



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

April 2008

What's On at Essex Church

Thursday 3rd April, 7.00-9.00pm

Adult RE: "The Quest" (5/8)

Closed group – pre-registering is essential!

Sunday 6th April, 11.00am

"John Biddle - 17th Century Thinker"

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 8th April, 7.00pm

Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 10th April, 7.00-9.00pm

Creativity Engagement Group:

"Floppy Fun Dolls" with Betty

Sunday 13th April, 11.00am

"Living Our Tradition"

Led by Daniel Hughes

Sunday 13th April, 2.00-3.00pm

Nia Technique with Sonia Leite

Holistic Movement Class

Sunday 13th April, 3.30-5.00pm

"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Thursday 17th April, 7.00-9.00pm

Adult RE: "The Quest" (6/8)

Closed group – pre-registering is essential!

Sunday 20th April, 11.00am

"Hindu Paths to the Infinite"

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 21st April, 7.00-9.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 24th April, 7.00-9.00pm

Reading Engagement Group:

"Under My Skin" by Doris Lessing

Sunday 27th April, 11.00am

"Books We Cherish"

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th April, 12.30pm

Essex Church Book Swap

Please bring a book you love to swap...

Monday 28th April, 7.00-9.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

Sunday 18th May, 12.30pm

Essex Church AGM

A Message from Our Minister...

Making Mistakes

*"Those who are willing to be vulnerable
move among mysteries."*

Theodore Roethke

It had been one of those days. I had lost my keys, forgotten to do something I'd promised faithfully to do, called someone by the wrong name, and walked around central London with my trouser zip gaping open. At the end of that long and difficult day I was lucky enough to spend an evening with old friends, people with whom it felt safe enough to admit how foolish I was feeling. The conversation unfolded into a sharing of the worst mistakes we had ever made in life, a topic that was at times very moving and other times hilarious.

Between us we had missed planes and trains, destroyed other people's car engines, broken treasured vases, sat on a hamster, caused major problems with plumbing systems in foreign lands, left another family's child behind in a bowling alley after a party visit, watered a neighbour's bedding plants with very hot water, driven the wrong way down a one way system. We had hurt people we loved, fallen over in public places, deleted important work files, been sick on a first date, made lousy financial decisions, been caught lying, felt foolish – over and over again.

Is this the price we humans pay for consciousness, for our ability to reflect and judge and assess? We end up with a stock of amusing anecdotes to entertain one another with and a collection of secret incidents that can fill us with shame, guilt or embarrassment whenever we recall them? Such memories can become corrosive. If we hide them away they can fester or loom larger than they ever originally were. They can limit our freedoms now if we fear making that same mistake again. And in hiding our shame from one another we may create a false world – a world in which nobody else blocks the toilet, trips over, says stupid things, drops crockery or ever feels helpless.

The poet Theodore Roethke points to another possibility when he writes that 'those who are willing to be vulnerable, move among mysteries'. What mysteries might he be referring to? Perhaps there is a deeper way of living in which people feel safe enough to look foolish, to admit their frailties and vulnerabilities, to recognise that making mistakes is an inevitable part of being alive. Perhaps in expecting less of ourselves and others we create a space in which we can discover more.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

P.S. It wasn't me that sat on the hamster.



In this Month's Newsletter...

** Kensington Community Singers – new term * Essex Church Book Swap * Iona Blair – Visit to Swaziland * News from "The Quest" Course * Creativity Group: "Floppy Fun Dolls" * Reading Group: "Under My Skin" * Article by Victor Anderson * FOY Conference at Great Hucklow * Multifaith Calendar * and much 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

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

... an event run by the Art and Spirituality Network...

'Growing in Spirit: A Celebration of Gifts'

Saturday 12th April, 9.45am-4.30pm
St George's Church, Forest Hill, SE23 2AG

Come for a day of art-making, creativity, silence, discussion and fellowship. You are invited to bring an object or symbol with you that represents a gift you appreciate in yourself. All materials are provided and no prior experience is needed. There will be opportunities to work privately and to share with others. The workshop will be led by Paul Cave and John Harley.

Cost: £25 including art materials and drinks.

