



## What's on this month:

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 10.30am  
**Walking Group**  
Hampton Court

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 11am  
**"You Do Not  
Have To Be Good"**  
Led by Rev. Johanna Boeke

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 11am  
**"Hallelujah"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2-3pm  
**Nia Dance:**  
Holistic Movement  
Led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 3.30-5pm  
**'Songs and  
Silence for the Soul'**  
Chanting and Stillness

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
'Making a Scarecrow'  
led by Juliet Edwards

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 11am  
**"Creating Sacred  
Space Together"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 12.30pm  
**Essex Church AGM**

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May, 11am  
**Morning Service** led by  
David Francis Darling

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:** 'Period  
Piece' by Gwen Raverat  
Led by Caroline Blair

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 11am  
**"In the Wilderness"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

## A Message from our Minister...

### Shop Local: Encourage Diversity

One of my concerns about the economic recession is the effect it is having on small shops and businesses. Here in Kensington & Chelsea there is little sign that businesses are suffering but it is a different story in other parts of the country and indeed in other parts of London. Travelling around on holiday over the last few weeks it has been shocking to see boarded up shops on high streets and I suspect there will be more to come.



Some hard nosed economists might argue that survival of the toughest is the name of the game. Weaker businesses will fail and that's how it must be. Darwin's theory of evolution, which rightly celebrates the rich diversity of creation, can seem much bleaker when applied to shopping centres. How dull it is to travel from one town to another and find the same shops time and time again. Do any of us want an economy where the only shops left open are owned by large companies? Supermarkets are useful but so are corner shops and delicatessens. We need variety.

Variety is something we have aplenty here at Essex Church, if we're talking about religious and spiritual beliefs. It is something we're rightly proud of. We're proud too of the diverse groups that use our building and of the wide ranging activities we offer for people to join in with. Yet there is always more that can be done. At the AGM after our Sunday service on May 17<sup>th</sup>, which we encourage all members to attend, we will be considering how best to make our community a welcoming place for all and how to let the world know that a liberal religious congregation exists here in Notting Hill.

So let us know your ideas for ways we can use and develop this valuable resource of our building and of our congregation, Kensington Unitarians. And remember to shop locally whenever you can!

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

P.S. See inside for a special offer from our local 'Retro' Exchange Shops – special shopping vouchers available at a bargain price!

## In this month's newsletter...

- \* "The Spiritual Bookshelf - Man's Search for Meaning" chosen by Stephanie Saville \*
- Report from the Unitarian General Assembly Annual Meetings by Caroline Blair
- \* "How I Came to Essex Church" by Karl Askew \*
- News from Gordon Deaville \*
- "Why Grow?" by Louisa Bird \*
- "Why Do You Go to Church?" by Jane Blackall
- \* "Popped One's Clogs" by Will Lyons and response by Carole Grace \* and more....

# Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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.

We meet for worship each Sunday at 11.00am. The format of the service varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a programme for children. Our activities also include religious education and spirituality workshops, engagement groups on a variety of themes, meeting for fellowship, a regular chanting session, and quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

Contact our minister to discuss our unique ceremonies, including child naming services, weddings, blessings, and memorials, which are available to all. 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 wardens by telephone or email.



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](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

Web: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

A forthcoming spirituality course here at Essex Church:

## Adult RE: 'Spirit Body'

Thursdays 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June from 7-9pm

This June there will be two introductory evening sessions here at Essex Church which will explore the idea of us humans as spiritual beings that are embodied, of word and consciousness made flesh in this material world.



### Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June, 7-9pm 'Being Embodied'

Using art work and gentle movement, music and conversation, we will explore what it is to have a body. The activities can be followed by all fitness levels and participants will be encouraged to explore at a depth that feels right for them. This session will be led by Fiona Watson and Sarah Tinker.



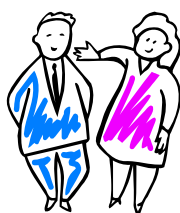
### Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June, 7-9pm 'Introduction to Contact Improvisation'

This will be a gentle introductory session in which we will experience some contact improvisation exercises, paying attention to our selves and our breathing and movements and to one another. The movements will be slow and gentle but may involve standing for a few minutes. This session will be led by Jenny Moy

Please ring Sarah Tinker on 020 7221 6514 to book a place on either or both of these sessions.

Suggested donation £2.00

## Stewarding and Coffee



### Stewarding:

3 <sup>rd</sup> May:	Will Lyons
10 <sup>th</sup> May:	Louisa Bird
17 <sup>th</sup> May:	Angela Gasparetto
24 <sup>th</sup> May:	Debra Hinton
31 <sup>st</sup> May:	Sachin Joshi

### Coffee:

3 <sup>rd</sup> May:	Jo Ridgers
10 <sup>th</sup> May:	Christine Joshi
17 <sup>th</sup> May:	Louisa Bird
24 <sup>th</sup> May:	Allan Bell
31 <sup>st</sup> May:	Christine Joshi

Please speak to Christine Joshi if you are willing to help!

## June Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the June issue is **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before this date.

Thank you!!!

# 'Why Grow?' – Growth Workshop

District Growth Group: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April in Sevenoaks, Kent

Angela Gasparetto, Caroline Blair, Jane Blackall and I accompanied Sarah to a one-day Growth Workshop led by Rev. Jane Dwinell, a Unitarian Minister from the United States and consultant in growing small congregations. There were representatives from 8 congregations in all, including Godalming, Chatham, Golders Green, Horsham, Lewes, Newington Green and ourselves.

The key tenets of Jane Dwinell's method for growing small congregations are:-

1. How big do you want to grow?
2. Clean up conflict/bad behaviour
3. Quality Sunday Experience
4. The right organisational structure for size
5. Hospitality & Welcoming
6. Mission (Social Action Project)



"Why grow?" was the key question Jane Dwinell put to participants. Responses ranged from "attracting young blood" to "offering a place for people to reflect". It was generally agreed that "worship is better with more people". However, this presented a Unitarian conundrum – Unitarians don't 'convert' – people come of their own free will. Jane quizzed us: "How welcoming are you?" and "How big do you want to grow?" Mutterings ensued as members cogitated on the state of their congregations and whether they wanted these to double or increase by only 10%. Change can be difficult.

Participants agreed that Unitarians should be able to welcome newcomers and also, be able to tell friends and family and acquaintances what Unitarianism is. Each congregation had to come up with their take on Unitarianism and present it the rest of the participants. From the Essex Church corner, Angela came up with an excellent statement:

"Unitarianism is a non-dogmatic liberal religious organisation that supports you to find your own spiritual truth".

We certainly felt this was a good explanation for what we believe at Essex Church and as a way of opening the eyes of people we encounter in the daily round. You never know with whom this statement may strike a chord. Jane Dwinell will also be co-leading a service and workshop at Essex Church on 26<sup>th</sup> April.

Louisa Bird



## 'Why Do You Go To A Unitarian Church?'

Imagine the situation: at work, at an evening class, maybe on the bus – you have been chatting with colleagues or acquaintances about what you got up to at the weekend – and you mention in passing that you went to church last Sunday. Going to church is a minority pursuit these days and is seemingly viewed with indifference, if not outright hostility, by many in today's society. Your companions might be surprised and intrigued to hear that you are 'religious'. They may not have had you down as the 'church-going type' and in all likelihood they will not have heard of Unitarians at all. So they might ask 'why do you go to church?', 'what is your church like?' or even 'what is Unitarianism?'

