sure we all need help at some stage in our lives. (At my great age I cannot enter a tube carriage without a great number of people standing to offer their seat!) And it is very important to indicate that we are willing to accept help. I once saw a lady refuse an outstretched arm and as a result she fell getting from the landing craft to solid ground in San Torini and broke her hip.

Who can we reach out to in our daily lives? And will we graciously let others help us? Maybe another workshop would be useful ...?

Stephanie Saville

Warden's Column: Leaving Things Better than You Found Them

It's daffodil time of year again & the plucky mini Jetfire variety have popped up again at the front of the church - as they reliably do. My heart always lifts when I see them and they're a reminder that certain investments keep paying dividends year after year.

It's hard to remember now that when I first started here as Warden, the front garden wasn't even terraced. It sloped away on both sides of the entrance ramp the way it still does on the right. The year after Groundwork landscaped and replanted it for us - I added lots of bulbs. Some have flourished - some not: for some reason both the white & purple crocuses perished, while the yellow are still going strong.

More recent additions to the front beds are a Wisteria - which has actually been there for several years, but came into its own last year when we had a week worth of work done by Russell's Garden Centre which included providing it with wires to rampage along. I had great fun trying to encourage the tendrils to twine in (roughly) the right directions - and look forward to continuing that project when it starts growing again in Spring. I'm also looking forward to sampling some home-grown figs from the bush nestling in the corner made by the walls of the side bed. I managed to eat one or two last year - and this year there seem to be about 20 immature fruits overwintering: so it could be a bumper crop. Do try one in August if you're athletic enough to scramble down to it!

Inside the building, the most dramatic change since I've been here is in the toilets & kitchen - but probably the improvement I'm proudest of is our custom-built library shelving. The previous shelving was very dark and on the other side of the room, which blocked the doorway somewhat. Now the room seems so much more light & spacious and a few weeks ago we even managed to complete the refurbishing project (after about 3 years on hold!) by installing new curtains - thank you to Heidi for sourcing these!

This summer, our big project is an attempt to finally make the church roof watertight (after 34 years of problems) by covering the whole thing with a continuous membrane. Surely not a drop of water will be able to get through that! We'll see I guess - watch this space. Normally August is a very quiet time - but even though the building won't be that busy, I'm sure there'll still be conflicts between the needs of hirers and the needs of workmen - so I wouldn't say I'm actually looking forward to the process of getting the work done. However, as Sarah says, if we leave knowing we stopped the roof leaking - we can reasonably feel we did our bit!



Jenny Moy

‘Medicine and Mystic Consciousness’



**2.00pm on Sunday 24th April 2016
Here at Essex Church**

A rare opportunity to hear the British doctor and author, Dr Rached Daoud, who is internationally known for his new message in medicine and healing which has helped relieve the suffering of thousands of patients all over the world, talk about education for wellbeing, new medical approaches for treating chronic illness, and self-healing; opening the possibility for a person to heal themselves even in the most apparently hopeless of cases.

Dr Rached Daoud is also the author of many books; the latest, published in UK, is ‘Doctor Impossible’.

All welcome. No charge. An event organised by musician and friend of our congregation Jenny Thorn.

Small Group Communion



**13th March, 10th April 2016
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. These services are led by different members of the congregation. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we can experience a variety of different approaches. The line-up for the next couple of months is as follows:

**13th March – led by Jane Blackall
10th April – led by Tristan Jovanović**

If you would like to find out more then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

Hucklow Summer School ‘This Changes Everything’

**20-27th August 2016, The Nightingale Centre
Great Hucklow in the Peak District**



Hucklow Summer School brings fellow Unitarians together and allows them to get to know each other deeply and form lasting connections. The core purpose of summer school week is religious education: we focus on matters of religion and spirituality and intend to draw out and develop the potential of all participants. We aim to provide a carefully balanced programme, offering a rich mix of activities for both the heart and head, and a wide variety of optional sessions including country walks, poetry, discussions and crafts, which participants might ‘take home’ and try out in their own congregations and communities. We also ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for relaxed fellowship and fun during the week!

