



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: November 2015

What's On...

Sunday 1st November, 11am-noon
'A Life of Honesty'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 1st November, 12.30-2.30pm
'Me and My Life' Workshop
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 3rd November, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 5th November, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Original Blessing' led by Carole Grace

Sunday 8th November, 11am-noon
'Remembrance Sunday'
Led by Congregation Members

Sunday 8th November, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Elisa Melgosa

Sunday 8th November, 2-3pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 10th November, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Sunday 15th November, 11am-noon
'Our Body of Sound'
Led by Sonya Leite & Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 17th November, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Sunday 22nd November, 11am-noon
'Our Body of Politics'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 22nd Nov, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 29th November, 11am-noon
'Our Body of Earth'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Date for your Diary:

Sunday 13th December, 11am
**Christmas Carol Service
and Congregational Lunch**

Many Ways to Travel

A Message from our Minister

This simple handcart appeared in the British Museum's exhibition about the history of Germany, though you might not immediately guess its symbolic significance in the history of humanity. It was chosen by the museum's director Neil MacGregor to represent the estimated 14 million refugees, mostly German,

who were made homeless after the Second World War. They were expelled from eastern provinces, where many of them had lived for generations, and then wandered across Europe seeking homes. The years of 1946 and 1947 were very bleak indeed for these refugees. Carrying their few remaining possessions, sometimes in handcarts similar to this one, they relied on the kindness of those they met along the way, people prepared to share the little they had with those less fortunate than themselves.



Recently I was looking through some course materials prepared by the Refugee Council to heighten our awareness of the experiences of refugees. In one exercise we were asked to imagine having to leave our homes in the dead of night, not knowing where we were going or how long we would be away. We were told to list 20 items that we would choose to take with us on such a journey. I've often led this exercise with groups of teenagers and it's always interesting to hear their thoughts about what might seem important, useful or essential at such moments in life. You might like to make such a list for yourself. What would you choose to take with you if you were to leave home this very night. As the exercise unfolds we are told to shed these items, perhaps using them as bribes to get through a checkpoint, or as currency to buy much necessary supplies. Eventually we are left with just one item. What might we hold onto until the very end? Would it be something practical or perhaps something of sentimental value, such as a photograph? In real life, chance plays a greater part than any choosing by us.

As journalists and film crews continue to record the arrival of refugees in Europe, fleeing from warfare and oppression in their own countries, I am struck by the changes of circumstances that have occurred in a relatively short period of human history. My parents worked in Germany immediately after the Second World War and witnessed the plight of European refugees. Newspapers at the time showed boat crowded with people desperately trying to leave Europe. Now the governments of Europe, and we as individual citizens, are confronted by the desperation of those hoping to come to Europe, with its relative safety and security. Let's not shy away from the complexity of this subject nor from the reality, that if world history takes another unexpected turn, it might be us who become entirely reliant on the help and welcome offered by strangers.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Me and My Life' Workshop * First Aid Training: Spaces Available * Poems by John Hands * 'Reflections and Thank You' from Jim Blair * November Charity Collection: The Kiloran Trust * FUSE 2016 * 'An Empathetic Eye: The Photography of Robert Doisneau' by Roy Clark * 'Embercombe Retreat' by Veronica Needa * 'Unitarian Women's Group' by Carole Grace * Creativity Group News * 'A Life of Gratitude' sermon 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.



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

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 5th November 2015 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 November gathering will be on the theme of 'Original Blessing' and will be led by Carole Grace.

If you would like to know more about our 'Heart and Soul' gatherings email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk



'A blessing is not something that one person gives another. A blessing is a moment of meeting, a certain kind of relationship in which both people involved remember and acknowledge their true nature and worth, and strengthen what is whole in one another. By making a place

for wholeness within our relationships, we offer others the opportunity to be whole without shame and become a place of refuge from everything in them and around them that is not genuine. We enable people to remember who they are.'

Rachel Naomi Remen

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

1 st November:	Natasha Drennan
8 th November:	Juliet Edwards
15 th November:	Gina Bayley
22 nd November:	Runa Alam
29 th November:	Juliet Edwards

Coffee:

1 st November:	Jo Tye
8 th November:	Liz Tuckwell
15 th November:	Veronica Needa
22 nd November:	Sue Smith
29 th November:	Sue Smith

Greeting:

1 st November:	Billy Jackson
8 th November:	Annette Percy
15 th November:	Roy Clark
22 nd November:	Ted Nist
29 th November:	Carole Grace

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

Playback Theatre: Let's Talk about Migrants



It was a suitably dark and wet autumn evening here in London when people from 14 different countries came together to explore their stories of migration. Co-hosted by Playback Theatre and GlobalNet21, an organisation committed to encouraging debate and discussion about current issues, we were given glimpses from lives vastly different from our own. We should do this again. There is still so much to explore, so many stories to be told, so much thinking to be done about these complex and confusing issues of our modern world. Thank you Playback.