This is something that comes up time and time again in workshops and books on congregational growth. Unitarians are challenged to come up with an 'elevator speech': imagine someone asks you one of those questions as you get into a lift and you have only got the time it takes to travel a few floors to get across the essence of Unitarianism in a nutshell. Just a couple of sentences to make an impression... what could you possibly say? However, a situation like this is a potentially a great opportunity to spread the word about Unitarianism – about our community here at Essex Church in particular – and a little bit of forethought might make us all better equipped to answer the question next time we are asked it. Understandably, many of us may feel a little hesitant at anything that smacks of evangelism, but to me it seems hugely important for us to get over our embarrassment: there must be so many people out there who would benefit from involvement with a community such as ours and would appreciate what we have to offer but most are not even aware that such a thing as liberal religion exists. Fundamentalists of all flavours have few qualms about grabbing the headlines... whilst we tend to hide our light under a bushell!

'Why do you go to a Unitarian church?' is an entirely reasonable question. Why DO you bother to get up and come here on a Sunday morning instead of staying in bed or going to B&Q or playing football or... whatever it is that everybody else does? What do you get out of your commitment to this community? What difference does it make to your life? I would suggest the best – most compelling – replies you could give are not historical or theological but personal. Also, stay positive, if you can: it seems more appealing to tell people what we do and what we are instead of what we *don't* do and what we're *not*!

I would love to hear your responses to this question. Please give it some thought and send me your replies (I would suggest you limit yourselves to about 20-40 words for a true 'elevator speech', though I would also be happy to receive longer responses for the newsletter, if you have more to say on the matter) and a selection will be included in future issues.

Jane Blackall

# Our Warden's Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...



I realise this is tempting fate, but by the time you're reading this, building work on the kitchen and toilet should be finally finished and the builders finally gone. The disabled toilet is already cleared and usable now, and everything else has been basically functional for some time. So as I write, we're mainly just waiting on the floor-sealing. The grand opening isn't till the 28th of June though – so we're not counting our chickens!

Unfortunately, as one set of builders leave another may be just arriving. One of our neighbours has planning permission for an extension and has asked to put scaffolding in our back-garden. We've given permission in principle subject to the relevant area being restored/improved at the end of the job. The scaffolding will hug the wall of the neighbouring property, so it won't intrude into the part of the garden we actually use – and hopefully there won't be any work going on on Sunday – but it will look unsightly for a while.

Meanwhile the front garden goes from strength to strength. The red Apfeldorn tulips are in full bloom in the bottom bed right now, and there's about to be an explosion of Black Parrot and Texas Flame on either side of the entrance. The self-seeded white allium are also looking very pretty – but given there already seem to be four times as many as there were last year (and that was after Groundworks made a serious effort to weed them out) they may soon start to become a nuisance.

In terms of use of the building, after a blessedly quiet Easter, the regular groups are starting up again – and we have a new 'Women's Kung Fu' group on Monday night. A Shakespeare Reading society is also meeting here temporarily once a month while their regular premises are refurbished. There's a one-week course on Gyrokinetics (a form of exercise) at the end of May and our neighbour Piero (who keeps an eye on the building if Sarah and I are both away) has started a arts-based training course on Thursday afternoons for people working with pre-schoolers.

In anticipation of the end of the building work, I've felt inspired to start playing with the furniture arrangement upstairs. Last month, we replaced the remaining small solid tables in the Hall with lighter folding ones, and we're now experimenting with keeping these in a cupboard during the week and centralising the long table on the window wall instead of under the hatch. This makes the room more spacious – which is helpful to the yoga group that meets there every morning. The round table has also been moved into the Church, to form a pair with the one already there, and the medium-sized solid table has replaced the cupboard the hymnbooks were on. Feedback on any of these changes (aesthetic or practical) is welcome.

Spring blessings.

Jenny Moy

# News from Gordon

Gordon says: "Please convey to the readers of the newsletter my thanks for their prayers and the candles that have been lit for me. I recovered from being unconscious and having pneumonia but continue treatment for myasthenia gravis. Until everything that goes in my mouth goes the right way again I am fed by tube. At times, being in hospital is like having a much needed quiet time. I get better as time goes on, but slowly. All readers of the newsletter are wished spring blessings."

## Farewell St. Mary's Hospital Flower Shop

We all send flowers for many occasions. The last night of shows by Kensal Youth Drama (now unfortunately closed), of which I was chair, saw various people presented with bouquets, we have flowers in church, give them for special occasions, and so on.

One flower shop that enabled us to support the Friends of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, at the same time has reluctantly closed its doors. It had brightened up the hospital environment for patients, visitors and staff alike for many years. A decision was taken to close the shop, which opened in 1965, because it had been running at a loss for some time (an effect of the current economic climate?).

Sue Rivers, chair of the Friends, said "the closure of the shop marks the end of an era. Over the years we've benefited from a succession of professional florists and skilled volunteers who've been a real asset to the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and its predecessors." Staff and volunteers at the shop provided floral arrangements for St. Mary's and the Western Eye Hospitals and kept up several small gardens around St. Mary's.

Unfortunately, visitors to me in St. Mary's could not support the shop by buying flowers for me. The nature of the illnesses treated in the wards I was in is such that flowers are not allowed in them.

The shop has masterminded many wedding and funeral flowers, and arrangements for special events – some of which have been complimented by distinguished visitors such as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Sue thanks all the shop's customers for their loyal support over the years as well as all their volunteers for their dedication.

There's no doubt that St. Mary's Hospital Friends Flower Shop will be missed, but it's still possible to buy just small bunches of flowers in the Friends' Shop at the entrance to the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother wing at the hospital.

Gordon Deaville



# The Spiritual Bookshelf

## #4: 'Man's Search for Meaning' by Victor Frankl

*This is the third of a new series of articles in the newsletter where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them. Look out for book recommendations throughout the course of 2009.*

### 'The Ultimate Freedom'

The recent Holocaust Memorial services, seeing the film 'The Reader', later reading the book on which it was based, reminded me of Victor Frankl's autobiography which made a huge impression on me many years ago. Borrowing the paperback from the public library it seemed to speak to me just as forcibly today.

Victor Frankl was a psychiatrist and neurologist who survived 3 years in concentration camps with all the cruelty that that entailed – not just from the SS, but from fellow prisoners; and while I very much doubt that the words came to him as he stood naked and shorn of hair after surrendering watch, clothing everything on arrival at Auschwitz, he believed that man's ultimate freedom is the right to determine his own attitude to any given situation. He taught fellow prisoners that it did not matter what they expected from life but rather what life expected from them. As Nietzsche put it, "He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how."

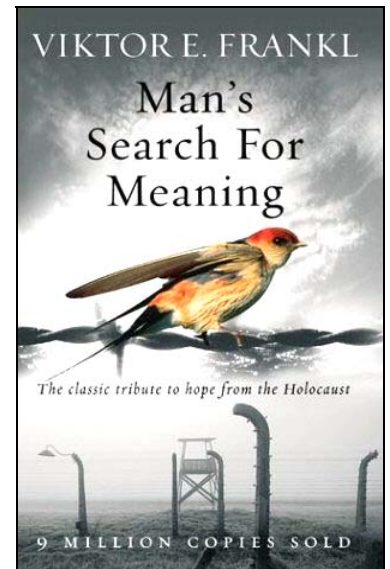
Quoting Frankl again, "to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering."

Despite everything, they could still see beauty in sunsets or glimpses or sunrise through the trees, even maintain a sense of humour. Some, like Frankl, were able to see personal development, while others gave up, smoked their cigarette, ate their last piece of bread, lay without moving until death carried them away.

