



What's On In March:

Thursday 4th March, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'Heart to Heart' (1/5)
Session Theme – 'Listening'

Saturday 6th March, 10am
Walking Group:
Chelsea and Battersea
Meeting at Sloane Square Str

Sunday 7th March, 11am
"Shades of Gray"
Led by Rev. Linda Hart

Thursday 11th March, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'Heart to Heart' (2/5)
Session Theme – 'Gratitude'

Sunday 14th March, 11am
"Creating Sacred Space"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Rev. Kathryn Reynolds

Sunday 14th March, 2-3pm
Nia Dance: Holistic Movement

Sunday 14th March, 3.30-5pm
**'Songs and
Silence for the Soul'**

Tuesday 16th March, 7-9pm
Creativity Group:
'Printing with our Lino Blocks'

Thursday 18th March, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'Heart to Heart' (3/5)
Session Theme – 'Balance'

Sunday 21st March, 11am
"Fresh Breeze, New Shoots"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 23rd March, 7-9pm
Reading Group:
'Father and Son'

Thursday 25th March, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'Heart to Heart' (4/5)
Theme – 'Success and Failure'

Sunday 28th March, 11am
"A Unitarian Palm Sunday"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
(note: clocks go forward today!)

Tuesday 30th March, 7pm
Management Committee

A Message from our Minister

Water Has a Tendency to Flow

There was at least a week in early February when our new ceilings and lights here at Essex Church were at last in place and I felt the warm, rosy glow that comes when a building project is nearly finished. Then it rained very heavily. By the next day we had water dripping very quickly through the ceiling tiles in the foyer and as I write this column nobody has yet managed to find the source of the leak, though the flat roof balcony outside the manse is the most likely culprit. This is a good six feet away from the actual leak, which just goes to show one of water's many interesting features – it travels so very easily. 'Capillarity' says an architect friend. Those water molecules love to stick to one another and together they make a formidable team.



Lao Tzu, back in 600BCE, learnt much from life by observing water. It is the substance most often referred to in the Tao Te Ching, the Taoist text he is credited with writing. He admired water's soft power, its ability to flow and bend in its gentle determination to get to its destination, overcoming all obstacles. Nowhere in the Tao Te Ching, or any other Taoist text for that matter, can I find clear advice about how to mend a leaking roof when you can't find where the water is getting in. But by following some of Taoism's essential teachings perhaps answers can be found.

- Battling against a problem only makes it stronger and you weaker. The wise are those who stop and observe before taking action. *(I think this means just keep emptying the buckets and mopping up the floors whilst staring at the ceiling in a meditative manner.)*
- Nothing stays the same. Situations will inevitably change. *(I think this means it will have to stop raining eventually.)*
- Accept your powerlessness. *(I think this means start talking to roofing experts.)*
- Consider the opportunities in all situations. *(I think this means that someone reading this newsletter is going to have a really good idea about how to resolve our leaking roof.)*

So watch out for those buckets in the foyer and let's also remember to celebrate the fact that we have new lights and ceilings, even if the power of water has destroyed one or two of the tiles.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

"Nothing in this world is more flexible and yielding than water. Yet when it attacks the firm and the strong, none can withstand it because they have no way to change it. So the flexible overcome the adamant, the yielding overcome the forceful. Everyone knows this, yet few can achieve it". – Lao Tzu

In this month's newsletter...

* Our Growing Community - Membership * News from Iona Blair in Cape Town * The Spiritual Bookshelf: 'Daybreak and Eventide' chosen by Gordon Deaville * 'It's Nutty!' by Will Lyons * 'How I Came to Essex Church' by Christine Joshi * News from our Essex Church Children's Group * Fairtrade Fortnight * and more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians meet to share experiences, to learn from each other, to explore our diverse faiths, to welcome spiritual seekers and offer companionship on life's journey.

The community meets for a service each Sunday at 11.00am. The format varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a children's group. Our wide range of activities includes religious education courses and spirituality workshops, meeting for fellowship, engagement groups on a variety of themes, community arts projects, regular chanting and dance sessions, and opportunities for quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

Many other groups share our church building. If you are interested in hiring one of our rooms for your own organisation or event please contact our warden by telephone or email.



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Notting Hill Gate
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Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

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A Date for Your Diary: Congregational Lunch

Easter Sunday 4th April from 12.30pm



We will be having another congregational potluck lunch after the service on Sunday 4th April (Easter Sunday).

Please put the date in your diary now and look out for a sign-up sheet in late March so you can offer to bring along some food or drink to share.

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

7 th March:	Geoffrey Olans
14 th March:	Natasha Drennan
21 st March:	Alice Lambert
28 th March:	Jo Ridgers

Coffee:

7 th March:	Julia Alden
14 th March:	Caroline Blair
21 st March:	Louisa Bird
28 th March:	Susan Smith

Please speak to Jane or Sarah if you are willing to help with stewarding or making coffee. Thanks!

Patricia's Memorial



At the end of January we held a memorial to celebrate the life of Patricia Walker, with a service that was followed by a champagne reception, requested by Patricia in her will.

It was very moving to hear from Patricia's sister Marion and her nieces Jacky and Sue during the service about Patricia's life and the many ways that she had touched and influenced them. There were lots of photographs to look at on the church walls from different times in her life and various other people spoke of their connections with Patricia through the many classes she attended and the Unitarian causes she was involved with.

Patricia's family have written to thank the Essex Church congregation for hosting this memorial so warmly.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

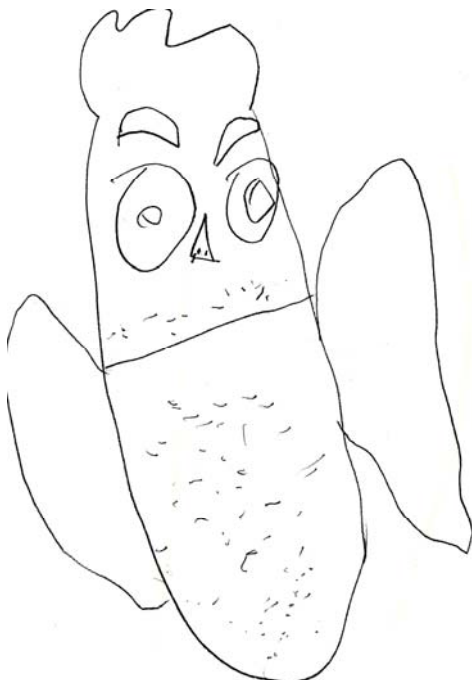
Essex Church Children's Group



Can you remember what your drawings looked like when you were five years old? I suspect mine were not quite as impressive as James' recent portraits of our children's leaders, Jennie and Jordan.