How to Make Money Go Further



In these days of bleak austerity we need to make our money work for us. If you are a UK taxpayer, this can be done at no extra cost to yourself. When you collect your hymn book ask for an envelope, put your contribution in and fill in the back. Just doing that will make your donation worth 20 per cent more. This is called 'gift aid' and is a wonderful way of you helping good causes painlessly. We claim gift aid back on all donations to the church if people sign the appropriate declaration on the envelope and when we do our monthly charity collection in the service for a good cause we pass the gift aid declaration envelopes on to them.

Even better for the church and indeed any other charity is to set up a gift aided standing order so that there will be a reliable source of income for them. It saves you the trouble of having to find your wallet when the collection is made on a Sunday morning! If you want to know more do have a chat with us or with Natasha Drennan our treasurer.

And thank you all for your generosity.

Carole Grace and Liz Tuckwell

First Aid Training: Spaces Available

Friday 27th November, 9.30am-4.00pm



As part of our staff training, we are hosting an Emergency First Aid course here at the church on Friday 27th November. The day will run from 9.30am to 4.00pm and will cover the essentials that we all need to know about first aid both at work and in our daily lives. Those attending will receive a certificate, valid for three years.

We have some free places on this course for congregation members and some subsidised places for £15 (the training usually costs £35). But we **do need people to book in writing** so contact us on info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk as soon as you can if you would like to attend.

'Pride & Prejudice'

26th, 27th, 28th November 2015
At Hampstead Parish Church

Jane Austen fans may be interested in the Hampstead Players' forthcoming production of *Pride & Prejudice*, featuring Essex Church's Alice Lambert as Mary Bennet. Performances will take place in Hampstead Parish Church on the 26th and 27th of November at 7:30pm and the 28th of November at 2:30pm and 7:30pm.



Hampstead Parish Church (St John-at-Hampstead) is within easy walking distance of Hampstead Tube Station (Northern Line). Tickets can be bought online or on the door. For more information, please see the Hampstead Players' website (<http://www.hampsteadplayers.org.uk>) or e-mail Alice at alicelambert@hotmail.com.

The church itself is a very interesting and beautiful building; its main graveyard is home to the grave of painter John Constable, and its adjoining graveyard contains a couple of du Maurier graves and that of Eva Gore-Booth, suffragist.

Good Cause Collection of the Month
**The Kiloran Trust:
 Caring for Carers**



Collection on Sunday 22nd November

Our November charity was recommended by Roy Clark. The Kiloran Trust has a large welcoming house in west London in which unpaid carers at home can come for a Respite Care Break away from Caring. Kiloran is specifically for unpaid carers looking after a relative or friend at home - a husband, wife, child, parent, sibling - who requires full time commitment to their care. Typical of the carers helped by Kiloran might be a husband whose wife has Alzheimer's Dementia; a daughter whose elderly mother is a victim of a stroke; parents of a child with both physical and learning disabilities. They welcome carers who are looking after a wide variety of illnesses and conditions. Sometimes they are able to welcome "carer families" who need a short break together whilst the person being cared for is in respite.

For more information see: www.kilorantrust.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:

August – Dr Hadwen Trust - £187.95

September - Mind - £270.47

October – Red Cross Syria Appeal - £168.42

**Creativity Group
 Taking a Break**



We have decided to give our creativity group a break for the time being. The project to make embroidered wall-hanging panels for the front of the church is ongoing and if you would like to join in with that then please speak to Sue Smith or Juliet Edwards to find out more about what's required.

Jane Blackall



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month
 from 2-3pm: 8th November 2015**

PLEASE NOTE – NO CLASSES IN DECEMBER

Midweek classes on TUESDAYS - 12.30-1.30pm

(please note that Tuesday classes will also be taking a break during December and will resume on 5th January)

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 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.



*'Epidaurus' by Barbara Hepworth - on the sea front at St. Ives.
 Photograph by Juliet Edwards.*

Reflections and Thank You

I wish to thank our many friends for helping us through these very difficult times. We lost Caroline on the 8th September 2015 to an aggressive liver cancer. Our church and broader Unitarian Community have and continue to be of great comfort to the Blair family. I am aware that we are all in mourning and that we all miss Caroline.

Caroline's passing was marked by a Cremation Service and a Life Celebration at Essex Church. Both were beautiful events filled with love and grief. Caroline was taken early and her loss is hard to make sense of. I have been very moved by the many conversations, cards and letters. This love has helped me bear her loss.