Re-reading this book now, I came across a little nugget I had not remembered. Frankl was invited to the American Consulate in Vienna to pick up his immigration visa. He hesitated. How could he leave his parents? Where did his responsibility lie – parents or career? His eye fell on a piece of marble on a table on his parents' home. His father had found it on the site of the largest synagogue in Vienna which had been burnt down. It was part of the tablets on which the ten commandments were inscribed. "Which commandment?" he asked his father.

"Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land." Frankl stayed.

**Dr. Stephanie Saville**



## Daffodils



Parasols to win the sun  
Trumpets to proclaim a better way  
Yellow fronds of light to test the stars  
Celestials in ordinary, green for enlightenment  
Returning tribute and light: daffodils you are  
Apotheoses of better times to come.

**John Hands, April 2008**

## Membership Service & AGM

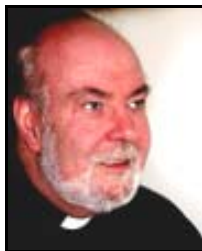
**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 11am & 12.30pm**



We hold a special membership service once a year at which the commitment of both new and long-standing members to the community is celebrated. It would be lovely if we had a good turn-out for this special service.

This service will be followed by our Annual General Meeting. It is important that members attend this meeting if at all possible so please put it on your calendar now and plan to come along.

We are seeking nominations for the management committee election, so please consider whether you might be able to serve the church in this way, and speak to one of the existing committee members about what is involved.



"If you were to remove one ingredient from the past – even a tiny one, even a painful one – you would not be who you are today. Pluck one strand from the web and everything unravels irretrievably. Your disappointments and sorrows, your mistakes and your failures, your disasters and your tragedies, have played just as much a part in the development of the person who sits here today as have your triumphs and successes, and you cannot lament any of them without lamenting what you have become."

Rev. Bill Darlison

## LDPA Day Workshop on Congregational Leadership

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May, 10.30am - 3:30pm.

Unitarian Church, Hamond Hill, Chatham, Kent ME4 6AP



The theme will be "Other Ways to Worship: Looking at alternatives to the hymn sandwich", and will be led by Andy Pakula, David Usher and our own Sarah Tinker.

Please tell the district minister, Rev David Usher, if you are planning to attend: davidusher@ldpa.org.uk.

## 'Ropes, Wheels and Wings'

A Unikids Weekend for 7-11 Year Olds

Friday 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> June 2009

At Alfriston Youth Hostel, Frog Firlle, Alfriston,  
Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 5TT



Join us for a weekend of rock climbing, mountain biking and meditation – also games, circle time and all sorts of stuff – in the wildest countryside of Sussex.

**Activities:** The weekend includes a day of climbing and a mountain bike treasure hunt. Also there will be some meditation and relaxation exercises. Also there will be time for creativity, games and circle time.

**Cost:** £45 (thanks to generous donations from Unitarian grant bodies) includes all activities, accommodation and meals – if money is an issue a further discount is available – contact John.

**Travel:** nearest station is Seaford – 3 miles from Alfriston. A minibus will be departing from South London to Alfriston on the Friday afternoon – and back on Sunday afternoon – for more details contact John. Arrivals 17.30 on Friday, departures 14.00 on Sunday.

Your leaders are John Harley, Liz Hills and Peter Teets.

For further information about the weekend please contact John on 020 8670 9280 or mobile 07985 900 935.

An Event from the Art and Spirituality Network

## 'The Fool'

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May, 10.30am to 5.00pm

London Interfaith Centre  
125 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6RG

A hands- on workshop inspired by the drawing methods of Cecil Collins, led by Maria Lancaster.

The fool represents that innate, inviolate primordial innocence which perceives directly and clearly, the recovery of which constitutes for me the object of all real culture, and all real education and civilisation.

Inspired by the vision and teachings of the late Cecil Collins – whose centenary is being marked by a display at Tate Britain – this workshop offers an opportunity to experience some of his teaching methods. A short video on Cecil's vision of the Fool will be shown in the morning, followed by a drawing workshop, working from the model in a series of short poses, working with movement and music, and using a wide range of drawing tools. The afternoon will be dedicated to developing paintings from some sketches from the morning session.

Materials are provided, no prior experience is needed.

Cost £25 including drinks and all materials.

Please bring lunch to share

Further enquiries about the workshop:  
maria.lancaster@waitrose.com

# Songs and Silence for the Soul

Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church



**Sundays 10<sup>th</sup> May, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 12<sup>th</sup> July  
and 9<sup>th</sup> August 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](mailto:sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you would like more information.

# Creativity Engagement Group "Making a Scarecrow"

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm



Juliet Edwards would like help to make a scarecrow to take to Pembridge (Herefordshire) Flower Festival. She says:

"I am going to visit my friend Jenny at the end of May and she asked me to bring a scarecrow. As part of the parish church flower festival the street is to be lined with scarecrows. The theme is nursery rhyme characters and I would like to have a go at creating The Grand Old Duke of York. I like the thought of driving him along in my passenger seat!

I haven't researched what period the duke hails from. At the moment I imagine him with a military jacket with velvet collar and cuffs and possibly hair in ringlets, although I realize he will require a touch of straw too! If the idea catches your imagination, please come along and help. Any contributions of material would be welcome too. I am hoping to return with photos."

**Juliet Edwards**

As usual, if this particular activity doesn't take your fancy, you are most welcome to bring your own crafts along, and simply sit with us in good company for the evening. There are usually biscuits and other goodies to eat too...



"When things are shaky and nothing is working, we might realize that we are on the verge of something. We might realize that this is a very vulnerable and tender place, and that tenderness can go either way. We can shut down and feel resentful or we can touch in on that throbbing quality. There is definitely something tender and throbbing about groundlessness.

It's a kind of testing, the kind of testing that spiritual warriors need in order to awaken their hearts... Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy."

**Pema Chodron**





# Multifaith Calendar



## ✿ May – Saga Dawa – Buddhist

This Tibetan and Nepalese festival, on the full moon day of May, celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. The festival is a day of strict Buddhist observance, with fasting. It is also a festival of lights, as lamps are lit everywhere. When Saga Dawa is celebrated in the UK the emphasis is on the joy associated with the Buddha's birth and enlightenment.



## ⊗ 1<sup>st</sup> May – Beltane – Pagan/Wiccan

Beltane is a Celtic word which means fires of Bel (Bel was a Celtic deity). It is a fire festival that celebrates the coming of summer and the fertility of the coming year. Beltane rituals would often include courting, for example, young men and women collecting blossoms in the woods and lighting fires in the evening. These rituals would often lead to matches and marriages, either immediately in the coming summer and autumn. Fire is still the most important element of most Beltane celebrations and there are many traditions associated with it. It is seen to have purifying qualities which cleanse and revitalise. People leap over the Beltane fire to bring good fortune, fertility (of mind, body and spirit) and happiness through the coming year. The tradition of dancing round the maypole contains sexual imagery and is still very popular with modern Pagans.

## ✿ 9<sup>th</sup> May – Vesakha Puja / Wesak / Buddha Day – Buddhist

Buddhists celebrate Wesak, or Vaisakha Puja, or Buddha Day, according to their tradition. This is the biggest of the Buddhist festivals, with lay people coming together at monasteries. Houses are decorated with lanterns and garlands, and temples are ringed with oil lamps. Theravadin Buddhists celebrate the life of Gautama Buddha on Wesak: his birth, enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, and his final passing away.

## ✚ 10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May – Christian Aid Week – Christian

Many churches devote this week to fund raising for Christian Aid, often through house to house collections. Christian Aid works in nearly 60 countries helping people, regardless of religion or race, to improve their own lives and tackle the causes of poverty and injustice.