Thanks to Jennie and Jordan we now have a weekly programme for children here at Essex Church on Sunday mornings. Children spend the first ten minutes or so with us in the main service and then leave to enjoy their own programme of activities. Recent highlights include providing the congregation with healthy fruit snacks for after the service, creating a multi-coloured clay dragon and making felt animals to link in with the congregation's Swaziland Education Project. We're letting families know about our children's group so if you know anyone who might like to join, do invite them along one Sunday or ask them to contact the church office to find out more.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



A Forthcoming Adult RE Course at Essex Church:

'Heart to Heart'

4th, 11th, 18th, 25th March and 1st April
Downstairs in the Library from 7-9.00pm



There will be a new small group running at Essex Church throughout March and into early April. It is entitled 'Heart to Heart' and is based on the book of the same name by Unitarian Universalist minister Christine Robinson and experienced small group ministry leader Alicia Hawkins.

'Heart to Heart' will offer participants an opportunity to connect with each other over five sessions via readings, journaling exercises, and thought-provoking activities on a range of topics. There will be an invitation to spend time in personal contemplation before each meeting and a space to share your own reflections in this small group.

'Heart to Heart' will be co-facilitated by our own minister, Rev. Sarah Tinker, and Jane Blackall. Each of the five sessions will focus on a particular theme:

Thursday 4th March – 'Listening'
Thursday 11th March – 'Gratitude'
Thursday 18th March – 'Balance'
Thursday 25th March – 'Success and Failure'
Thursday 1st April – 'Friendship'

It is not essential to attend all of the sessions but it would be beneficial if you could come to as many as possible. We do request that you sign up in advance if you are planning to come as, to get the most out of the course, there will be a little bit of reading and preparation for you to do before each session.

**Please contact Sarah/Jane AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
if you would like to take part in this course:**

Email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or leave a message for us at the church office: 020 7221 6514.

"Most people need a few experiences of simply being listened to before they can really believe that just listening is enough. In time, we discover that to be listened to is a way of being loved, and that listening is a way of being loving. We can take what we learn from our sharing groups out into the rest of our lives and bless the world."

Words from the introduction of 'Heart to Heart'

A Forthcoming Adult RE Course at Essex Church

'Soul Poetry'

22nd, 29th April and 6th, 13th, 20th May
Downstairs in the Library from 7-9.00pm



Poetry speaks to the soul for so many of us and we often have a favourite piece that speaks to us and I hope that these evenings will give us an opportunity to share some of these.

There will be five Thursday evenings when you can come along to share, by listening to others or reading your poems aloud. I believe that spirituality is experienced in many different ways and with a surprising range of feelings so I have structured these sessions around love, anger, joy, grief and hope:

Thursday 22nd April, 7-9.00pm – Love
Thursday 29th April, 7-9.00pm – Anger
Thursday 6th May, 7-9.00pm – Joy
Thursday 13th May, 7-9.00pm – Grief
Thursday 20th May, 7-9.00pm – Hope

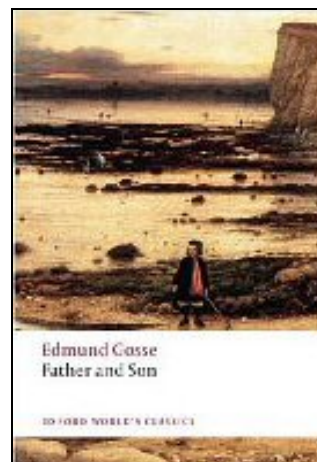
I was thrilled to run a similar workshop at Summer School last year and it left a lasting impression on me of a beautiful multi-coloured kaleidoscope which changed and fell into new patterns whenever I looked at it. Do ask me questions about these sessions and I hope to see you in April.

Carole Grace



Essex Church Reading Group

'Father and Son' by Edmund Gosse



Tuesday 23rd March, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading engagement group's next conversation will be about "Father and Son" by Edmund Gosse. This book will be introduced by Caroline Blair at our March session.

Information from Amazon UK:

"This book is the record of a struggle between two temperaments, two consciences and almost two epochs.' Father and Son stands as one of English literature's seminal autobiographies. In it Edmund Gosse recounts, with humour and pathos, his childhood as a member of a Victorian Protestant sect and his struggles to forge his own identity despite the loving control of his father. A key document of the crisis of faith and doubt; a penetrating exploration of the impact of evolutionary science; an astute, well-observed, and moving portrait of the tensions of family life: Father and Son remains a classic of twentieth-century literature."

The group takes special care to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to. Members come together to share our diverse views and appreciate our differences in a spirit of curiosity and respect. The group has a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere and newcomers are always most welcome to come along to any session.

The reading group has been meeting monthly since 2003. Regular members of the group take turns in choosing a book for everybody to read and talk about together so we tackle a wide variety of material (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, etc...). Please pick up a flyer or check our forthcoming selections online:

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html



How I Came to Essex Church

Nine years ago, my son was attending a nursery in the basement of a charming church with a notice board that read something like: "All are welcome here to follow a path of spiritual worship that embraces teachings from all world faiths." What a relief that there was somewhere for me to bring my two children from a Hindu/Christian household where there would no longer be nuns (I was raised a Catholic) asking the children when they would be receiving their first communion. I toyed with the idea of admitting that the children weren't even baptised but thought otherwise.

Upon first arriving at Essex Church I found myself completely floating on air at the unbelievably talented classical choir and pianist. I thought right away that I had discovered the best kept secret in Notting Hill. The minister at the time was a former Irish police officer turned Unitarian minister/Buddhist psychoanalyst. Wonderful! Then came Reverend Sarah. I had a good feeling about Sarah before I even met her and am continually impressed by her easy-going way of bringing everyone together and getting things done. She's the iron fist in the velvet glove that we needed to hold us together.