I miss Caroline very much and I cannot fully comprehend that there will be no more conversations, walks and cuddles. It sometimes feel that she has gone on holiday and will just pop up, but part of me knows that this not true. I am aware that I have lost her physical being, but I still feel her around me, I sense her presence and still find myself talking to her: but I do miss the considered responses and the occasional 'Oh Jim'.

I have generally been kept busy since her death, with lots of visiting friends and family. Jennie, Iona and Amber, supported by Jordan and Mark have really taken care of me. Amber has kept me on my toes and directed me into joyful activity; she is fully alive and very much in the present. Amber is a beautiful, generous and friendly little bundle of joy and at only eighteen months, reminds me of Caroline. The legacy of my three girls does help. They are a testament to Caroline, her love and devotion. In leaving South Africa before her visa was resolved, Iona has incurred an automatic five year ban from returning. We are seeking to have this overturned.

In trying to make sense of any of Caroline's death, I have been looking for some positive outcomes. Under the energetic organisational skills of Jennie, we have all managed to raise over £2000 for Meadow House Hospice, where Caroline was so well cared for and another £2660 for Sight Savers, Caroline's favourite charity. Sight Savers say that £30 is enough to restore or save a person's sight. This means that we have helped around 90 people see again. This is both a beautiful and a very a meaningful contribution, enabling many of those individuals to also provide life giving support for others. Helping a breadwinner can rescue a whole family. The UK Government is matching any contributions to Sight Savers until the 15th December 2015. If you are inclined and able, that means a £15 donation is doubled to £30 (does not included recovered tax) and provides the gift of sight. A close friend, Janine, inspired by Caroline, recently ran a half marathon and raised another £1000 for Cancer Research. Maybe we can all do more?

I am in the foothills of a long journey and face uncertainty for what lies ahead. The prospect of being 'a proper adult' and redefining who I am in the world makes me nervous. It all feels a bit strange, almost as if my view of the world has altered and has not yet come back into sharp focus. But, I do have the inspiration of Caroline who was quietly courageous and sought to live a full life in the present. As one of Caroline's biggest projects, I expect that she has left me better equipped to deal with what lies ahead.

I am aware that Caroline is mourned by many and that individuals also carry the loss of family and friends, from previous events. I am aware of how poorly equipped I was to deal with the death of Caroline. Others have expressed similar concerns and I feel it might be a good time, as a community in mourning, to explore how we deal with loss and explore our own mortality.

Unitarians are a mixed collection, but it is a strong community of individuals who come together and offer genuine love and support when it is needed. I offer thanks on behalf of the of the Blair clan. I am still a bit shaken by events, but will always have time to have a chat or support others. Responding to a bereaved person can sometimes feel uncomfortable, I am personally comfortable with your attention and, just a reminder, hugs have always worked for me.

Jim Blair



wars are terrible
but
evanescent
tenacity of peace
outlives them all.

John Hands



An Empathetic Eye: The Photography of Robert Doisneau



I was recently asked to undertake a magazine review for a major new book on the work of the great French photographer Robert Doisneau. In undertaking this pleasant task, I was reminded once again of the power of the image to communicate wordlessly life's contradictions, beauty, complexity, and mystery. Robert Doisneau's photograph *Le baiser de l'hôtel de ville* (The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville) is one of the most famous and instantly recognisable photographs of the 20th century. This and other celebrated Doisneau images, many scarcely less iconic; continue to adorn posters, greetings cards, book jackets, music album covers and countless other printed materials. Perhaps more than any other photographer, Doisneau's vision has come to represent the very soul of romantic Paris.

During the late 1940s and through the 1950s Doisneau becoming a leading figure in what became known as humanist photography. This important international movement's primary interest and focus was a celebration of the human spirit, the fleeting events and simple pleasures of everyday life. Life as it unfolded in the streets of Paris was Robert Doisneau's theatre. "One of the greatest joys of my career has been to see and speak to people I don't know. Very often these simple people are the sweetest souls and generate an atmosphere of poetry all by themselves," he once said. "I took a mischievous pleasure in spotlighting society's rejects, in both the people I took and my choice of backgrounds."

What marks out a classic Doisneau image is not technical skill, which he had in abundance, nor his in-depth knowledge of his terrain. These were important contributory factors of course, but what ultimately determines the impact and retaining power of his best photographs is how they convey his deep empathy and respect of all classes of people captured in their natural environments. In addition there is his ability to invest a specific event with universal meaning. For example, a wedding party in a local cafe through the lens of Doisneau symbolises social cohesion and the power of community, all achieved through the single frame narrative. Doisneau called himself a "fisher" of pictures, content to wait for the coalescing of circumstances before pressing his camera shutter button. This tendency is well illustrated in images like "The Sidelong Glance", "Propping up the Arts" and "Close to the Right Answer", where the rewards of his patience are timelessly recorded.