## ✧ 12<sup>th</sup> May – Lag B'Omer – Buddhist

The Omer lasting from Pesach to Shavuot, is a period of 49 days of sadness in the Jewish calendar. On the 33rd day, Lag B'Omer, this is relieved in memory of the end of a plague in Roman times. This is also the one day in the Omer when weddings are allowed to take place.

## ✚ 21<sup>st</sup> May – Ascension Day – Christian

Ascension Day, the 40th day after Easter, commemorates the last earthly appearance of the risen Christ. According to the Bible, Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. It is one of the four most important dates in the Christian calendar, coming after Christmas and Easter but before Pentecost.

## ✧ 29<sup>th</sup> May – Shavuot / Festival of Weeks / Pentecost – Jewish

Shavuot, also known as Pentecost or the Festival of Weeks, comes seven weeks after Pesach. The festival celebrates the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai and the early harvest season in Israel. Synagogues are decorated with flowers, and dairy foods are traditionally eaten.

## ✧ 23<sup>rd</sup> May – Declaration of the Bab – Bahai

This is celebrated from 2 hours after sunset on the 22nd The Bab was the Forerunner of Bahauallah. His mission was to prepare the world for the coming of Bahauallah, declared it in the evening of May 22nd 1844. The Bab was later imprisoned and executed for his beliefs and activities.

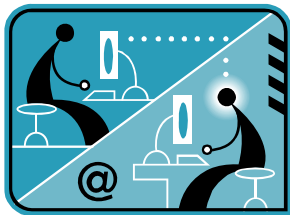


## ✚ 31<sup>st</sup> May – Pentecost / Whitsuntide – Christian

Pentecost, also known as Whitsuntide, is often thought of as the 'birthday' of the Church. Christians remember the first disciples of Jesus receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and first proclaiming the Gospel, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Called Pentecost after the Jewish festival day when the event took place, the name Whitsuntide comes from the custom of people presenting themselves for baptism on this day, dressed in white.



# Monthly 'PULSE' Unitarian eBulletin



The LDPA (our Unitarian district association) has recently launched a new e-mail Bulletin. This is a monthly publication, available only by email, which contains news, information and articles relevant to Unitarians in the South East.

If you would like to receive this monthly update, simply send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to [pulse.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pulse.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk).



"It's the most tantalising temptation in the world to conform to the enlightened consensus that all those who subscribe to religion are out of touch with reality.

But I wonder if that form of sweeping assessment is not the worst temptation of the lot? To judge in advance, to categorise someone's personality and morality according to the group to which they belong? To place a big cartoonist's label on them before they speak?

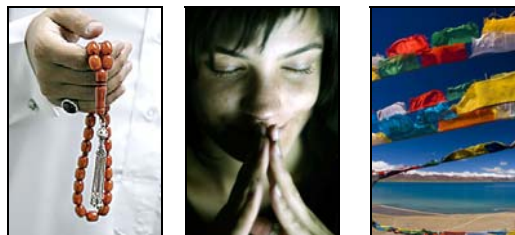
The things that annoy me are the things that deny or restrict our humanity. But isn't the religious impulse itself an intensely human activity? Practically every tribe, every community in any continent has come up with a system of beliefs in the supernatural or other-worldly. Man defines himself almost by being the only creature capable of thinking about a set of values greater than himself. It's what makes humanity rather marvellous.

Attack religion for being irrational, and you also have to question everything we do that's irrational. That includes clapping at a concert, singing at a football match, saluting, two-minute silences, birthday parties, in fact any communal act or ritual that designates or celebrates something other than itself. We technically don't need these things to survive. Technically, we don't need songs, or stories, or soap operas, or sermons. We don't need them. They're silly. We don't need jokes. Humour isn't essential for our survival. Yet, we have an appetite for them. That's a human thing. Religion celebrates our humanity. To err may be human, but so is to worship."

**Armando Ianucci**

# 'Exploring Prayer'

A New Adult RE Course for the Summer



**Six sessions on Thursday Evenings  
from 16<sup>th</sup> July to 27<sup>th</sup> August, 7.00-9.00pm  
(please note: no meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August)**

This new adult RE course will run for six sessions, meeting weekly on consecutive Thursday evenings (7.00-9.00pm), from 16<sup>th</sup> July to 27<sup>th</sup> August (excluding 20<sup>th</sup> August). It is not essential to come to all of the sessions but we would appreciate it if you let us know in advance if you plan to attend... and it would be even better if you could commit to coming to at least four of the six nights.

The sessions will be partly based on the book 'Simply Pray' by Unitarian Universalist minister Erik Walker Wikstrom. During the course, we will focus on four types of traditional prayer which are shared by all the major world religions: naming, knowing, listening, and loving. It is our intention that the course will also provide opportunities for everyone to directly experience various different forms of prayer. There will also be plenty of time for your own personal reflection on the theme and chances to share your views and your own experiences of prayer with the rest of the group. We hope that the course will help each participant to find a way to pray that is authentic to them and their sense of the Holy.

We are still in the early stages of planning for this course and would particularly like to hear from anyone who has their own prayer practice and might be willing to come to the sessions and tell us about it. Please leave a message on 020 7221 6514 or email [education@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:education@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

There is also a tentative plan to start up a new regular weekly meeting at Essex Church in the autumn – some form of open, prayerful, quiet group-led space – to be held in an early evening slot. We have some preliminary thoughts about how this might work but the precise details will be shaped in part by feedback from participants in the summer prayer course.

**Jane Blackall and Jenny Moy**





## News from 'The GA': The Annual Meetings of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

I might be wrong but I imagine that if I attended a Pentecostalist conference it would be full of beaming faces exclaiming about how good God was being today (at least that is the kind of comment I always get from my neighbour when we meet). Not at the Unitarian G.A., where every casual comment seemed to start with the exhortation, "I wish they wouldn't...", in a benignly grumbling tone of voice. Not that I am in any position to criticise – I became obsessed with the hardness and thinness of the pillows. Unitarians may be a great force for good in the world, but they do have a talent for (generally good-natured) complaining.

And yet....there was so much to admire, and even to love. The business meetings were conducted with the stately grace of a restoration gavotte. The presentations by individual churches and chapels, showing their achievements and activities, were done with so much loyalty and affection that they were, without exception, touching and cheering. And the services, from the shortest, simplest ceremony to the main Anniversary Service on the

Friday night were just beautifully done: thoughtful, profound, warm and inclusive; not an easy combination to achieve.

By the time I had finished my three days there my mind seemed to be a tangle of experiences, and it was not easy to find a single outlook on the whole function. On the one hand there is the business side of the G.A. – not just the main business sessions, but the vast pattern of background work done by committees of all kinds. On the other hand, there are the spiritual fundamentals that made us join a church in the first place – the wrestling with questions of joy, sadness and fear, with birth and death, with anger and forgiveness and all the other painfully difficult questions we never quite answer.

I believe that a healthy Church works like a healthy family. Children are able to grow freely without fear because a lot of the world outside their personal experience is taken care of. Food, warmth, safety and dignity are arranged through the efforts of others, so their developing minds are not consumed by the basics of survival. As they grow, they may feel able to take on bits and pieces of the responsibilities for themselves, but not straight away, and certainly not all at once. By a great stroke of luck (for most of us) there are people in the Unitarian Church willing to take on the role of parents, sometimes with truly awe-inspiring dedication, so the rest of us can pursue our own spiritual explorations without endlessly worrying about practicalities.