For info: Email artandspirituality@gmail.com or telephone John Harley on 020 8670 9280

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

6th April: Mike Pritchard
13th April: Heidi Ferid
20th April: Devika Joshi
27th April: Albert Dolan

Coffee:

6th April: Yasmin Pritchard
13th April: John Hands
20th April: Christine Joshi
27th April: Angela Gasparetto

Please speak to Christine Joshi if you would be willing to help out with stewarding or coffee duties. This is a really easy way to get involved and help to support the life and work of our community.

Essex Church Book Swap

After the service on Sunday 27th April



To link in with celebrations surrounding our landmark 50th book group we will be holding a book swap after the service on Sunday 27th April. If you would like to take part then bring a copy of a book you have enjoyed that you are now happy to give away to someone else. You might like to enclose a short note on paper to explain what you particularly liked about the book. You'll then be able to choose a book to take home with you.

Feel free to bring more than one book but as all books left at the end of the swap will be donated to a local charity shop, please put a note on your book if you would rather have it returned to you in the unlikely event of no-one choosing it!

People will be welcome to stay and talk about their favourite books over a bowl of soup and a bread roll. Cost of lunch £2.00 ~ all profits will go to our Accessible Building Fund.



A “Choir-for-All” at Essex Church Kensington Community Singers

Mondays from 21st April, 7.00-9.00pm

Our community choir was launched at Essex Church last autumn and the third term starts on 21st April. This choir is open to all – you don’t need any qualifications except enthusiasm – and we’re actively striving to welcome in local people alongside members of the congregation.

The sessions are great fun. Jen Hazel, our choir leader, has been teaching us a wide selection of songs from diverse sources. Donations to cover the cost of running the choir are invited (£3/£6/£9 per session – a sliding scale according to income). Contact Jen or Sarah to find out more.

Thank You To Community Singers

Kensington Community Singers joined us for worship on March 16th, their second performance here. They have been meeting on Monday evenings since last September and under choir leader Jen Hazel’s inspiring guidance they are showing an increasing confidence.

We look forward to more visits from this group, which really is a ‘community’ choir - it’s open to everyone, whatever their level of singing ability. The new term starts on Monday April 21st and we invite people to come along and have a go.

Sarah Tinker



Thanks to Jim Blair for the photographs of the choir performance.

A local attraction within walking distance of the church...

The Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising



Located just off Portobello Road (at 2 Colville Mews, Lonsdale Road, Notting Hill) this is Notting Hill's best-kept secret. Open Tuesday to Saturday 10 to 6, Sunday 11 to 5 (closed Mondays) this has 12,000 different packets. I challenge anyone over (say) 30 not to walk round uttering cries of recognition and nostalgia. As a student in the late 70's I remember well that no party was complete without a Watney's Party Seven can, and where a craving for chocolate led to a feverish debate as to whether to have an Aztec or one of those new-fangled Marathons. No doubt most people have their own memories. The museum has level access and a nice little tea shop, so I recommend it to anyone with a couple of hours to spare.

Caroline Blair



Grow Your Own Bay Tree

Do you fancy having your own little bay-tree outside the kitchen door, on your balcony, or in your window box? They grow quickly and are perfectly happy in a pot.

Bay trees are available from Stephanie Saville (07765 083 161).



...a forthcoming event organised by the (Unitarian) London Spirituality Network...

'Touching Wholeness: The Way of Silence'

Weekend of 18th-20th April – Arrivals from 5pm Friday

In our searching for a sense of wholeness in our lives, learning to be quiet and to find a stillness within is a powerful tool. Join with others in this mindful retreat where we will explore silence in a variety of ways. We will walk a labyrinth, use art materials and creativity, employ movement, and experience the power of our presence to each other in our search.

The retreat will be held at Duncton Mill Retreat Centre, a highly rated, lovely site located in West Sussex. The centre is spacious and beautiful. Co-leaders John Harley, Linda Hart and Andrew Pakula will guide the time with reflections, meditation and instruction. All are welcome to participate in this weekend of exploration and rejuvenation.



Accommodation: Twin bedrooms only. Linens and towels are provided. For more details, please see Duncton Mill's web site.

Cost: £200. All meals are included in the price of the retreat. All retreat supplies and materials will be provided, including meditation cushions and yoga mats.

Registration: Only 17 spaces are available. Participants will be booked on a first-come, first-served basis. Please download and print the registration form (PDF) and post with a cheque payable to 'The London Spirituality Network' for payment in full to:

Touching Wholeness, 66 Thelton Avenue, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 3LT.