After convincing my husband that I hadn't joined a cult, I even convinced him to come along once or twice. I think I have also accomplished my goal of showing the children that there is a spiritual place where one can go at times of great joy and celebration as well as at times of sorrow and pain. They may not feel that they need such a place at the moment but they will know such places as Essex Church do exist and to find such a place is a blessing. To be able to sit quietly and reflect is a welcome respite from hectic London living. To be able to light a candle of joy or concern and listen to others' offerings is one of the most special traditions for me in the service. The choir continues to move me at times to weep and other times to want to jump out of my seat and yell 'Bravo!'

I have been meaning to attend at least one Unitarian Universalist service in the States just to satisfy my curiosity. How could I not have known about this religion before Essex Church? When I do finally attend a service elsewhere, I am sure I will have thoughts of our own sweet community where it all started for me.

Christine Joshi

At the church committee meeting in February special thanks were recorded to Christine for all the work she has done to keep our church rotas filled over a number of years. It's one of those behind the scenes tasks that are vital for the smooth running of our community and Christine has served so very graciously. Thank you very much Christine and we look forward to pouring you a cup of coffee and showing you to your seat in church!

Rev Sarah Tinker

Essex Church Walking Group: Chelsea and Battersea Saturday 6th March - 10am at Sloane Square



Photos by Mary Spurr – from our Regent's Canal Walk

The Essex Church Walking Group has made provisional plans for its activities over the next few months so please put these dates in your diary and plan to come along:

Saturday 6th March
– Chelsea and Battersea
(meeting 10am at Sloane Square Tube Station)

Saturday 3rd April
– Rainham Marshes RSPB Reserve
(meeting 10am at Fenchurch Street Station)

Saturday 1st May
– Lee Valley Country Park
(meeting 10am at Liverpool Street Station)

Saturday 5th June
– Richmond Park / Isabella Plantation
(meeting 10am at Richmond Station)

We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length. If you are intending to come please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.



Essex Church Creativity Group

'Block Printing'

Tuesday 16th March, 7.00-9.00pm

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE!!!



This is the last of three linked sessions of the creativity group in which have been designing, carving, and printing pictures (possibly for use as greeting cards or simply as artworks in their own right) using a rubber printing block.

In the March session we will be using the blocks we have carved to print our own pictures so, if you were working on a block during January and February, please try to get your carving finished in time for this session.

As usual you are welcome to come along to the group even if you are not particularly interested in the activities on offer – bring along your own craftwork – or simply come along to relax and enjoy the good company.

Another Exciting Research Opportunity

We've been asked by Aidan Coyle who attends worship at the Meadow Unitarian Chapel in Godalming if some of us would like to take part in a focus group discussion as part of his research towards an MA in the Psychology of Religion. This is what he says about it:

"I am researching how Unitarians think about and locate their tradition in relation to rationalism and liberalism. OK, so that might not sound like the most exciting research topic but my interest was first drawn to it by the claims of Richard Dawkins and others that religion is inherently irrational and illiberal."

One of the ways that Aidan is gathering data is in small group discussions and when he heard how involved with small group work we are at Essex Church he was keen to hear our views. So if you would like to know more ask our minister for a copy of Aidan's proposal. We have pencilled in March 28th for a 90 minute discussion and will confirm this as soon as we can.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

News from Iona in Cape Town



Iona Blair has just started an MPhil in environmental management at the University of Cape Town. She is staying at an 'eco-village' hostel a couple of miles out.

I wish I could whisk you here for chilling out in a craft market, eating mangos and stroking the horses, and the wise, though cheeky-looking goats that just wandered past my window.

I met up with Fari, the South African tour guide Jim and I met in Mozambique – he's got splendid ideas and plans for making southern Africa a better place. He wants to help initiate a recycling project in Mozambique where people of little means can turn the junk that consumers leave strewn across the landscape into arty and practical items for sale on the markets; and the human waste into compost for happier gardens. He wants me on board for planning and helping set up – perhaps to do environmental assessments. Chinese companies are taking advantage of world media attention diverted elsewhere to cut down all Mozambique's indigenous trees.

So Fari, my friend, wants me and a Finnish journalist to come and document what's going on and help save some of the indigenous trees – even if that's just taking cuttings and seeds and storing them safe for rehabilitation when the loggers are done. I would guess they [the companies] are acting in collaboration with the government, and I don't know what their designs are for the deforested land – perhaps to open it up for grazing or intensive agriculture, perhaps crops or beef for export and bio-fuels – as if that would really benefit ordinary Mozambicans. Woe.

These destructive industrial companies take advantage of the current ideology that says any income to a country or to its government – even if short term and based on the removal of its non-renewable resources and life support systems – is good 'development'. Perhaps this will become part of my research – it sounds just the kind of thing I'm keen to help document and criticise – but it is also vital to contribute to positive remedies.

Iona Blair

Iona Blair has also written an article for the latest 'Inquirer' – be sure to pick up a copy to read more about her studies.

Unitarian Christian Association



You are invited by the Unitarian Christian Association (UCA) to join them at Kingswood Meeting House, Packhorse Lane, Alcester Rd., Hollywood. B47 5DQ on Saturday 6th March from 12.30 for lunch and at 13.30 for Worship conducted by the Rev. Anthony Howe.

The A G M of the UCA will follow at 14.45 to include a short presentation about the UCA sponsored child in Bethlehem. The afternoon will conclude at 15.45 with tea and biscuits Please do let the UCA know if you are joining them for lunch (for catering purposes).

For more information and directions go to www.unitarianchristian.org or contact Ken Howard - ken75howard1@aol.com

Our Growing Community



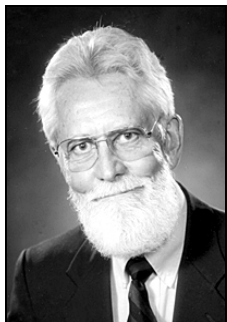
From the recent workshops about congregational growth have come a number of good suggestions of ways to improve the welcome we give to newcomers here at Essex Church. Here are some ideas that we're getting into action with in the coming months.

Photo Board: As our congregation grows it can be hard to keep track of names and faces. People were not keen on the suggestion that we all wear name tags so instead we are planning to have a Photo Board of members and regular attenders. So if someone approaches you with a camera in the next month you'll know why. And of course you are quite entitled to turn them down if you would rather not be placed on the wall. But we think it will be really useful to have the photos – not least because it shows people who are in the building for other groups just what an appealing bunch of people Kensington Unitarians are.

Greeters: We're hoping to have enough volunteers to have at least one greeter on duty each Sunday and possibly two. It makes a big difference to visitors if they are greeted by a friendly person who can give them any information they want. So if you could be at church by 10.30 on an occasional Sunday and would like to help out, let us know.