Doisneau's style of photography fell steadily out of fashion during the 60s and 70s replaced by a harder hitting social realist school. The market changed too with weekly picture magazines and papers declining in popularity increasingly giving way to the fast growing new media of television. However, a revival of interest in the work of Doisneau and his fellow humanist photographers since the 1990s is a testament to the timeless humanity of these photographs. Arguably Doisneau's vision was a celebration of a world partly real and partly as he wanted it to be, but it is also unique, moving ... and rather wonderful.

Roy Clark

Children's Group News

We have been busy working on a project about children of the world and talked about the things in life that money cannot buy. We made this list - what would you put in your list of things money can't buy?

- Peace
- Happiness
- Love
- Honour
- Sky / moon / sun / stars
- Family
- Mum / Dad
- Health - but 50/50 because rich people get better health care
- Friendship
- God
- Air - but again rich people often live in less polluted places

Nadia

Festival of Unitarians in the South East: FUSE: 19th-21st February 2016 Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing



Join over a hundred spiritual seekers for a weekend by the sea, filled with celebration, inspiration, and education. Over twenty workshops on leadership, worship, community, social justice, personal growth and spirituality. Inspirational worship that speaks to the diversity of belief in our community. Full children's programme led by John Harley and Liz Hills. Inclusive and accessible space.

Cost of the full conference weekend, adult: £245 (single room), £195 (shared room). Take advantage of the early bird discount of £20.00 if you book before 1st December. There will be a limited number of bursaries available that will cover up to 50% of the registration costs. Our Essex Church committee are also interested in helping people to attend so please speak to Sarah if you'd like to go.

For more information on programme, prices and registration see: www.fusefest.org.uk

Small Group Communion



8th November, 20th December
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:

8th November – Elisa Melgosa
20th December – Tristan Jovanović

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

John Hands and Heidi Ferid Pop-Up Art & Poetry

Sunday 22nd November, 7pm
Golders Green Unitarians
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS



Do come along to this art exhibition and poetry reading from our own John Hands and Heidi Ferid at Golders Green Unitarians. Donations will be welcome in aid of the British Red Cross Syria Crisis appeal. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome – bring your friends!

'The Big Sleep Out'

Sarah Williams (Juliet Edwards' daughter)
Sleeping Rough for Charity



On Friday December 4th I will be joining my fellow colleagues and older students from Greenford High School in The Big Sleep Out to raise money for 'We are Trinity' (wearetrinity.org.uk) a charity based in Uxbridge which works to end homelessness. Every year a group of staff and students take part by being sponsored to survive the night out of doors – just as thousands of homeless people do every night. I'd be really grateful if you would be prepared to sponsor me – it is suggested we raise £100 each but I'd like to think I could do a lot better than that... absolutely all donations would be very gratefully received.

You can pledge your financial support here: <http://goo.gl/CBVwj4> (Virgin Money giving page) or I will arrange to make a collection at church.

Many thanks for your support. Best wishes, Sarah Williams

One Light Spiritual Gathering 'Kindness'

with Rev. Paul Sandford



Friday 13th Nov, 7-9.00pm - Here at Essex Church

One Light Spiritual Gatherings are offered by Joanna Ryam and Suzanne Cohen. We are open hearted One Spirit Interfaith Ministers offering blessings, celebrations, services and spiritual counselling to people of all faiths and none. Members of the Association of Interfaith Ministers - trained and ordained by the Interfaith Foundation. In response to requests, we're are going to start 30 minutes later than usual at 7pm to allow more time to get to gatherings from work. This means that the service part of the gathering will finish at 8.30pm and because of the lateness, we won't be sharing a pot-luck supper. However, you are most welcome to join us for tea and cake until 9pm if you wish.

For further information contact: onelightlondon@gmail.com

Unitarian Women's Group: An autumn weekend in Hucklow



The village is an ideal retreat being surrounded by wooded hills which overlook picturesque farmland. Just breathing in the fresh air feels healing. The welcome is always warm at the Unitarian Nightingale Centre in the Peak District village of Great Hucklow and, although they must be paddling very fast like the swans, Stella the manager and her lovely staff look calm and happy. I feel at home though I have not been to a national Unitarian Women's Group meeting before. I feel prepared and excited.

Later in the evening: There are 32 of us here. It has been a pleasure to be greeted by old friends and by many women I do not know. Although I am new to the movement people are very kind and 'bring me up to speed' when I start to look unsure. The AGM is in the evening and passes off peacefully; despite some animated exchanges reconciliation was soon gained.