This year’s theme is ‘This Changes Everything’. In a series of daily theme talks our team of speakers will offer their perspectives on the subject of change. Amongst the aspects we may examine are: ways in which we may bring about positive change in our own lives, our relationships, our community, and the world at large; strategies for responding to and coping with the inevitable changes that all life entails; the impact of significant moments which prove to be life-changing; and those social, political and environmental changes taking place on a global scale which have an impact on all life. Our theme speakers for 2016 are **John Harley, Maria Pap, Jef Jones, Colleen Burns and Danny Crosby.**

There will also be a choice of morning engagement groups:

‘A Change is as Good as a Rest’

with Jo O’Sullivan and Michael Dadson

‘All Change!’ with Elizabeth Birtles and Lindy Latham

‘Taken at the Flood - Epiphany Moments’

with Margaret Kirk and Cody Coyne

‘New Brooms?’ with Katie McKenna and Robin Hanford

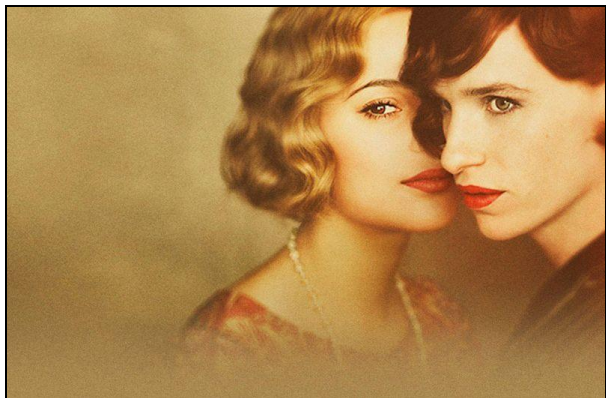
Children & Young People’s Programme

led by Claire Maddocks and Izzy Rosenberg.

Basic Cost for Adults (place in a shared room) is £500. Some bursaries are available to help with the cost of attending and we would appreciate it if you would get in touch ASAP for further funding advice.

Please visit Hucklow Summer School website for further details (www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk) and an application form. **Applications are due by 11 April 2016.** Alternatively, telephone Janet Costley on 01732 464211 or email info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk if you have any questions about the event.

Film Reviews: 'The Danish Girl' and 'Room'



Recently I have seen two films that made me think about gender roles and transgender people in our society.

I went to see "The Danish Girl" with a friend. For those who haven't seen it, the film tells the story of Einar Weneger, a Danish artist who in 1920s Danish society came to realise that she was a woman, trapped in a man's body. The name she chose for herself was Lili Elbe. I am sure that Hollywood has simplified and prettied up her story but even so, the film makes it very clear how hard it was for her to be a pioneer transgender person and how brave she was. All the doctors she consulted about the issue of being a woman in a man's body simply thought that she was mad and should be locked up if the various extremely unpleasant treatments they prescribed did not work. Lily had several ground-breaking surgeries but sadly, she died after her last operation of a heart attack. The film made me think more deeply about the roles that our society assigns to genders and how difficult people find it when people refuse to play the roles customarily assigned to them.

Another film I saw recently, "Room", brought home to me my own ingrained assumptions about genders. This is a film about a woman who was abducted at seventeen and now lives in a one-room garden shed with her child by her kidnapper. At the beginning of the film, the child has waist length long hair and quite delicate features. The child is called "Jack" but despite the masculine name, I did not accept it was a boy until he has his long hair cut about halfway through the film. I thought it must be some ploy of the mother's to keep her daughter safe from her kidnapper. I was shocked when I realised how much I had assumed simply because the little boy had long hair and how I felt differently about the film once I had accepted the child was male. I won't say any more about what happens in the film as I don't want to spoil it for anyone who wants to go and see it.

Both films are well worth seeing and have made me think more deeply about how deeply gender roles and attributes are engrained in our society and how I need to be more aware of this and more questioning.

Liz Tuckwell

'There are always hungry people to feed, naked people to clothe, sick people to comfort and make well. While I don't ask you to save the world, I do ask you to love those with whom you sleep, share the happiness of those you call friend, engage those among you who are visionary, and remove from your life those who offer you despair and disrespect.'

Nikki Giovanni

Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel Choir
will be entertaining you with music and songs including audience singalong on the theme of

Women in Song

Friday 4th March, 7.30 – 10.30pm
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, NW3 1NG

Tickets £14 to include a delicious two-course hot meal (children under 12 - £6)

Wine and soft drinks available

ENTRY BY TICKET ONLY

Tickets can be purchased at the chapel on Wednesday evenings 7.30-9.30pm

Richard Price Memorial Lecture Karen Armstrong 'Compassion: Nice Idea or Urgent Global Imperative'



Saturday 19th March 2016, 6-8pm
(doors open at 5.30 for a 6.00pm start)

**New Unity, 39A Newington Green
Stoke Newington, London N16 9PR**

The noted scholar, religious author, journalist, and campaigner for compassion, Karen Armstrong, will deliver New Unity's Richard Price Memorial Lecture. Karen Armstrong launched The Charter for Compassion in her 2009 TED Prize Talk Her 2008 TED talk 'Let's revive the golden rule.'