E-Mail Updates: We plan to send a regular email out to members to let everyone know what is happening here at the church. It's another way to help increase our sense of being in community with one another. We asked on this year's membership form if people wanted to be included on that list so let us know if you change your mind one way or the other.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



"I'm sure you've wondered about the value of practicing any spiritual disciplines or self-denial. I'd like to suggest that there are many practices of self-sacrifice that can strengthen your spiritual life and feed your soul. For example, the '*Sacrifice of the Tongue*' is one of those invisible disciplines that reaps

rich rewards for all who engage in this priestly ritual. Unlike daily sacrifices, this ritual is used only in those urgent times when words of criticism, disagreement, anger and impatience are beginning to take shape on your tongue. In the micro-seconds of their forming, they are first tasted on the tongue with an appetizing eagerness to be spoken. It is at this moment that you need to perform the '*Sacrifice of the Tongue*'. Begin the ritual by gently gripping the tip of your tongue with your upper and lower teeth and softly squeezing them together, thus restraining your tool of speech. This unspoken prayer of tongue retention will prevent you from speaking. The next step is to swallow your intended critical or negative words. On certain occasions this may require having to gulp down the unspoken remark like a big pill. Only when the impulse to express whatever your soul has judged to be inappropriate disappears should you release your tongue. Yet do so with an inner smile of gratitude, for in the act of silencing your tongue, your soul has grown."

Edward Hays

April Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 14th March**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before this date.

Thank you!!!

The Spiritual Bookshelf

#12: 'Daybreak and Eventide' by Andrew J. Brown and John C. Morgan

This is the twelfth of a series of articles where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them...

This little book of prayers has deepened my faith and my understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus, but I see it as having something of value to a broad range of people, whether called Christian, or not.

At the time of this book, John C. Morgan, now retired, had been a minister in America for over 25 years. His wide writing on spirituality includes the book *'The Devotional Heart...'* (Skinner House, 1995), containing his discovery of small group ministry in the heritage of our faith in the West. It's good that the words in *'Daybreak and Eventide'* are in English rather than American spellings.

Andrew J. Brown is a professional jazz double bassist and Unitarian Minister. His quartet *'Riprat'*, recorded a set of poetry by the American Buddhist poet, Gary Snyder (AMP Records). He is the minister since 2000 at *Memorial Church* (Unitarian), Cambridge, Unitarian Chaplain to the University of Cambridge, and has some Associate Chaplainships. At the time of this book he edited the (Unitarian Christian) Herald, which is still available today.

My upbringing was traditional Christian, but I found in the 1960's that I had my own interpretation of some of the Bible. So I began worshipping with Unitarians (at first in Lewisham), who allowed me freedom of belief, and exposed me to other writings for insights from them as well. Ever since then I've joined with Unitarian congregations with a Christian bent and, in recent years, Essex Church to aid my spirituality as well.

I have found *'Daybreak and Eventide'* a great treasure and a great help with *disciplined* practice of daily prayer. The book draws on the traditions of the Radical Reformation, from which Unitarians emerged here and in the USA, with some prayers adapted from the *Brahmo Samaj (Society of God)* mixed up with more recent thinking, notably Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings. It offers a framework for disciplined practice of daily private and collective prayer. Whether on the outskirts of the crowd, reading and listening to the words of Jesus and watching his behaviour, or professing to be His disciple, there are a range of resources here to help the reader draw closer to God.

It is three parts. Part one contains a suggested pattern of daily private devotion which can be used as a pattern for communal prayer as well. Part two contains the Prayer of Jesus and morning and evening prayers for each day of the month. Part three contains prayers and practices for small groups. The pattern of private daily devotion echoes that used in orthodox Christian churches, but without assuming the Divinity of Jesus. It includes *the Prayer of Jesus, Benedictus, Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*. This pattern of prayer includes Bible passages from the *New Revised Standard Version* with the alternative from John Henson's very modern interpretation, *'Good As New: A Radical Interpretation of the Scriptures'*. It may have made Christian fundamentalists seethe. For others, it's a breath of fresh air. Any readers uneasy with either of those can use a preferred version of the Bible alongside the book. Near the beginning of this pattern I particularly like the reading from Micah in the New Revised Standard Version as follows:

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and how myself before God on high? He has told you O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6, 6a, 8.

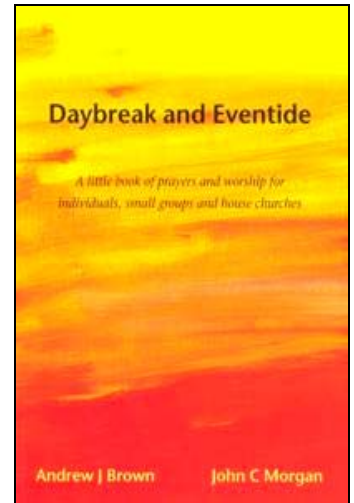
The prayers for each day of the month begin with versions of a Bible reading that stresses the unity of God. Only the *King James Version* is used here, as modern translations try to make the text *easier* to understand, narrowing down what can be drawn from it. Around each prayer there's space for the user to note his or her own thoughts and prayers.

The Communal Worship part is an excellent resource for worship on a variety of occasions by small groups, meetings in houses or other gatherings. It was good to find an Appendix with an eventide service for those who, for whatever reason, are on very low incomes and which can be adapted to focus on different themes.

I recommend this book to all believers in a God, whether Christian or not, wishing to get closer to God.

Gordon Deaville

Note: Our Minister, Sarah Tinker, has a number of copies of 'Daybreak and Eventide' for sale at Essex Church for £10 per copy.



Primroses



Huddled together on a twilight bank
Accompanied, yet all alone each pale
Lemon trumpet brays out – “Spring! – Look!
Spring! Among dense, unflowering weeds.
These no eye discerns
No tongue exclaims – “See! See!
Just look at this miracle!
In this rare season only pale
Pretty miracles are observed and praised.

John Hands

‘Discover Yourself’

17th – 19th September 2010

St Denys Retreat Centre, Warminster, Wiltshire



Some enterprising Unitarians from the south are holding a weekend retreat, ‘Discover Yourself’, this autumn, at the St Denys Retreat Centre, in Warminster. Their leaflet says: “Come and join us for a weekend of self-discovery!”