Saturday: We spent our morning in groups with very skilled workshop leaders. We were looking at how we communicated to others and how we made assumptions about them with no evidence for our beliefs. It was done in a respectful way and we could be light and humorous as well. It was fun and profound. The theme lasted all day and was approached through a number of creative processes to create insight. We used art-work, drama, dance, singing and words. I could have sat out at any time but decided to stay and was rewarded with a better understanding of how I communicate.

The evening was completed by us presenting our work to the group. The different approaches and concerns were handled very creatively, there was laughter, pathos, sadness and questioning. What else would we expect from Unitarians! I love the fact that we are unique and that our movement encourages us to give love and respect to others, in all their diversity.

I have not mentioned the food at Hucklow yet, which is hearty. I believe their vegetables etc. are sourced locally or even grown in the gardens and the cooking is mainly old-fashioned but well done. It's heavy work trying to create insight. And so to bed.

I cannot remember when I have slept so deeply. We are plied with great English breakfasts which warmed us as we walked down to the chapel. It was a lovely service and I was feeling fed in every way. So back to the Nightingale Centre to say farewell, which is sad, however I feel we will meet again. We exchange hugs and phone numbers.....what a gift. Carole Grace

Editor's Note: The Unitarian Women's Group runs a weekend at the Nightingale Centre each autumn, usually on the last full weekend of October. If you are interested in attending next year our congregation's chairperson Juliet Edwards will have more details.

News from the Church Management Committee

Notes from the last meeting on Tuesday 20th October

- The previous meeting on 17th September was postponed due to the illness and sudden death of our dear friend Caroline Blair. The committee wishes to record our deep sadness and to give thanks for her life and service to the church.
- We received a report from the Avonside Group who had surveyed our troublesome roof in the summer. They are proposing using a new membrane system to cover the entire roof, which has the advantage that it can be coloured to look like the existing roof. They would also suggest replacing our roof lights with much better insulated versions. We need to do more research on this new roofing material but it may be the way forward.
- Our church heaters are reaching the end of their lives and cannot be replaced. We are not sure what to do next so for this winter we have put complicated instructions by the thermostat to guide user groups in getting the church space warm enough. Some heaters are still working and there are two oil filled radiators that can be plugged in.
- Apologies to anyone who didn't get the message that we had postponed the September Activists' Group. We hope to return to this idea next year.
- Our new accounting software Xero is starting to show its potential now that Jenny and Natasha have entered lots more of our monthly figures. It should make budgeting and preparing Annual Accounts much easier next year.
- We will be happy to support people with the costs of attending the FUSE weekend from 19th to 21st February as needed. Try and book before December 1st to receive an early discount.
- Sarah is still hoping someone might like to attend the Unitarian Vision Day in Sheffield on November 21st with her. Again, all expenses can be paid.

'Finding Our Voice' Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

**Sunday 22nd November 2015,
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.

Refugees: A Prayer and a Poem

Let's join now in a time of prayer and reflection as I call on the divine spirit of life and of love to be with us now and to bless all that we do and say together here today.

In a week filled with news of people like us trying to move from one part of the world to another and meeting so many hardships along the way, let us pray for all people who have had to leave their homes for any reason – all displaced persons, all refugees, all asylum seekers, all immigrants. It is hard for many of us to imagine what it must be like to feel the need to leave one country and seek refuge and a new life in another, but those of us who are blessed with homes of comfort and safety can give thanks for the blessings we have. There are some among us who are far from home, some with joy and some with sadness. Let us think of those far from home with love and with commitment to help all people feel welcome here in our church community.

The issue of refugees and displaced people is a concern throughout our world. Let us pray for the lawmakers and enforcers who have such a difficult task. May they be blessed always with compassion in their words and actions – may they never forget that they too might find themselves without a home and in danger at some time. When the words 'economic migrant' are used to describe people that some developed countries are trying to shut out may we have the humility and the grasp of history required to remind us that our good fortune is based entirely on our ancestors moving about the earth to seek better conditions for themselves and their offspring – us.

May our world community find ever new creative ways to help one another and to overcome the problems that cause people to leave their homes – economic uncertainty and inequality, hatred and oppression, warfare, hunger and shortage of water. Let us be people who rise to the challenge and keep searching for humane ways to resolve complex issues.

And in our own lives let us never slip into complacency in our thinking – but rather be ever grateful for that which we have, ever attentive to the needs of others, doing what we can, however small – to make this world of ours ever more just, more humane, more compassionate, a bit friendlier – and may this be so for the greater good of all – amen.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Hope and Dreams

All Gods have stopped smiling
While watching the problems compiling
The moon and stars are witnessing the mess from the sky
Hoping for a solution to apply
One human right is equal to both you and me
It's the right to dream about a better future and being free
On one side of the fence there's hope
On the other side nobody can cope
To cure the world with paracetamol isn't enough
Leaders who try that are just a big bluff
Many sparks set the world on fire
To connect it again we need a strong, strong wire
Overwhelmed thoughts are turned into ice
Who's successful is up to a single dice
Little room for blaming and shaming
More of that will only lead to deeper inflaming
To make the Gods smile again
You have to start using mother Earth's brain
Stop helping only a fraction
There's need for plenty of action

Sofie Sandell 2015

With These Wet Leaves...