The lecture proceeds will benefit *Standing on the Side of Love UK*, because only love can drive out hate. *Standing on the Side of Love UK* brings love where there is hate and compassion where there is misunderstanding, anger, and fear.

Full price tickets £20, concessions £10
Available via www.eventbrite.co.uk

'Responding to Public Sculpture'

Address by Rev Sarah Tinker from 28th February

Do you ever find yourself reacting to seemingly similar events quite differently? Having chosen this theme of public sculpture, I've been looking through news reports from recent years, telling of the destruction of various statues. Why don't you have a guess whether these acts of destruction filled me with glee or despair:

- A sculpture of Margaret Thatcher here in London was attacked with a tennis racket in 2002 and eventually decapitated
- Saddam Hussein's statue was toppled by joyous Iraqis celebrating their freedom in 2003
- Colonel Gaddafi's statue in Libya suffered a similar fate in 2011
- The destruction of 6th century AD statues of the Buddha in the Afghani valley of Bamiyan in 2001, was orchestrated by the Taliban
- Many Syrian antiquities in Syria and northern Iraq have been destroyed or sold by the extremist group Daesh
- Ukrainians smashed a statue of Lenin in Kiev in 2011.

Statues can represent power and once authority starts to diminish it can be so very pleasurable to watch its fall, both real and symbolic. Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* describes so well how the mighty inevitably crumble or are ignored. Our towns are still decorated with statues of Queen Victoria but we don't generally notice her, or the thousands of other Victorians immortalised in bronze or marble, until some event brings them to our attention.

How did you respond to the recent campaign led by some Oxford students, who wanted a statue of Victorian businessman and politician Cecil Rhodes to be removed from Oriel College? The college refused to re-write history and insisted that Rhodes' considerable contributions as an educational benefactor deserved to be recognised. But the campaigners regard Rhodes as racist and as someone who misused the South African resources he controlled and who exploited African workers. His statue remains in Oxford – for now - too high up the front of a building to be attacked and covered with netting so pigeons can't pooh on him, which is the fate of so many public sculptures – loved or hated.

When extremists in foreign lands target ancient sculptures I have to moderate my immediate response. It's so easy to be aghast isn't it, as though a piece of ancient art work deserves a more emotional response than the daily attacks and indignities being suffered by millions of people the world over, ruled by harsh regimes or caught in the crossfire of civil war. Smashing statues, destroying old temples – these are remarkably effective ways to horrify us art loving liberal westerners, letting us know that they don't value what we value. We may not always remember the religious zeal shown by Protestant reformers when they smashed religious statues they regarded as idolatrous, not so many hundreds of years ago here in Europe.

By and large, here in 21st century Britain, we value public artistic expression. Even in these times of austerity money is found for playful and even provocative public displays. Currently standing on

the Fourth Plinth is German-American artist Hans Haacke's *Gift Horse* – an emaciated creature carrying an LED bow showing the latest prices on the London stock market – generally considered to be a comment on the way the capitalist financial markets can ravage ordinary lives. I don't know if you saw any of the recent *Lumiere London* light displays. They were exuberantly expressive examples of modern art. Janet Echelman, whose quote you'll find on today's order of service sheet, (*'My sculpture thrives in the context of the city, interacting with people in the course of their daily lives.'*) created a huge multi-coloured woven sculpture that was hung high above Oxford Circus. It looked like a giant wave and it was created to remember the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011. Us Londoners are fortunate to live in a city that is filled with publicly accessible art work. Of the 41 post war sculptures recently given grade 2 listing to protect them, 26 of them are here in the capital city and there's a map available to help you find them all.

Somerset House is hosting an exhibition till April 10th called *Out There: Our Post-War Public Art*. It's a celebration of the role sculpture played in the reconstruction of our cities after the bombings of World War 2. This was an optimistic era: the Festival of Britain, the founding the National Health Service, the building of new housing estates and even new towns. The concrete looked clean and new in the 1950s. We're living in such different times now. But thanks to the foresight of some of those working on reconstruction in the 1950s we have some remarkable pieces of sculpture on our streets and in our parks. They were created in an era where objects were built to last and though some have disappeared some will hopefully have just as long a life as those eminent Victorians.