There will be lots of varied activities including:

Creating A DIY Unitarian Service

Introduction to the Enneagram

Dances of Universal Peace

Some Optional Creative Activities

The cost of attending is £115:

(£20 conference fee – £95 accommodation)

Speak to Jane or Sarah for a leaflet/booking form or contact the organiser, Kathy Beckett, for information:
email - kathy@kpb.gotadsl.co.uk / phone - 02380 273420

Membership Forms

Kensington Unitarians Becoming a Member of Essex Church: 2010



We are here to share our experiences, to learn from each other, to explore our diverse faiths, to welcome spiritual seekers and offer companionship on life's journey.

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Thank you to everybody who has filled in and returned their membership form for 2010. It's lovely to see new names on the list and to hear from people that they want to show their commitment to our congregation. We'll be gently encouraging everyone to get their forms back to us soon so do let us know if you have not received one or if you would like another copy. You can also find the form on our Kensington Unitarians website and print out a copy for yourself.

Make a note in your diary of our Membership Service on May 16th when we will welcome new members in a simple ceremony and celebrate our community. This service will be followed by our congregation's AGM.

Another Date for your Diary:

As part of our growing congregation project we invite you to come along to an action meeting at 1pm on **Sunday 18th April** when we'll be talking through positive steps we can take to make this an ever more welcoming congregation that people are falling over themselves to join. Bring your ideas, your enthusiasm, your willingness to give more people the chance to experience being part of a vibrant spiritual community.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Youngsters' Social

After the service on Sunday 11th April

Seven younger members of the congregation went out for lunch after the service on the 7th February and squeezed round a tiny table at the Windsor Castle pub (where we soon got stuck into a great conversation).

The next of our bi-monthly ‘Youngster's Socials’ will be on the second Sunday in April. We are slightly deviating from the usual pattern this time around so as to avoid a clash with the church potluck lunch on Easter Sunday.

If you would like to know more about these social events please email social@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

A forthcoming London event which may be of interest to some of our readers:

OUT Spirituality Group Workshop

Saturday 17th April, 10-5pm
OneKX, Cromer Street, WC1H 8BS



In this one day event for gay and bi men, we will be exploring our ways of 'being in the world.' Following on from our highly successful day last April it was asked that we put together another workshop, to further develop the theme of being gay/bi and having a spiritual journey to follow.

Are our spiritual roots in the gay/bi community, or can we be satisfied with 'straight world' ideas? What do we mean by 'spiritual' and how can we feel rooted, supported, 'at home' when we find it? And in which ways do we not feel any of the above? How have we been let down – or betrayed – as gay / bi men? And how might our spirit(uality) support us better?

These are some of the questions we will be asking ourselves as we join together in modestly-sized group of like-minded gay and bisexual men.

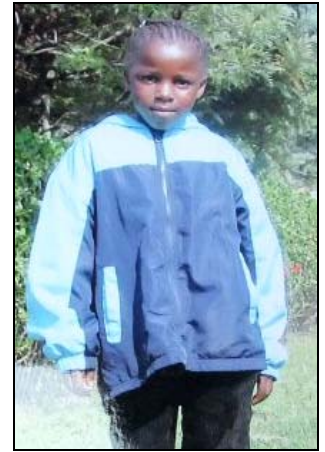
As the day unfolds, we will be spending time quietly contemplating, moving, breathing, talking, thinking, imagining. As we will be touching on some deep areas of our lives, we will be paying attention to our well-being during and after the day, particularly on how we can support ourselves and others. Please bring paper or a pad, with pens to make your own notes. You might feel most comfortable if you bring warm clothing (including a rug or wrap if you wish).

Please register your interest ASAP to:
andrew.rolph@another.com

Cost (includes lunch/all refreshments): £25

A Letter From Swaziland...

In Africa, SOS Children's Villages supports 44,000 AIDS orphans. Swaziland has the highest HIV rate in the world, and Essex Church have agreed to support two orphans there, Patience and Fortunate Zeeman. This is a report from Mbabane, where they live.



Dear Essex Unitarian Church,

It is that time of the year again when we bring you, our friends and supporters, the yearly update in our village the children's progress in their different areas. We cannot forget to always express our most sincere gratitude and appreciation for your support.

It was a very cold winter last year in Swaziland due to the heavy rains received in summer. However all our children were able to cope well in these conditions. The country held one of its major cultural events for the young girls called Reed Dance. It was attended by more than 60,000 young girls from all parts of the country and 28 of the village girls participated. This event was also used as an advertisement campaign for the 2010 World Cup to be held in our neighbouring country, South Africa. We have experienced a massive number of visitors even from abroad and this has put the country in a spotlight for people to camp here for the 2010 World Cup.

The village is currently operating at full capacity of one hundred and thirty children. There has been an admission of twelve new children into the village, ranging from one year to thirteen years. All of these have settled well in the new environment and are already bonding with their mothers, brothers and sisters. Two of these are at primary school, two in kindergarten, four in the literacy class and four at home.

We do have cases of children who are sickly but with the good care provided by the SOS Mothers and village nurses, there are significant signs of improvement. There has been a country wide immunization campaign for all children under the age of five and our clinic has been very busy with the village and community children.

The village children and youths have had a number of activities during the year. Most of these activities took place during the term holidays. They held a car wash campaign that attracted eight of the Miss Swaziland finalists. The main aim of the event was to create awareness to the public about the work done by SOS Children's Villages in Swaziland and for fundraising purposes. The event was a huge success as the public from the surrounding community and far came in their large numbers for support.

The Kindergarten held a successful family fete day with an overwhelming attendance from the community. Stalls include jumping castle, face painting and cookie decorations, pick a box, raffle draws and entertainment groups from the village.

The children, mothers and administration staff would like to thank all friends, supporters and sponsors for all your contributions, and wish you the best.

Philile Khumalo

Fairtrade Fortnight

22nd February – 7th March 2010



As a fairtrade church we are encouraging everyone here at Essex Church to take part in Fairtrade Fortnight, which runs from 22nd February to 7th March. This year they are asking us all to swap at least one of our regular purchases for a fairly traded product. It could be your morning cup of coffee, a T shirt, a bunch of bananas. It is by making small, simple consumer choices that people have made the fair-trade movement the success that it is. So have a look on your next shopping trip and see if there's a fair-trade product you could buy.