With these wet leaves
I lie flat upon the ground
With these tall trees
I touch clouds inaccessible
With this rain I wash
Hedges and roads
With all these things I am
Part of what You are.

With this mobile telephone
I talk away Your presence
With this book I muse upon
Unreal possibilities, parked
In front of the television set
I ignore Your world around me.
Behind and through
All my many artefacts
I hide away from You.

John Hands

Christmas at Essex Church

Dates for your Diary



Carol Service and Christmas Lunch Sunday 13th December, 11am & 12.30pm

Bring your friends along to enjoy singing familiar Christmas carols on 13th December... and also bring some food and drink to share for a shared lunch (keep an eye out for a sign-up sheet nearer the time and let us know what you plan to bring).

Candlelit Christmas Eve Thursday 24th December, 5pm

We will be holding our candlelit service at 5pm on Christmas Eve. There will be time for a cup of tea and maybe a mince pie or two afterwards.

Christmas Eve Meal Thursday 24th December, 7pm

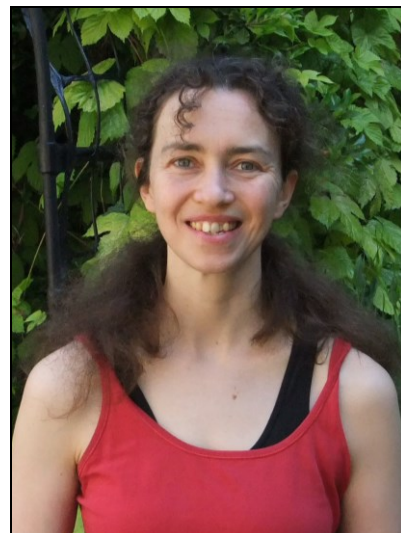
A small group from the congregation plan to go out for a meal at a local restaurant on Christmas Eve (as has become our tradition). If you would like to join us please let Jane know so she can book a table: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Warden's Column

I thought I'd use this month's column to talk about a couple of one day workshops happening in the church this November. The first is organised by Alternatives – who are based at St James, Piccadilly – but have recently booked in several workshops here.

Conscious Writing: Saturday 14th November 10.30am-5pm

Conscious Writing is a holistic and practical approach to creative awakening that leads you to discover your true self and express your true voice – on the page and in the world. It's the core teaching for anyone who has a message to share or a story to tell and feels inspired to make a positive difference in the world. It can be applied to any and all types of writing to reveal your most innovative creative ideas and fluently blends soul and craft. Whether you dream of writing but haven't started yet or are an experience published author, join us to experience this original practice for releasing your fears and writing what you are truly here to write.



By the end, you will have completed your first piece of Conscious Writing and know how to:

- Apply the 7 Core Principles for personal experience of transpersonal Truth, and emerge transformed and ready to write
- Align all aspects of yourself – body, emotions, mind and soul – to bring your whole self to the creative writing process
- Access the Conscious Writing Sanctuary, a powerful inner space out of which timeless words flow freely

£65/£50 concessions. More information from: www.alternatives.org.uk/event/conscious-writing-julia-mccutchen

Yoga Retreat: Saturday 21st November, 10.00am-5pm

The second is a yoga retreat run on the following Saturday, 21 November, 10-5pm, by a local teacher who's held several one-day workshops here. This is what she writes about it:

You don't have to attend yoga classes in London regularly to join us on the urban yoga retreat as I try my best to make these yoga days suitable for everyone, from beginners to those with experience of yoga. I encourage students to listen to their own bodies attentively and learn how to adapt poses and sequences to suit their own level of strength, stamina and flexibility. You will have the opportunity to develop your practice during an extensive morning yoga session where we will work on various core strengthening techniques and longer held poses that bring with them a deeper, meditative quality to our yoga practice. The morning session on the urban yoga retreat will be followed by a freshly prepared vegetarian lunch where we like to produce new and interesting seasonal dishes for us all to try followed by some of our homemade cakes. After lunch, we will go out and enjoy some fresh air on one of our traditional 'yoga hikes' together around the Serpentine and Kensington Gardens, in London, which is really close by.