The first time I discovered that I might be trusted with the honourable task of coffee-making at church, I was 90% delighted that I was no longer a New Girl, but an actual member of the congregation who could do grown-up stuff. But there was a tiny 10% thinking – hang on, all I've had to do so far is enjoy myself; now I have to think about other people. Hmmm, let me think about this. But I did understand that in a tiny way I was repaying a debt: that joining a community is not, in the long term, a simple matter of taking everything I can from it and giving nothing back.

Eventually I came to the conclusion that even Unitarian grumbling is a positive trait. There is an old saying that if two people always agree, one of them is doing all the thinking. The Unitarian Awkward Squad, who question absolutely everything, are at least making use of their brains and, within reason, I like it.

And by the way, all thanks to Sarah Tinker, who went out and bought me a new pillow especially for conference use. It made all the difference.

**Caroline Blair**



## Kensington Unitarians at the GA Meetings



There were six of us from Essex Church at the G.A. meetings in Chester this April – Juliet, Sarah, Jane, Caroline and Patricia, pictured above – and also Howard who was mostly on duty at the bookstall in his role as a member of staff.



The new GA Executive Committee took up their new posts at the end of the meetings. Four of the existing members will be staying on for another term: Sir Peter Soulsby (convenor), Rev. Dr. Ann Peart, Dot Hewerdine and Lis Dyson-Jones. Four new members will be joining them: Joan Cook, Jim Corrigan, Andy Pakula, and London District Minister Rev. David Usher. Once again the committee will have a great deal of hard work to do over the next few years. At this year's meeting, motions were proposed asking the E.C. to consider adopting a 'shorter and more dynamic title for our movement', and to 'compile of behavioural principles that can be seen to underpin our theological diversity' which would be 'brief, simply expressed, easily understood, and attractive to the new inquirer'. There were also motions urging the E.C. to appoint an Information Officer and a Social Justice Officer to work for the denomination at a national level. There will doubtless be lots of challenges ahead for the E.C. as they work on our behalf over the next few years.



A Forthcoming District Unitarian Event

**LDPA Day Seminar:  
Religion and Spirituality  
in Contemporary Society**



**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 10:30 - 4:00pm.  
Essex Hall, Essex St, London WC2R 3HY**

The District is excited to offer a day-long Seminar on Religion and Spirituality, led by Fr. Adrian Smith. Adrian Smith is a noted author and commentator on contemporary religion and spirituality, and is in much demand throughout the country for his informative, stimulating and challenging presentations.

A former Catholic missionary in Africa, he is the author of numerous books which challenge the church and society to embrace new forms of religious thinking. In many ways, much of what he proposes is eminently Unitarian. The District Minister, David Usher, has attended one of Adrian Smith's seminars and found it extremely relevant and helpful.

Cost: £7 per person, payable on the day, £6 in advance (cheques payable to the LDPA). Bring your own packed lunch. Hot drinks will be provided. Advance bookings to the District Minister, no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> June, via davidusher@ldpa.org.uk or (01732) 465248.

The Joined up Education Panel  
Invites you to a training day for Lay People

**“What’s Going on Here?”**

**With Rev Dr Vernon Marshall  
and Rev Dr Ann Peart**



**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009 at Luther King  
House, Rusholme, Manchester M14 5JP**

**Dynamics of Worship Explored**

10.30am - Arrivals and Coffee

11.00am - Ann Peart  
‘The Dynamics of the Service’

1.00pm - Lunch

2.00pm - Vernon Marshall  
‘The Dynamics of the Sermon’

Cost of the day is £5 plus lunch  
(Bring your own or book in advance)  
Tea/coffee will be provided.

Bookings and further information from Liz Shaw.

Email: lizzy.shaw50@btinternet.com  
Tel: 01433 630541

Seniors and BUYAN Bridging Weekend for 16 to 21 Year Olds

**‘Spiritual but not Religious’**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

Do you fancy a great weekend away hanging out doing a mixture of activities and workshops? Come enjoy the Seniors and Bridging weekend where we will talk about questions such as:

- Do you think there's something out there but have no idea what?
- Do you think there's nothing out there, but don't explain it well to those who do?
- Do you feel uncomfortable with the idea of god or religion?
- Do you like the whole god and religion thing, but not the sitting in church on a Sunday bit?

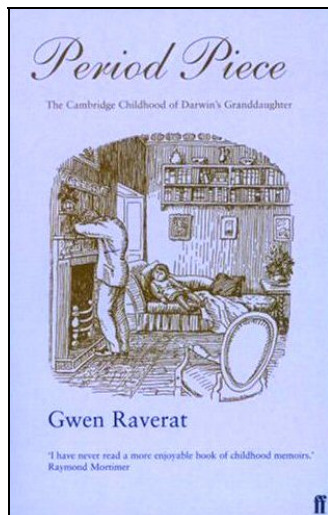
Cost £45. All participants to complete a booking form and personal information form and return to Essex Hall  
Read more and download the necessary forms from the GA website at: [www.unitarian.org.uk/shortterm/2009bridging.pdf](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/shortterm/2009bridging.pdf)



Reading Engagement Group

## “Period Piece” by Gwen Raverat

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next conversation will be about “Period Piece” by Gwen Raverat. This book was chosen by Caroline Blair and will be the focus of our next group on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May**.

Information from the Guardian:

*“Dipping into Period Piece is like gorging in a literary sweetshop. Every aspect of Raverat's late-Victorian childhood has a fondant, fairytale texture, dusted with a sheen of sugary nostalgia. Raverat remembers the Cambridge of her childhood as a lucent world of tea-parties, lawn-tennis, new bonnets and remarkable young men. Life skips along with little vexation, though Raverat admits it might seem too perfect to be true: “There must have been some difficulties, even in those days,” she reflects. “Indeed, all the right sleeves of my mother's dresses would keep getting too tight, from the constant tennis.”... Period Piece's bestseller status came as a complete surprise to its author, who wrote it at the age of 66 with no immediate view to circulating it outside her family. Raverat described it as “a circular book”, without beginning or end, but one which rotates continually, “sticking out like the spokes of a wheel from the hub, which is me.”*”

All are welcome to join the book group. Please do try to read the books before the meeting if you're planning to come along. It would also aid discussion if you pick out favourite passages to share. Regular members of the reading group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material.

## How I Came to Essex Church



Finding a church is a lot like internet dating. Both require some upfront searching, an exchange of emails and a sense of expectation and excitement before you eventually meet the person who could possibly turn out to be your soul mate. I used to attend the Metropolitan Community Church but unfortunately our relationship broke down due to irreconcilable theological issues. After a brief period of unsuccessful rebound encounters I began to do some serious shopping at the spiritual supermarket. Many of the churches I dated were just not right for me. I rejected some for entirely valid reasons such as theology and liturgy. Others I discounted for more superficial reasons such as funny costumes or a weird smell.

I first came to Essex Church for the first time last year. It was not love at first sight, but it was also not like the majority of my previous dates. There were many elements that felt very right, but a few things that did not fit the ideal I had in my head. One of the best pieces of dating advice I have been given is not to go into a relationship expecting your partner to change. You need to be prepared to accept their quirks, as do they you. A key part of being able to do this is communication and understanding, and this was where the “New-U” course proved to be invaluable.