Website (for downloadable form and more information): www.ukspirituality.org/Programmes/TW-The_way_of_silence.htm

Nia Technique



Holistic Movement Sessions:

Sessions led by Sonya Leite

Sundays 13th April, 11th May, 8th June - 2.00-3.00pm

Following the success of the introductory session back in January, a regular Nia class is continuing here at Essex Church, on the second Sunday of every month from 2-3pm (usually the same day as "Songs and Silence for the Soul"). The cost will be £7.00 (£5.00 concessions).

Nia is holistic movement for body and soul. It is an expressive movement practice promoting fitness, creativity and wellbeing. Fusing dance, yoga, tai chi and martial arts, Nia provides a holistic workout and leaves you feeling energised, relaxed and centred. It suits any level of fitness, age and experience, working from where you are now.

Nia's barefoot, grounded approach maximizes body efficiency and teaches you to move consciously in a gentler way. Dance movements are mixed with subtle therapeutic suggestions and visualization techniques that help you develop awareness and heighten sensation. The result is a fusion of movement styles that is incredibly free and liberating. Moving between simple choreography (form) and freedom of movement (freedance), Nia classes combine the grace and expressiveness of dance, the power and explosiveness of martial arts, and the wisdom and stillness of yoga and tai chi.



"The best books for a man are not always those which the wise recommend, but often those which meet the peculiar wants, the natural thirst of his mind, and therefore awaken interest and rivet thought."

William Ellery Channing

Planned Working Visit to Swaziland



Congregation member Iona Blair writes below about a trip she will be making to Swaziland in the summer to assist with two projects. At a recent committee meeting we made a commitment to raise £1,000 towards the costs of Iona's visit and we would be very glad to receive contributions from newsletter readers. Cheques can be made payable to Essex Church, with a note attached mentioning Swaziland. We have already had a promise of £200 so I'm sure it won't be long before we raise that target.

Sarah Tinker

In July I am planning to travel to Swaziland for two different projects. First I will be working for four weeks with the Orphan Care Project in Lobamba. 40% of the population of Swaziland are HIV positive, and there are nearly 200,000 orphans in this desperately poor country. The Orphan Care Project uses volunteers to give support and love to some of these children, to organise games and outings for them, to teach them simple English, maths and life skills, to help those still in the community, to help with setting up gardens and food distribution programmes, to improve their homes and to raise funds.

After this I will spend a further four weeks working with "Siyabonisana Permaculture Project" in Mbabane, which is an organic garden run by volunteers in the community, which aims to educate local people about environmental conservation and organic farming methods. This group also runs course on HIV/AIDS prevention and coping strategies. They have e-mailed me telling me that I have been elected as their British 'ambassador' in advance!

If anyone reading this feels able to make a donation, either towards the cost of this visit (I am saving hard, but any help would be very welcome and I promise that it will be used well) or directly towards the work of Orphan Care or towards the Siyabonisana Water Pump appeal I would be very grateful. I hope I will bring back some interesting experiences to share with people at the Church. In the meantime, if anyone does feel that they could offer anything, perhaps they could contact a member of the Church committee if I am not there.

Thank you for reading this anyway.

Iona Blair

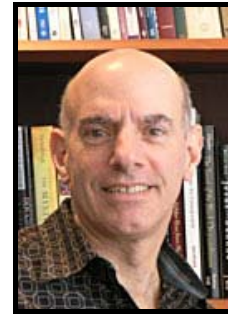
Songs and Silence for the Soul: Chanting and Singing at Essex Church



**Sundays 13th April, 11th May, 8th June,
12th July, 10th August - from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

Suggested Donation: £2.00

An opportunity to sing chants from the world's faith traditions and to sit together in candlelit silence. All are welcome, no experience is necessary. A space in which to re-connect with yourself, one another and with whatever you hold to be divine.



“Each person is born with an unencumbered spot, free of expectation and regret, free of ambition and embarrassment, free of fear and worry; an umbilical spot of grace where we were each first touched by God. It is this spot of grace that issues peace. Psychologists call it the Psyche, theologians call it the Soul, Jung calls it the seat of the Unconscious, Hindu masters call it Atman, Buddhists call it Dharma, Rilke calls it Inwardness, Sufis call it Qalb, and Jesus calls it the Center of our Love.”