Some people have asked why we still have some non-fair trade products in our church cupboards. We encourage all our user groups to choose fair trade but we can't insist on it and London Transport left us some giant jars of coffee when they used the church during Notting Hill Carnival. We'll encourage them to choose another brand of coffee this year.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



It's Nutty!

When Carole and I were recently on holiday in Goa, we went on an excursion to see various aspects of Indian life. One of the features of the trip was a tour of a factory processing cashew nuts.



In my working life I have had a wide experience of factories of various types in this country and yet was not prepared for the conditions we saw in this factory.

The raw nuts in their shells come from Indonesia (their own crop was ruined by premature monsoon) and are first boiled for eight hours to soften the shell prior to its removal. The next process was the most startling. In a vast room, lines of women in traditional saris stood at benches. Each had a pile of nuts to their left and the job was to take EACH NUT with the left hand, place it on a bench-mounted, foot-operated device and press down with the right foot to crack the shell.

The nuts were then 'polished' to remove the remaining skin (which is said to be carcinogenic). We were told that they do this work for eight hours a day for ONE DOLLAR. The only men visible were either overseers or sat at computers in the office.

The processing of the nuts is complete after roasting for a further eight hours. We were offered some for sale and the price per kilo was more than would be paid in this country at a well known supermarket.

Will Lyons

Essex Church Podcasts



Most weeks, the sermon from our Sunday service is recorded, and the audio is made available as a podcast. You can download individual mp3 files from the church website (we have been recording since July 2009 and at the time of writing there is already a back catalogue of 22 podcasts online) or subscribe to the podcast to receive sermons automatically whenever they are released (the easiest way to do this is to search for 'Kensington Unitarians' or 'Essex Church' on iTunes or similar).

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/podcasts.html

District Annual Meeting of London and South East Unitarians

Saturday 20th March 2010, 1:30 - 4:00pm
Essex Hall, 1- 6 Essex St, WC2R 3HY



The proceedings will begin with worship led by Rev. Jim Robinson of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead. Following the service, there will be afternoon tea, and then the Annual General Meeting. The meeting will end no later than 4.00pm.

Universal Spiritual Gathering

Sunday 14th March, 6.30-8.15pm
Held at Essex Church



The Universal Spiritual Gatherings, led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary, draw on wisdom and inspiration from all faiths and none.

"This month we are honoured to have Imam Amar Hegedus with us. He will share devotional practice and wisdom from the Islamic tradition. This will include prayer from the Prophet Mohammad's great grandson, story from the great Islamic poet and mystic Rumi, plus Sufi Zikr and chant. Imam Amar Hegedus is a visiting speaker with the Interfaith Seminary and Chaplain, Lambeth Hospital & South London & Maudsley NHS trust. In addition we will be able to lose ourselves in Devotional chants led by our wonderful musicians Sean Shoket, Lila Cohen and Rev. Jan Land."

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

For further information contact service hosts:
Reverends Danielle Wilson - 07802 898 252,
Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980,
Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286
Grace Morgan - 07931 132 890

"We tend to think of religion as a set of beliefs. That is a huge mistake. Religion is much more about what we love than about what we think. This emphasis on belief, especially on 'true religion' being about correct belief, is a modern aberration. Actually, the very word "religion" comes from a Latin root that means to tie, to bind. Ultimately what ties us together, what makes us a religion, a united people, is what we love. Religion, our religion, is what we truly care about, what we want to preserve, embrace, and create.

The questions we ask one another are so critically important. If you and I ask each other what we believe, we will get into talking about very heady stuff. We will put forth our beliefs and then support them with evidence and argument. All too often we will end up arguing. I know. I have done more than my share. However, when we ask one another what we truly love, what we truly value, what we care about more than anything else in life, something amazing happens. We don't argue. We listen. We connect. We discover that we love and want the same things. We care about one another. We want honesty, depth, and intimacy. We want enduring friendships.

We also discover that we realize that we are all in this life together. We want to help heal the world. We want compassion, understanding, and justice to guide our actions and our governments. We want to work together, hand in hand, to build a world beyond exploitation and violence. The truth is that we do care deeply about the same things. We share a vision. In our congregations there is love, idealism, and energy waiting to be released. When we release these, when we really let our people go, we transform lives and change the world."

Rev. Peter Morales (UU President)



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms Sessions led by Sonya Leite

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3.00pm
(14th March, 11th April, 9th May, 13th June)

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 £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

Warden's Column

What's on in our Busy Building...

Now we've finally got rid of the asbestos and life is relatively back to normal, I'm noticing how much busier the building is now in the day than it used to be. This seems to be mainly due to the number of yoga groups we now have meeting here.

Lynne Pinette's Ashtanga self-practice group now kicks off in the Hall at 8.30 Monday morning, then at 11 there's pregnancy yoga with Lolly Stirk and again in the main Church in the evening. Lolly's back at 11 on Tuesday for postnatal yoga and baby massage and in the evening her husband John runs his very popular Osteopathy based classes. Lynne's sessions continue at 8.30-11 all week and on Wednesdays and Fridays she's followed by Catherine James and Catherine Adams (I used to just enter Lynne's bookings in the diary as yoga, but when that got confusing I started adding the teacher's first name as an extra identifier - even this system is now being tested!) and there's more! In September Katrina Repke is starting a class from 4-6 on Fridays and for the first week of October she's running intensive yoga teacher training (Mon-Sat 9-5.30) - by then Charlotte Watts may be back from maternity leave to restart her Monday evening class too.

Phew!

On the whole though, although there is extra work involved in managing all these extra bookings, it feels quite nice for the building to be so alive all day and these activities seem to bring in a stimulating gentle energy.

At the beginning of this year, I changed my days off so I could work on Sundays. This has been going well, I think, and I'm appreciating the closer connection to the congregation. I'm hoping that a clearer sense of how the building is used on Sunday will also feed into my current project of re-organising the storage and furniture – particularly in the lobby. Sarah, Jane and I did some visioning on this last year, but put any implementation on hold until the work on the ceilings was finished. Hopefully now we can go ahead and invest in appropriate soft furnishings, leaflet racks, notice boards etc.