The course was aimed at those who felt in some way new, be it to Essex Church or to Unitarianism. For me it had three real benefits. The first was that it helped me to understand what a Unitarian is. When I mention Essex Church to people I inevitably get the dreaded question of “so what's a Unitarian?”. I always managed to do a fair job of cobbling something together but I was never sure whether it was particularly accurate or whether I was instead inventing a new religion. The second benefit was learning about how the congregation works and being introduced to the building, used by such an amazing breadth of groups. Finally, it was a great opportunity to meet some fabulous people and to have the time to hear about their journeys. We discussed some of those age old questions such as life after death, ethics and creation. These turned out to be surprisingly straightforward which led me to wonder whether the life of a philosopher is really as difficult as they would like us to believe, rather like teachers.

All good relationships take work and time. There will inevitably be moments of frustration and annoyance, but also shared times that you remember forever and which help you to grow. I still not convinced that I can give a particularly good definition of a Unitarian, but then I am not sure that this matters. The New-U course led me to challenge the reason that I attend a Unitarian church. For me Unitarianism provides a framework upon which I can organise and explore ideas that I am having on my own spiritual journey. I have met some great people and have been introduced to some concepts and cultures which were completely new to me. I am not sure that I am ready for marriage quite yet but I am enjoying our time together.

Karl Askew



## The Rolling English Road

Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,  
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.  
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,  
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire;  
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread  
The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,  
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire;  
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed  
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,  
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,  
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.

His sins they were forgiven him; or why do flowers run  
Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in the sun?  
The wild thing went from left to right and knew not which was which,  
But the wild rose was above him when they found him in the ditch.  
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so clear  
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.

My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient rage,  
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,  
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that wandereth,  
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn of death;  
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen,  
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

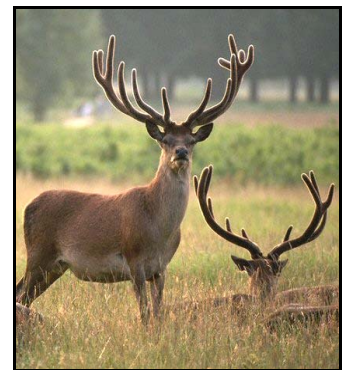
**G.K. Chesterton**  
Submitted by Will Lyons

## Walking Group: Hampton Court

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, meeting 10.30am at Hampton Court Palace**

### Possibly the Best Walk in London!

Genuinely a walk with everything. Meet at Hampton Court car park. Expect to pay around £4 for the car park – you pay on exit and can use a card – or the railway station is five minutes walk away. We will walk through the publicly accessible part of the gardens, which are beautifully planted and free! Then we will cross a road and enter Bushey Park, probably the least well-known of London's major parks. We will pass the Diana fountain (the Roman goddess not the Princess) and try and photograph the deer, then enter the woodland nature reserve, which has some truly bizarre swamp cypresses.



Unless there is a major monsoon, I suggest that people bring a picnic lunch and eat it in the nature reserve, where there are seats. (If the weather is terrible, I will still be walking, but might suggest a pub lunch instead). From the park we walk down to the Thames, where there is a little ferry (cost £1 per person) to carry us to the South bank. We then walk back along the river path, with interesting views of the Thames islands and their ramshackle houses; there is even a little tea shop along the way where we can stop and have tea and buns. At the end of the walk, the super keen and energetic could pay another £4 to look at the walled parts of the Hampton Court gardens, which are well worth an hour or two.

Please let me know if you would like to come; we need to have a way of contacting each car, as during very busy times cars are diverted to an overflow car park, and we do need to get everyone to the same starting point.

**Caroline Blair**

### Forthcoming Walks:

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June** – The Chilterns

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July** – Lee Valley Country Park

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August** – TBA



## ‘Popped One's Clogs’

Carole and I were talking the other day about sex and death (as you do!) when we struck by the present-day reluctance to acknowledge death directly while seemingly besotted by sex. This is a complete reversal of Victorian mores.

When I was a child in the '40s, it was still common practice to lay a deceased person out in the 'parlour' or front room in order that family and friends could 'pay their respects'. In fact, I remember at the age of seven being cajoled to kiss my dead uncle on his cheek before they closed the coffin lid.

Western society now has the ability to hide the dying process from public view; and often people see the dead body as so abhorrent that they pay strangers to dispose of "it" properly. Death is largely remote: in a hospital, hospice or care home and if it occurs in the family home the body is quickly removed to 'funeral home'. We have become death denying, The modern mind can buffer itself from the fact of death when describing the event. In daily conversation the deceased tend to 'pass away' or 'fade away', go 'to meet their eternal rest' or merely 'fall asleep'. When we do not want to acknowledge something directly we employ all sorts of euphemisms and metaphors.

There are classical references – 'crossed the River Styx'; poetical ones such as 'crossing the bar', 'shuffled off this mortal coil' and 'that good night' and Othello's 'put out the light'. Comedians make jokes about it -'I don't mind death; I just don't wanna be around when it happens' (Woody Allen). Then there are the metaphors; 'pushing up daisies', 'kicked the bucket', 'snuffed it' – the list is almost endless.

Why are people afraid of death when they've had a fair lifespan? If a non-believer, there is 'nothingness' (as before we were born) – if a believer, the prospect of infinite paradise. Basically, I believe that death is the end of mind and body but Unitarianism being what it is there are many other personal beliefs in the tradition ranging from reincarnation to the immortality of the soul. Life is wonderful and probably the one and only life we'll have. Let's hope that it's some years before I 'go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green'.

**Will Lyons**



## ‘Death, Where is Thy Sting?’

We fear and hate death for good reason. I assume that we have an instinct that requires we stay alive as long as possible and this must actually be overcome voluntarily or by some terrible disease of the mind. I also believe that there is a deeper cause for our distress at thinking about death. We all know in our hearts that life is uncertain and, being Unitarians, we have no fixed idea of what will happen after death. If I cannot know or even if I do know whether there is a deity or even a devil that will judge my actions and have enormous power over my fate that could be anxiety provoking.

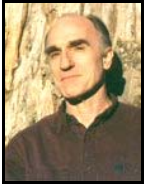
I personally do not believe in Hell although one description of Hell does give me pause - what if we all go to Heaven and the only difference between us is our ability to love. Those that love best will be closest to God, those poor souls that could not overcome their difficulties being consigned to the outer reaches. We would always know that the love of God was there but we would not be able to feel the warmth.

So now that I have reduced Hell to a level of regret that might be bearable can I look on death easily? I do not think so. Death is about loss, all my dreams and possibilities, all my loved ones and my sadness that there will be important things in my life left undone. I will not have said 'sorry' for all the hurt that I have caused. I will not be able to reach out my hand and feel the warm presence of a loved one. I must be dis-embodied with all that means to me.

No matter how radical our atheism, disappearing from this earth is not easy. We will leave behind people who will miss us and we will not be there to comfort them.

I hope to die well; by that I mean without regret. I will be able to forgive myself and others and feel that I lived as well as I could. I hope to overcome my fear of death and be glad of my life and all the people that have made it what it is. Hopefully one way of doing that is to recognise that death is the only certainty and therefore to be acknowledged. This might help me to live well.

**Submitted by Carole Grace in response to Will Lyons' article**



"It has taken me half a lifetime of searching to realize that the likeliest path to the ultimate ground leads through my local ground. I mean the land itself, with its creeks and rivers, its weather, seasons, stone outcroppings, and all the plants and animals that share it. I cannot have a spiritual centre without having a geographical one; I cannot live a grounded life without being grounded in a place. In belonging to a landscape, one feels a rightness, at-homeness, a knitting of self and world. I am suspicious of any philosophy that would separate this-worldly from other-worldly commitment. There is only one world, and we participate in it here and now, in our flesh and our place."