Mark Nepo

Our Wardens' Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

March was a very busy month, with eleven days of Music Board exams and two of auditions for a sketch show, 'No Signal' (they booked an extra day because they were having difficulty finding a Mother Teresa). The casting company, You Me & Him, were so pleased with us as a venue, that they recommended us to another company, 'Candid Casting', who are auditioning children for a BBC programme and have booked in for seven days in April and another two in May. We've also hosted auditions for a short film about young offenders for Screen South. All these bookings take place at times when the building would otherwise be empty, so they represent a useful boost to our lettings income and hence also to the fund for replacing the toilets and kitchen. This has also received a boost through a £400 donation from the Yoga group who have been fundraising on our behalf – so kind of them!

The Architects are working on the final plans for the renovation work and our wish-list currently includes baby-change facilities, Dyson hand-driers, a dishwasher and a recycling area as well as the essentials of a toilet accessible by wheelchairs. Work is planned to start on 21st July and continue throughout August while the building is at its quietest. We hope that church services and most regular bookings will be able to continue as usual by using the facilities downstairs.

Other bookings this month include the regular meetings of the Pastoral and Analytical Psychologists on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 7.30pm and an Interfaith Service on Friday 25th April at 7pm. The Alister Hardy Society is hosting a lecture on Tuesday 10th from 3-5pm and the non-duality group with Richard Sylvester are having an all day meeting on Saturday 26th.

Kensington & Chelsea Council continue to make regular use of us for social events to consult users of their services and on Monday 7th April there will be the first of a seven week series of diet and exercise classes for pensioners organised by "60+".

With the warmer weather and rain the new planting in the front garden has settled down and started growing and we look forward to seeing it flourish for the rest of the year. Daffodils and tulips are already flowering and there seem to be many other bulbs we haven't yet identified – so watch this space!

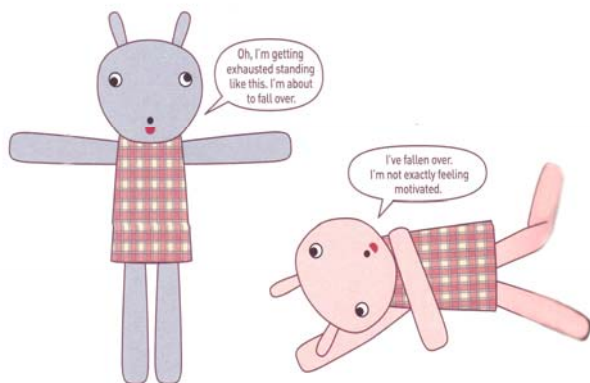
David Berridge and Jenny Moy



Creativity Engagement Group

Floppy Fun Dolls

Thursday 10th April, 7.00-9.00pm



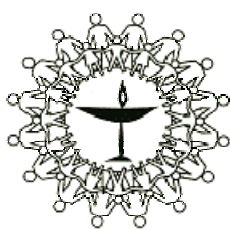
In April, Betty Evans will be encouraging us to make some floppy characters from Aranzi Aronzo's book "Fun Dolls". Some materials will be provided, but it would be helpful if you could bring along some jersey fabric (such as from an old T-shirt), as this will help to give the dolls their floppy character. If you want to bring other sorts of fabric or bits and pieces to decorate your doll that would also be good. Please speak to Betty if you need more advice or to chat about anything else you're thinking of bringing along.

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

If you would like to know more about the creativity engagement group please do talk to Jane Blackall or Patricia Walker-Hesson. Photographs of work from several of the projects we've worked on over the last few years can be found on our website.

Essex Church AGM

Sunday 18th May, 12.30pm



A date for your diary: our church AGM will be held on Sunday 18th May this year. It is very important that members attend this meeting if at all possible so please do put it on your calendar now and plan to come along.

...some thoughts from our student minister, Daniel Hughes...

“No Body then No Mind - No Mind then No Spirit”



I freely admit that I have a problem with the literal or slapdash use of traditional religious language - concepts represented through words such as God, Salvation, Resurrection and Spirit. We can of course choose to reject these words or maybe try to reclaim some of them. I have a particular fondness for mind related words to describe the spiritual journey and the signposts for a healthy spirituality.

My reading of current trends in western philosophy and my experience of meditation underpins my concern for the mind. I see the human mind as the starting point for any spiritual exploration. Thankfully, today's concept of mind is far from the obsessive rational or mechanical models of previous generations. Today's mind is an embodied consciousness, not a ghost in the machine but rather a wonderful birthing from our brain matter - consciousness and matter are interconnected rather than totally independent.