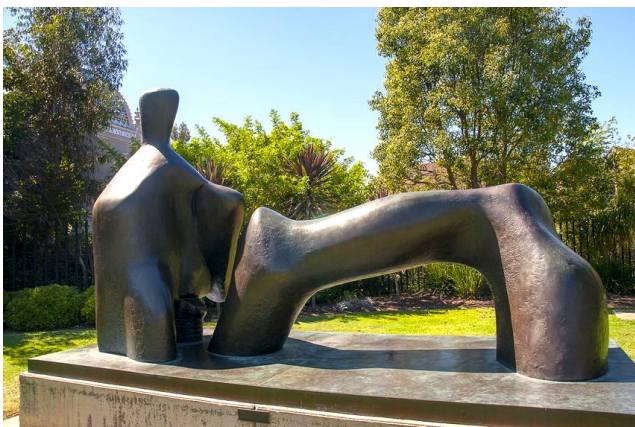
We can trace the development of popular styles in public art work. For a long time it seems that 3D sculptures were created primarily as religious artefacts. In later developments, powerful individuals were honoured in stone and metal. The post war period was often a time of exuberant artistic self-expression and has led to the current day where public art tends to be more ephemeral, more an event, a short lived yet powerful statement which then moves aside to allow others their turn.

But all such works, whether temporary or permanent, invite a response from us – we relate with them – sometimes quite powerfully. The light sculpture created by Janet Echelman in Oxford Circus changed colour in response to members of the public who connected to it through wifi using their phones. I've really enjoyed people talking today about their favourite sculptures. They can become like much loved old friends to us. Hence the campaign a few years ago to stop Tower Hamlets Council from selling a Henry Moore sculpture of a seated woman to the highest bidder and taken abroad. Created in the 1960s for a Bethnal Green housing estate Old Flo is now enjoying retirement on a hillside in Yorkshire at the always-worth-a-visit Yorkshire Sculpture Park. At one point in the campaign to stop her sale, her supporters started dressing like Flo in very entertaining ways. Public sculpture can be funny; it can also be both moving and ridiculous – two of my reactions to the Albert Memorial in nearby Kensington Gardens, which tells both of Queen Victoria's love for her husband alongside the ridiculous and dangerous notions of an Empire at its peak. Perhaps best of all, public sculpture can lift us – can lift our spirits, can lift us out of ourselves, can lift us out of the ordinary. Next time you're travelling along Oxford Street towards the west I recommend you barge your way to the front seat upstairs on a double decker bus and enjoy a glimpse of Barbara Hepworth's *Winged Figure* on the side of the John Lewis building. It always lifts my spirits. I wonder what some of your favourite sculptures might be?

Some of our Favourite Sculptures



Roy's choice: Rodin's 'The Burgheers of Calais'



Heidi's choice was a Henry Moore reclining figure at Kenwood House (picture shows a Moore figure in Bilbao).



Jane's choice: 'Man with Arms Open' by Giles Penny which is situated at Canary Wharf near Westferry Circus.

My Favourite Work of (Public) Art

From the service 'Life in Three Dimensions' on 28th February.

The UK is blessed (or in some cases it has to be said cursed) with many artworks situated in public places. Sculptures small, large and extra- large as well as murals of various sorts occupy urban sites and increasingly rural spaces too. In London some superb Works of Art can be found in both municipal and Royal parks, perched on office buildings and even on the sides of shops such as the Barbara Hepworth sculpture on the side of John Lewis in Oxford Street.

The London Underground too has art on view. You could for example find Eduardo Paolozzi's exuberant mosaics lining the platforms at Tottenham Court Road.

However, the work I have chosen as my absolute favourite is The Burgheers of Calais by Auguste Rodin. Situated in the gardens next to the Palace of Westminster, the medieval style of the Houses of Parliament which loom over the figure group actually works as an excellent scene setting backdrop.

The story of the Burgheers of Calais derives from a time when the Normandy town was besieged by the English king in the 14th century. Six townsmen gave themselves over as prisoners, believing they were to be executed in return for the city's salvation. In the event, they were spared, but Rodin's sculpture portrays the moment of their martyr-like sacrifice.

The emaciated bodies, tattered robes and, above all, the wonderfully delicate and melancholy gestures and poses of the figures express a strangely powerful and captivating view of the pain and sorrow experienced by these brave souls and indeed by all of us.

The sculpture cast in bronze, is one of very few large commemorative public artworks that for once does not celebrate kings and nobles, military men, imperialists, industrialists, or other worthies, but is instead a representation of the dignity and humanity of the ordinary citizen prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the welfare of others.