**Scott Russell Sanders**

## Universal Spiritual Gatherings at Essex Church



Run by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary these monthly Spiritual Gatherings are worship with a difference and this year feature guests from particular faiths. Hosted here at Essex Church, it is lovely to see our beautiful worship space put to such good use, with chanting, silence, music, prayer and inspiration.

Here are some dates for your diaries:

**Friday evenings 6.35 for 6.45 to 8.15pm**

### **8<sup>th</sup> May - Sacred Sound and Healing**

Experience the profound spiritual healing that comes from deep contemplation of Sacred Sound. Including Interfaith Chants led by Sean Shokat and Anna Cohen, inspiration, and eternal wisdom from different spiritual traditions

**12<sup>th</sup> June - Courage with Sikh chants and Sikh tabla player**

**10<sup>th</sup> July - Radiance with Jason Chan, Master of Taoist Sacred Arts**

**14<sup>th</sup> August - Including inspiration from Jainism**

*Donations are asked for, to cover costs.*

A forthcoming London Lecture which may be of interest:

## 'The Physics of The Impossible'



**28 May 2009 at 7:00 pm**

**The Royal Institution,  
21 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BS**

Dr Michio Kaku takes us on an exhilarating journey to the frontiers of science as he explores the actual possibilities of ideas such as time travel, teleportation, and invisibility.

Where does the realm of science fiction end? Dr Michio Kaku takes us on an exhilarating journey to the frontiers of science as he explores the actual possibilities of ideas such as time travel, teleportation, and invisibility. Believing that 'anything that is not impossible is mandatory!', he reveals how many of the fascinating technologies of science fiction are actually allowed by the laws of physics, and what we can hope to achieve in the future.

Everyday we see that what was once declared 'impossible' in the last century by scientists has become part of our everyday lives: the internet, jet planes, space ships, satellites, atomic bombs, and cell phones. Can we now expect to see possible things that are usually confined to the realms of science fiction - things such as force fields, invisibility, ray guns, anti-matter, teleportation, telepathy, psychokinesis, robots and cyborgs, time travel, even extraterrestrial life?

In Physics of the impossible, he explores the state of play of tomorrow's sciences, explores their historic and cultural relevance and indicates which are imminent, which unlikely, and how few are really far off. In this event, after a lifetime of study, Michio confidently hurdles today's frontier of science to reveal that what we currently consider 'impossible' science mostly lies within the known laws of physics...

Tickets for this event cost £8 (£6 concessions)

**Royal Institution website:** [www.rigb.org](http://www.rigb.org)



## Shopping Voucher OFFER!



If you have never been inside any of the Exchange Shops on Notting Hill gate or round the corner in Pembridge Road, why not treat yourself. These are wonderful second hand shops – selling DVDs, modern and classical music on CD or vinyl, books, retro clothes and household items. We have some of their shopping vouchers which we can sell you for the bargain price of £15 for a £20 voucher. Why not have a browse and find yourself something special?

These shops promise to buy anything that you offer them so long as it is legal to do so – so why not think about selling them some of your excess stuff and make room for more clutter at home!

The vouchers are on the notice board in the church office so ask our minister or someone who has an office key if you would like to buy some.

## Summer Show

HND in Fine Art / Artist's Professional Development

Featuring our own Heidi Ferid



5<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Hortensia Gallery  
Kensington and Chelsea College  
Hortensia Road  
London SW10 0QS

### Opening Times:

Mon-Wed 9am-9pm  
Thurs/Fri 9am-5pm

Private View Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 6-9pm



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

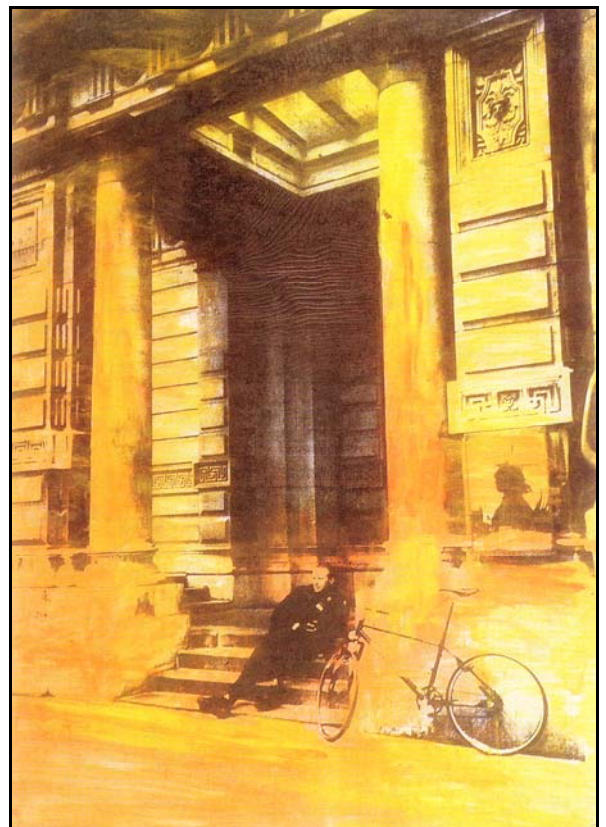
**Second Sunday of the Month from 2.00-3.00pm  
(10<sup>th</sup> May, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 9<sup>th</sup> August)**

**Mondays from 11.00am-12 noon**

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 the dance arts.

Cost £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)

**Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674**

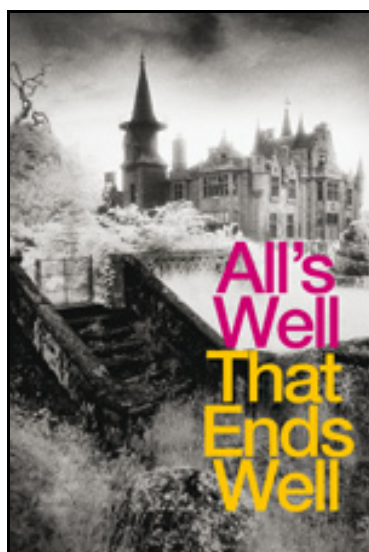


*'London Cyclist Dreaming'* Photopainting by Heidi Ferid



# District Theatre Affinity Group

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2.00pm



The next gathering of the District Theatre Affinity Group will be at the National Theatre on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June for a 2:00pm matinee performance of All's Well That Ends Well. Tickets are £10. Please send a sae and cheque (payable to David Usher) to the district minister at the address below. There are ten tickets available.

Rev. David Usher  
Unitarian Meeting House  
5 Westerham Road  
Bessels Green  
Sevenoaks  
Kent TN13 2PX  
Tel.: (01732) 465248

e-mail: davidusher@ldpa.org.uk



"Hinduism is an imaginative, an 'image-making,' religious tradition in which the sacred is seen as present in the visible world--the world we see in multiple images and deities, in sacred places, and in people, the notion of darsan

calls our attention, as students of Hinduism, to the fact that India is a visual and visionary culture, one in which the eyes have a prominent role in the apprehension of the sacred. For most ordinary Hindus, the notion of the divine as 'invisible' would be foreign indeed. God is eminently visible although human beings have not always had the refinement of sight to see. Furthermore, the divine is visible not only in temple and shrine, but also in the whole continuum of life-in nature, in people, in birth and growth and death..."

Diana Eck

"Why do people come to church? It is not to learn. It's not to be entertained. People come to quench a thirst, find meaningfulness, to have an authentic experience, or, in a more traditional religious language, to connect with mystery and see their everyday lives reflected in the mirror of eternity. Churches, then, and the lay and ordained people who lead them, are Imagineers of Soul, sorcerer's apprentices in the art of quenching thirst, filling voids, opening the doors of meaning.