Spring seems to have been a very long time coming this year, but hopefully by the time you're reading this there will be signs it's finally on its way – at least green shoots, and maybe even some flowers. ☺

Jenny Moy



The Digital Hive

(for Mark Slovak, "one of the creators of the digital hive")

Round about, under and over, in and out, hysterical drones
toil for their mythical queen. Bits like balls driven by squads of demented suits
bandy into the thrumming nets of digital workers' brains.
Like birds they flock and rise, lift and fall in harassed perturbation.
No cries, no pleas – much less protests – are permitted; but more digits
are quietly credited to their accounts; more kudos for their 'rapture of submission'
as more and more recruits line up to replace them: once sanity cracks and caves, or age
ineluctably debilitates. These are their rewards: no time to deliberate, no opportunity
to remonstrate, no energy to organise even a token opposition, the benighted drones
redouble their efforts to achieve – but what exactly? – and for whom?
Who appropriates the sweetness of their tasks? Who ransacks the digital hive?
And who breaks through from what unseen dimension
to rape their queen, and confiscate her combs?

John Hands



Notes From a Curmudgeon

Submitted by Will Lyons - adapted from HumanistNetworkNews.org

In these days of gloom and doom, so much of humanity seems incredibly stupid--abandoning responsibility for the future because, well, who gives a damn? And, anyway, some deity will take care of everything, now or upon admission to a promised hereafter.

Some of us curmudgeons have a secret spark of careful optimism, hoping that with knowledge and effort, humanity will save itself. Unfortunately, in order to use any optimism productively, you must give up pretending. You must try hard to find out and understand what you're up against, accept the evidence and deal with it the best you can. This is called modern science.

We can't pretend that Planet Earth is a safe place. It never was, and we're making it worse for ourselves--thanks to our overpopulated and greedy species doing things that contribute to global warming, loss of drinkable water and arable land, rising sea levels, etc.

Some people know the problems, and put effort into saving the environment for ourselves and for the ecosystems upon which our lives depend. They are recycling, repairing water mains, planting trees, limiting greenhouse emissions, relocating important things away from shorelines and using alternate sources of energy.

Unfortunately, only a small minority of the population is working on how to survive the potential disasters that are not caused by human activities. Such problems are not made any easier to deal with when fundamentalists insist that they are sent to punish us, or to bring about the rapture of the devout, or whatever.

These disasters are real. Back when I was writing a bi-monthly science column, I called one, "At Least We Missed the Permian Catastrophe." About 250 million years ago, most of life died. We humans weren't even evolved at the time to cause it or do anything about it. Yet even in the modern world we are vulnerable to similar catastrophes. Asteroids could still strike the earth's surface, a star going supernova could affect the earth's atmosphere. Our planet is daily shaken by earth tremors.

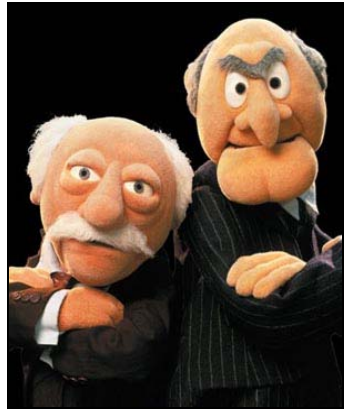
We all know that earthquakes must be anticipated, prepared for and built for. Buildings that collapse in quakes are inexcusable these days and yet they are the norm, especially in poor countries such as Haiti. A volcano erupting in one part of our planet produces dust that affects the whole world.

No matter what some people believe and preach, humanity is one species, part of the web of life that we---who hold so much power over Earth---must protect. Do nothing, and our species may be ultimately doomed. Nobody else now or hereafter is going to save us.

Of course, I have this little fantasy that a powerful alien species will visit us on earth, take one look at human folly, remove all the fundamentalists of every religion and political party, and put them on a distant planet that has one undivided continent . . .

Well, I told you I was a curmudgeon. Enjoy your day!

Janet Jeppson Asimov, M.D., a retired psychiatrist and children's science fiction writer, is the author of twenty books and many short stories and articles



"No matter the circumstances, we are a religious people who choose ultimate optimism. What does it mean to live religiously with an attitude of ultimate optimism? In terms of a personal spiritual orientation, being an optimist means approaching life with a sense of openness, waiting expectantly for a glimpse of truth or glory. It means being ready, ready to receive, to process, to act. And it means being willing, willing volunteers in service to the ultimate unfolding of the kingdom of God, or whatever you would like to call that better world waiting to be born into our hands.

Maintaining an attitude of ultimate optimism requires that we live with some awareness of and appreciation for history. We remember that we didn't invent these ideas, this faith, or these principles. We reap what we did not sow. That by itself is a reason for optimism. At the other end of the spectrum, to be an ultimate optimist also requires us to have some awareness of and appreciation for an unknown future that we will not live to see. We are obligated to sow anew so that others who come after us will reap as we have.

This attitude of ultimate optimism requires that we do our works of mutual ministry with no guarantee of immediate results. We may never know what the ultimate results of our actions will turn out to be. We may not get the credit; we may not ever cross over into the promised land. But to act anyway is what our liberal faith is all about. It is about advocating for the principles and values we believe in with no guarantee of success or even discernable progress."

From a Sermon on the Website of South Church Unitarian Universalist, Portsmouth, NH

☪ ☸ ॐ ☾ ☆ ✚ **Multifaith Calendar** ✚ ☆ ☾ ॐ ☸ ☪

✚ 1st March – St David's Day – Christian

Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, lived in the 6th century CE. A monk, abbot and bishop, he helped to spread Christianity among the Celtic tribes of western Britain.

☸ 1st March – Holi – Hindu

Various stories are associated with the Hindu spring festival. One story involves Krishna and his antics with the gopis (milkmaids), which gives rise to the tradition of throwing coloured powders and dyes. The story of Prahlada and Holika is also associated with Holi. Prahlada worshipped Vishnu in defiance of his father, and survived when his aunt, Holika, immune to fire, held him while she sat on a bonfire, giving rise to the tradition of lighting bonfires.

☪ 2nd March – Hola Mahalla / Mohalla – Sikh

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, introduced the festival as an alternative to Holi, in 1680. First celebrated at Anandpur, in India's Punjab, it includes competitive displays of swordsmanship, horsemanship, archery and wrestling, and displays of weapons and symposia of poetry.

☾ 5th March – The Women's World Day of Prayer

This international, interdenominational prayer movement, begun in 1887, uses material from a different country each year. This year's order of service comes from Papua New Guinea.

✚ 14th March – Mothering Sunday (Simnel Sunday)

Mothering Sunday, the 4th Sunday in Lent, has now become secularised and is known as Mother's Day. It was traditionally a Sunday when Christians visited their 'mother church' and took gifts to their mothers, often including a simnel cake.