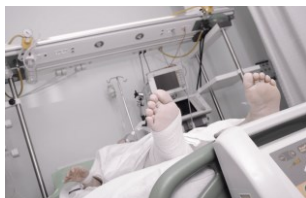
After our walk, the afternoon yoga class will be more restorative and focussed on relaxation. It will comprise yoga gently, breathing techniques and a deep, guided relaxation known as yoga nidra. You will get the chance to experience the essence of yoga and the way it unites us all over a longer period than you can in a regular yoga class and also have the opportunity to get to know some lovely like-minded people, enjoy some beautiful urban scenery and return home feeling thoroughly relaxed and rejuvenated.

We remain committed to keeping our one day urban yoga retreats, in London, as affordable to as many people as possible and have kept them unchanged since 2009 at £60! This price includes all drinks, snacks and the freshly prepared vegetarian lunch.

More information from: www.elisawilliamsyoga.com/#!/one-day-retreats

Jenny Moy

**CAMPAIGN FOR
DIGNITY
IN DYING.**



Dignity in Dying

I won't be the only one I suspect who had written to their MP in support of the Assisted Dying Bill in September, which MPs in the end voted against - 330 against and only 118 for the Bill. This is a disappointing result, which shows the House of Commons does not always reflect public opinion. Public opinion now supports a change in the law to allow assisted death, only in very limited circumstances when someone is in the last stages of a terminal illness and fully understanding of their situation. Our Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings voted in favour of assisted dying two years ago, the only religious movement here in the UK to do so. If you also care about this issue you might consider joining Dignity in Dying, which is a campaigning organisation aiming to increase public and political awareness of the complex issues involved.

Stephanie Saville

'A Life of Gratitude'

Address by Rev Sarah Tinker from 25th October

An audio podcast of this address is available on our website.

We build on foundations we did not lay.
We warm ourselves at fires we did not light.
We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant.
We drink from wells we did not dig.
Each of us is blessed with gifts from those who were here before us
And have gifts to pass on to others in our turn.
(adapted from the Book of Deuteronomy)

Gratitude is a feeling of being thankful in life, a readiness to show appreciation and to express our thanks in some way. This morning I'm going to explore why gratitude is good for us, and consider it as a form of religious expression, a spiritual practice that can be helpful whatever our beliefs. I won't tell you anything you don't know already but gratitude is one of those bits of life that I need reminding about from time to time, so I'm hoping this might be useful for you as much as it has been for me. A week of thinking about, and reading about, gratitude has made a difference to me.

It's not surprising that it's made a difference because the very process of having grateful thoughts - of thinking and saying 'thank you' type thoughts - has an effect on us both psychologically and physiologically. Our minds and our bodies are changed by gratitude. I wonder if all of us at this moment could think a 'thank you' thought - being grateful for anything that pops into your head - perhaps for this autumn day, nice day for yesterday's sunshine and the bright coloured leaves starting to fall, for a good breakfast, living in a safe country, doing something nice later - let's hold that feeling of gratitude for 30 seconds or so.

If we were wired up now to various measuring machines we'd see that all sorts of interesting things are happening to us when we feel thankful. All sorts of neural pathways are lighting up, sparking, connecting. If you start a practice of feeling grateful and practice that a few times every day - a brain scan can show an increase of activity in various parts of the brain including the amygdala area - the centre for emotional responses. And when gratitude is practiced regularly those areas of the brain stay more switched on. Not surprising then that gratitude practices are said to help with feelings of depression. People who feel gratitude are apparently also more likely to act generously towards others - gratitude seems to set off a virtuous cycle of behaviour which has a positive effect on human relationships.

Having an orientation towards gratitude in life means we're more likely to appreciate what is and less likely to take things for granted - we tend to notice more and appreciate more - especially perhaps the little things. Isn't that one of the pleasures of being out in the natural world - there's lots of little things to notice out there. Gardeners will tell us how much there is to appreciate outside when you get down to the earth itself. Our senses are activated, we feel more alive, more present to the moment that is.

Henri Nouwen takes it to another level when he writes that "to be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives - the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections - that requires hard spiritual work."

Nouwen, a Dutch born Catholic priest worked with people who had tough lives. He helped people to work through their difficulties by finding often quite small things to feel grateful for. And this path is also demonstrated by Stephen Levine who has worked extensively with issues of death and dying over the decades. It's his quote we've chosen for the front of today's order of service:



"Gratitude is the highest form of acceptance. Like patience, it is one of the catalytic agents, one of the alchemist's secrets, for turning dross to gold, hell to heaven, death to life."