With this sculpture, designed in the 1880s, Rodin proved himself the rightful heir of Donatello, Michelangelo and Bernini. Indeed, the soft feeling of surrender it evokes is comparable with Michelangelo's Dying Slave in the Louvre. Yet, in Rodin's hands, this is disconcertingly modern art, flowing surfaces, seemingly undulating volume and mass adding psychological depth to the heart-breaking scene.

Rodin's masterpiece is sculpture as history painting, and it serves in London as a monument to humble, everyday heroes. It is true and it is beautiful. If only more public art rose to its level.

When you are next in central London and have some spare time it is well worth a visit. If you can't face negotiating the tourist throng encountered on exiting Westminster station you can instead approach it from Millbank being in fact only a short stroll along the river from Tate Britain.

Roy Clark

'One kind thought, one kind word, one kind deed, one at a time, and the world will be transformed. Every thought pondered, every word uttered, and every deed performed counts. Nothing is lost. Good or bad, nothing dissipates in the void. Rather, everything is recorded in the human brain and heart, and in the cosmic development and into eternity.'

Jean Maalouf

Services at Essex Church



Sunday 6th March, 11am – ‘Cultivating Joy’

Service led by Jeannene Powell

In this service we'll explore the importance of cultivating joy in the good times to balance the difficult times in life.

Sunday 13th March, 11am – ‘Messages from the Wise Ones’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker with Interfaith Minister and Storyteller Christopher Corps

The start of a three week series of services leading to Easter, exploring the eternal wisdom brought to us by the world's wisdom traditions.

Sunday 20th March, 11am – ‘Palm Sunday’

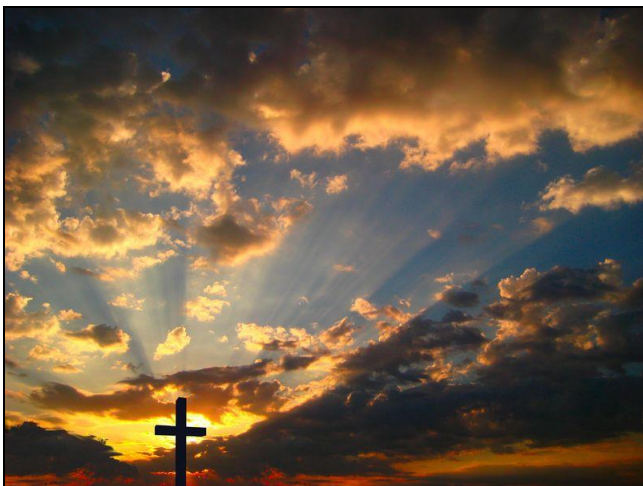
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A day remembering Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding a donkey and chance for us to ponder the rises and falls risked by those in public life.

Sunday 27th March, 11am – ‘Easter Sunday’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With stirring music from our quartet followed by a shared congregational lunch. Please bring some food or drink along.



Good Cause Collection of the Month

‘Water Aid’



Collection on Sunday 27th March

The Crisis: Diarrhoea caused by dirty water and bad sanitation is the second biggest child killer worldwide. A lack of clean water and toilets keeps girls out of school, stops women from working, and traps people in poverty.

Water Aid's Approach: We tackle the crisis from all angles. We work with local partners to deliver clean water and toilets and promote good hygiene, and campaign to make change happen for everyone everywhere.

Policy and Practice: How can water, sanitation and hygiene help end extreme poverty? How does climate change affect our work? How can we ensure the poorest and most vulnerable people are not left behind? These are just some of the questions you can find the answers to in our policy, practice and advocacy pages.

For more information see: www.wateraid.org/uk

Previous Charity Collections:

Thank you for your generosity in contributing to recent charity collections. I am pleased to let you know that we will be sending the following donations to good causes:

December – Glass Door (local homeless charity) - £374.93

January – Unitarian Youth Programme - £666.37



‘The challenge, then, is to recognize that the world is about two things: differentiation and communion. The challenge is to seek a unity that celebrates diversity, to unite the particular with the universal, to recognize the need for roots while insisting that the point of roots is to put forth branches. What is intolerable is for differences to become idolatrous. No human being's identity is exhausted by his or her gender, race, ethnic origin, national loyalty, or sexual orientation. All human beings have more in common than they have in conflict, and it is precisely when what they have in conflict seems over-riding that what they have in common needs most to be affirmed. James Baldwin described us well: "Each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other — male in female, female in male, white in black and black in white. We are part of each other."’

William Sloane Coffin