☸ 16th March – Varsha-Pratipada – Hindu

Varsha-Pratipada is also called Yugaadi, which is a combination of the words yuga (era) and aadi (beginning). The first day of Chaitra, the first month of the Hindu lunar year, is regarded as an auspicious day for starting anything new. (Divali, in the autumn, is also a new year festival.)

✚ 17th March – St Patrick's Day – Christian

Patrick lived in the 4th century CE, and was held captive in Ireland as a young man. He escaped, became a priest and then returned to Ireland to spread the Christian Gospel. The shamrock is his symbol and is worn on St Patrick's Day.

✚ 19th March – Feast of St Joseph – Christian

A feast day is held in some churches in honour of Joseph, who, together with the Blessed Virgin Mary, brought up Jesus.

✚ 21st March – Passion Sunday – Christian

This is the 5th Sunday in Lent, when Christians begin to concentrate their thoughts on the Passion or suffering of Jesus.

☾ 21st March – Naw-Ruz – Baha'i

Naw-Ruz is the Baha'i New Year's Day and coincides with the spring equinox. It is an ancient Persian festival celebrating the 'new day' and it marks the end of the annual 19 Day Fast for Baha'is and is one of the nine holy days of the year. Celebrations start at sunset on March 20, often by gathering for prayer and a festive meal.

☾ 21st March – Jamshedi Noruz – Zoroastrian

The Zoroastrian New Year celebration, according to the Fasli calendar used in Iran. Individuals may pray prayers of repentance for thoughts, words and deeds during the past year, and in so doing prepare for a commitment for future goodness in a spiritually cleansed state. There is a special meal and elder members of the household giving younger members gifts. Families may sponsor a thanksgiving ceremony performed by a priest, or priests, at their home or in the temple.

☸ 24th March – Rama Navami – Hindu

Rama Navami, the birthday of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, is celebrated at noon (Rama was born at noon), by arati in front of a picture of Rama swinging in a cradle.

✚ 25th March – The Annunciation of the Lord / Blessed Virgin (Lady Day) – Christian

Lady Day celebrates the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a child, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. An opportunity to focus on the doctrine of the incarnation.

☾ 26th March – Khordad Sal – Zoroastrian

The birthday of Zarathustra is celebrated on this day. The date is symbolic as the actual date cannot be accurately identified. It is one of the most important Zoroastrian festivals - people gather in fire temples for prayers and celebrate with feasting.

✚ 28th March – Palm Sunday – Christian

Palm Sunday is the first day of Holy Week, when Christians remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, followed by his arrest and crucifixion. Many churches commemorate Palm Sunday by processions, where the congregation carry symbolic palm crosses, or branches of trees.

✚ 28th March - 4th April – Holy Week – Christian

This is the most solemn week of the Christian year. Christians recall the events of the final week of the earthly life of Jesus.

☸ 28th - 29th March – Mahavira Jayanti – Jain

Festival celebrating the birthday of Mahavira, the last Tirthankara, or great teacher of the Jains. The events surrounding his birth are re-enacted, and if there are monks or nuns present, there will be readings from the scriptures and teaching about the rest of Mahavira's life. Lay people will also celebrate with a special meal at home.

☸ 29th March – Hanuman Jayanti – Hindu

Hindus celebrate the birth of Hanuman, the monkey-warrior. Hanuman is Lord Rama's supreme devotee, and his story is told in the Ramayana.

☾ 30th March - 6th April – Passover / Pesach – Jewish

This Jewish festival lasts eight days and commemorates the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. The Seder meal, which takes place at home, at the beginning of Pesach, is an important highlight. The Haggadah, the story of the deliverance, is recounted, and special food, including matzah (unleavened bread) is eaten throughout the festival.

Songs and Silence for the Soul

Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church



**Sundays 14th March, 11th April, 9th May
13th June, from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

Suggested Donation: £2.00

We've been running this monthly Songs and Silence group here at Essex Church for over two years now and one of its delightful features is how the group varies from month to month, depending on who comes along.

We always meet on the second Sunday of each month from 3.30 to 5pm. We sing a wide range of chants from the world's faith traditions and sit together in candlelit silence. It's a gentle and healing, group-led space in which everyone is welcome to join. No particular singing skills are needed.

Phone Sarah via the church office on 0207 221 6514 or email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you would like more information.

"Each of us is challenged by our faith to live these three components of our identity, and to hold each of them in proper balance: the rational, the creative, the practical.

Many of us choose to live in our heads, and find it difficult to open ourselves to our connection to spirit and mystery and awe. Others yearn for a life of the spirit, but find it hard to get out of our heads and away from the daily grind of living, even though we want to. Some of us are engaged in serious social justice work, doing, doing, without much thought to the spiritual component of our activities. We're all hands, and our minds are clear and focused, but we're not spiritually grounded.

The balance we seek between our freethinking, our mysticism, or connection to spirit, and putting our hands to work is constantly shifting and changing. It's dynamic, not static. Yet without holding all three components in that dynamic state, we will remain incomplete."

UU Minister Rev. Peter Friedrichs

Sunday Services at Essex Church

**7th March – "Shades of Gray"
– Service led by Rev. Linda Hart**

We all have beliefs which are deeply set, ideas that we trust are true. Can we live with less black and white, and see the world with more gray? Do we want to? Rev Linda Hart is minister of Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church. A Unitarian Universalist minister, she has been in the UK for three years along with husband Peter Teets (who gave the sermon on Remembrance Day 2009), and daughter Claire.

**14th March – "Creating Sacred Space"
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and
Rev Kathryn Reynolds**

Kathryn is an Inter-faith minister and is part of the group that runs monthly Universal Spiritual Gatherings here at Essex Church. In this service we will explore the many ways we can create sacred space, both in worship and in our everyday lives

**21st March – "Fresh Breeze, New Shoots"
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

This service celebrates the seasonal changes happening all around us and reflects on the messages that spring may bring. If you have found your heart lifted recently by signs of spring – a freshness in the air, bulbs appearing in the garden, catkins on trees, or not, – come and join us to welcome the new season.

**28th March – "A Unitarian Palm Sunday"
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

At the start of the Easter narrative is Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In this service we will consider the intertwining of triumph and despair in life. People will be invited to take part in a simple ritual to mark this day.