Many people... come to us to see if here, by any chance, someone will point them to experiences of depth and wonder and meaningfulness, sans dogma; if something will bring tears to their eyes and strangely warm their hearts.

We do lots of things as church people, of course: teach the children, comfort the dying, change the world. When we do these things as religious people, they evoke the holy - and if they don't, we've failed at the only thing the church can uniquely do."

UU Minister, Rev. Christine Robinson

## Song Writing Weekends with Julian Marshall at Essex Church

For each weekend the maximum class number is twelve and the cost is £95.00.

**6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June:** The art of good song writing from scratch – a weekend course for all those interested in learning and developing song writing and performance skills. There will be plenty of opportunity for feedback and advice. During this weekend you will discuss melody writing, chords and how to use harmony effectively, lyric writing, song structure, arrangement and form and how best to combine these elements to write a strong song.

**27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> June:** Improving song writing and performance skills – a weekend course for those already engaged in the art of song writing. During this course you will further develop the unique qualities that you already have as a song writer and /or performer, increase your technical and theoretical knowledge and skills, and be coached in how to develop a powerful personal practise that will enable you to put what you learn to maximum effect.

**4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> July:** Song writing with skill, passion and purpose! This weekend is open to all songwriters and performers working toward or already at a professional standard. You may have already embarked upon or be seriously contemplating a career as a song-writer/performer.

To book for any of these weekends email or call Julian:  
julian@wigglylines.co.uk 01803 840024

## **'Sharing the Spiritual Journey Through Diverse Group Activities'**

**24-Hour Engagement Groups Training:  
16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**For Facilitators, Would-be Facilitators,  
and Engagement Group Participants**

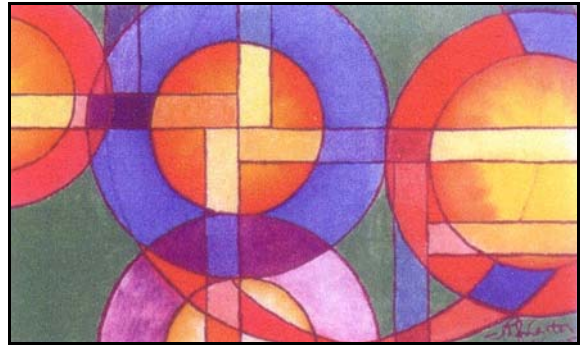
**Luther King House, Rusholme, Manchester, M14 5JP**

This 24-hour gathering is intended to bring together facilitators of small groups from across the country, to make connections, share experiences, and build confidence. Through practical workshop sessions and experiential activities we will consider some simple principles that everyone can learn to make a success of small group ministry. Join us to explore the wonders of small groups in which our spiritual potential can unfold.

Speak to Jane Blackall for more information.

**Cost: £25 per person** (cost is subsidised by the ETC)  
Cost includes accommodation, meals, and conference fee.

Website: [www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk](http://www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk)



## **Art Exhibition Work by John Philip Carter**

**May 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>  
Croydon Unitarian Church  
1 The Croydon Flyover**

Reception:  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 5.30-9.00pm

Exhibition:  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 11am-4pm  
Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1pm-4pm

For more information 020 8667 1681  
[www.croydonunitarians.org.uk](http://www.croydonunitarians.org.uk)



Forthcoming talks to be held at Essex Church

## **The Alister Hardy Society**

**'Mysticism and Contemporary Spirituality'  
by Eley McAinsh**

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009, 6.30 pm**

There is a growing popular fascination with mysticism, but theologians argue more about what mysticism is not, than about what it is. Eley McAinsh is Director of the Living Spirituality Network, a research initiative of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and main producer of BBC Radio 4's Something Understood. Cost: £4 (£2 concs)

**'Understanding Consciousness  
and Spiritual Experience'**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 10.30-4.00pm**

The day will seek to explore the subject from various viewpoints, each speaker bringing his/her own perspective and understanding. The day will include a debate between the speakers on the implications of the subject and where this might be leading, this followed by questions and discussion from the floor. Cost: £20 for non-AHS-members.

**website:** [www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk](http://www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk)



"I think Pentecost is actually the creation myth of Unitarian Universalism. I mean, think about it; think about this church. Here at All Souls, are we not a diverse group of people, speaking about God in different languages? Are we not believers and agnostics? Don't some of us pray, while others of us meditate? Isn't Jesus central to some, while others have a fondness for the Buddha? Don't some of our families celebrate Passover while others honour Easter? Aren't we just like the folks at Pentecost? A quirky mix of people, all jabbering away in our unique tongues, all trying to make sense out of life?"

**UU Minister, Rev. Robert M. Hardies**

## Sunday Services at Essex Church



### 3<sup>rd</sup> May – “You Do Not Have To Be Good”

*Service led by Rev. Johanna Boeke*

The title of the sermon is: "You do not have to be good." It is based on one of my favourite poems by Mary Oliver: "Wild Geese." and inspired by a sermon of UU minister Laurel Hallman. It's about finding our place "in the family of things."

### 10<sup>th</sup> May – “Hallelujah”

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

It is 250 years since the death of Georg Frideric Handel, renowned composer of The Messiah. This service will celebrate his musical contribution to our world and explore the role of sacred music in worship and celebration.

### 17<sup>th</sup> May – “Creating Sacred Space Together”

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

To mark our annual membership service and the AGM that will be held after worship, we will explore the ways in which we create sacred space together here in our community. What makes a church congregation more than a social club? How does the style of our building influence our theology? We will be celebrating all of our members in this special service.

### 24<sup>th</sup> May – *Service led by David Francis Darling*

### 31<sup>st</sup> May – “In the Wilderness”

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

As our world's wild places become less remote, what are the important teachings we humans can learn from the wilderness, both as metaphor and as reality? How can we best relate to and care for the wild spaces that exist within us? "We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander" wrote Thoreau.

## Summer Celebration

Official Opening of our Kitchen and Toilets  
and Unveiling of our new Wall-Hanging

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 12.30-2.30pm



We invite friends of Essex Church to join us in celebrating:

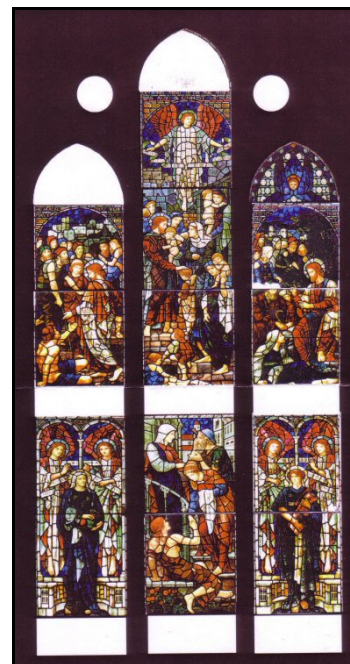
**The official opening of our new kitchen and toilets**  
*Come and try our new hand-dryers and electric doors!*

**The unveiling of our 'Fabric of Diversity' Wall-Hanging**  
*This artwork is the fruit of our community arts project.*

Pop in when you can, but let us know if you plan to come for lunch so that we can make sure there is plenty for everyone. Phone the Essex Church office on 020 7221 6514 or send an email to [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

## A Date for Your Diary: Visit to Ely Stained Glass Museum

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009



We will be having a summer outing to the Ely Stained Glass Museum which houses one of the famous Henry Holliday stained glass windows from the old Essex Church. All will be welcome. More details to follow in the next newsletter.