Our gratitude can be a companion to us in times of loss, a reminder that the very experience of loss is an indicator of the depth of love and connection we have felt and experienced. But don't let's imagine for one moment that this kind of spiritual practice is easy or always possible. There are times in every life when we cannot access a feeling of gratitude - when our pain, our suffering, our problems, our disappointments are too strong and need to be attended to and accepted. When you're in one of those difficult times in life - and I imagine most of us have been in such a time or are maybe even experiencing it at the moment - in the difficult times, are you like me? Do you become incredibly aware, both of the people who can simply sit with you in your pain and those who feel a need to cheer you up? It's the ones who can just be with me in all my distress that I feel most grateful for in life's difficult moments. And strangely when someone accepts me just as I am my feelings seem more able to move onward. There's a spiritual practice for us all - acceptance of what is - being real and true to the present moment, whatever it holds.

Another of gratitude's spiritual messages is that we are not isolated, independent beings but part of something greater than ourselves - we need one another and we need this planet earth on which we live - without them we are nothing. As children are taught to say thank when they receive a gift or a kindly act, we adults may also need to heighten our awareness of the very reciprocity of life - the inter-relatedness of all that is - and that extends from the simple level - of a door being opened for us and a cup of tea being made to the profound gift of life itself, the miracle of our breath and our senses. For each of you and for this place and for this day, I am truly grateful. Thank you for being here and thank you for being you. Amen

Some Gratitude Practices

Try making a note of three things each day for which you are grateful. Keep these lists going for a while and enjoy the pleasure of re-reading them from time to time. Make a list of 100 Blessings of your life. Include all that is precious, pleasurable, special to you. Be specific and descriptive. For example:

- *The smell of a sunny autumn day and the crunch of dry leaves beneath my feet*
- *Eating a delicious bag of chips wrapped in paper with lots of vinegar on*

And some blessings chosen by our children's group members:

- *I am grateful for having food*
- *I am grateful for having my family*
- *I am grateful for my health*
- *I am grateful for water*

What would be in your own list of 100 Life Blessings?

Services at Essex Church in November

1st November, 11am
– ‘A Life of Honesty’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Followed by a workshop for us to explore what faith and truth mean to us. What kinds of life are religious liberals called to lead? Bring your own lunch.

8th November, 11am
– ‘Remembrance Sunday’

Service led by Congregation Members

Our service today will mark Remembrance Sunday, honour the victims of war, and reflect on the impact of armed conflict. The sermon will be given by Roy Clark. Please be sure to arrive promptly and take your seats in good time to observe a minute's silence at 11am.

15th November, 11am
– ‘Our Body of Sound’

Service led by Sonya Leite & Sarah Tinker

We'll be exploring the joys of chanting as a spiritual practice and the value of paying loving attention to our physical selves.

22nd November, 11am
– ‘Our Body of Politics’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our bodies are an expression of our individual selves yet also reflect our wider society. What might our liberal faith have to say about the body politic?

29th November, 11am
– ‘Our Body of Earth’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our bodies depend entirely upon our planet earth home. On the day when climate change protests are planned for London to heighten awareness of the Paris climate talks, we'll be taking a reflective look at our relationships with the earth, with ourselves and with one another. If you would like to join a group of fellow Unitarians on the Climate Change march on Sunday November 29th, email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk so we can arrange to travel together from church or find a place to meet.

Embercombe Retreat



I went on a 6-day retreat in the depths of Devon wilderness at a place called Embercombe. (www.embercombe.org). There were 22 of us there for that particular group experience. And I was the oldest. It was wonderful to be with so many younger people in their 20s and 30s, who care deeply about the environment and want to make a difference. I was there to create a deeper connection to our natural physical world – land, trees, earth, stones, water, plants, birds, insects, sun, moon, sky, stars, and so forth - everything out there that gives us material and spiritual sustenance. And which many people in the world are thoroughly disconnected from. I have been one of them. Not completely disconnected, but a stranger because it was not part of my upbringing in a metropolis. Quite fearless staring up a concrete and glass megastory building, I tremble standing beneath a very tall tree. I weep now at this deprivation of engagement with the natural world, and also with joy that it is never too late to have a happy childhood!

I slept in a yurt and imagined sleeping outdoors in a bivvy bag under the stars (something for next time!). I sat for ages on a tree trunk listening to the wind through the trees and bird songs. I gathered windfall apples and lessened the load on the branches of the apple trees. And drank the juice, freshly made. The wheelbarrow and I traversed this Garden of Eden and uploaded gifts for the compost heap. I foraged for Plantain leaves and munched on them. A kind of second childhood. And came away with a deeper commitment to walk more mindfully listening to the earthsong. Looking up, looking down and all around us even in the city.

Veronica Needa

Stream of Life

by Rabindranath Tagore

The same stream of life that runs through
my veins night and day
runs through the world and dances in
rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through
the dust of the earth
in numberless blades of grass
and breaks into tumultuous waves of
leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the
ocean-cradle of birth
and of death, in ebb and in flow.

I feel my limbs are made glorious by the
touch of this world of life.

And my pride is from the life-throb of ages
dancing in my blood this moment.