That is the philosophy behind my focus upon mind within spirituality. The joy of this philosophy is that it celebrates the body. Our bodies have given rise to the consciousness that make our lives unique within the universe. Our bodies are so intimately interconnected with our consciousness; emotions do affect us physically. When considering the characteristics of a healthy spiritual life I am increasingly feeling that the body is central. Keeping ourselves healthy and allowing greater freedom in expressing our conscious state through dance or movement are some ways of living this out. The beauty and uniqueness of other bodies can also be intimately blissful. I remember that the book of Genesis affirms the human body as the image of God - every human being is an icon of Divinity. I take no issue with that.

Daniel Hughes

Risks

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental
To reach out for another is to risk involvement
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.

To place your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss.

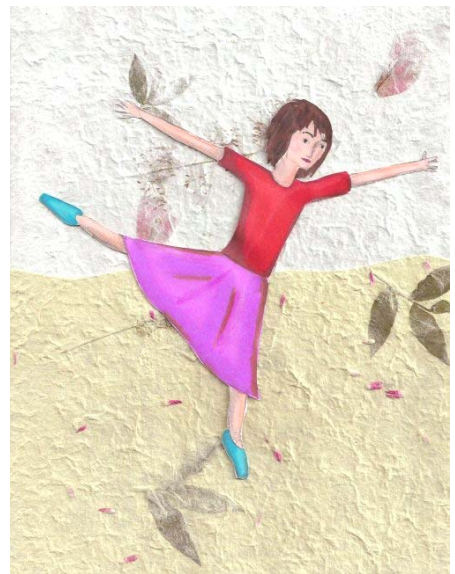
To love is to risk not being loved in return
To live is to risk dying
To hope is to risk despair
To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken because to risk nothing is one of life's hazards.

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing and is nothing.

We may avoid suffering and sorrow but we miss then the chance to learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
Chained by our certainties we forfeit our freedom.
For only a person who risks is free!

Words adapted for the 'In Praise of Spontaneity' service on 9th March – original source unknown.



“My Path to Unitarianism...”

My first connection with Unitarianism was working at the House of Commons for a Unitarian MP, Cynog Dafis, who was elected Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion in west Wales in 1992. I learned a lot from him, including a bit about Unitarianism. When he wrote his autobiography, I was mentioned in it a few times, though since it was entirely written in Welsh (and is unlikely ever to be translated) I have never been able to read what he said about me (though I am assured it was something nice!).

However I didn't go along to any Unitarian events until towards the end of 2006. Then over the Christmas holiday, I read “The Elements of Unitarianism” and various leaflets and magazine articles, and since then have become increasingly involved.

Trying to sum up what I like about the Unitarian tradition, I would say there are five things:

- The openness to discussion, reason, dissent, and the individual conscience.
- The support over centuries for a variety of progressive causes, including having women ministers for over 100 years longer than the Church of England.
- A long history of involvement in inter-faith dialogue, including with Hindus in India in the 19th Century.
- A long history of interest in science and the question of combining together scientific and spiritual insights. This is important for me because ever since childhood I have been fascinated by evolution and the cosmos (my all-time-favourite book is “The Universe Story” by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme).
- The willingness to include paganism as a source of inspiration, for instance through the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans in the USA, and the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network in Britain. It seems to me that this is a religious perspective which is particularly important at this time of ecological crisis.

Victor Anderson

News from 'The Quest' Course



In 'The Quest' course this month we used the chart below to consider our own spiritual intelligence (or SQ). Since being involved with a Unitarian congregation is clearly a sign of advanced spiritual intelligence we thought that newsletter readers might like to fill in examples from their own lives of when they have demonstrated these characteristics.



Sarah Tinker

Characteristics of SQ – Zohar and Marshall (2000)

Flexibility – a capacity not to be stuck in basics, rules, and regulations but to be open to the new.

A high degree of self-awareness.

A capacity to face, transcend and use pain and suffering, including your mistakes.

The quality of being inspired by vision and values.

A tendency to ask "Why?" and "What if?" about fundamental questions.

An ability to be holistic, to see the connections between different things.

A capacity for working against convention and standing out against the crowd.

An openness to diversity and the possibility of optional paths from A to B.

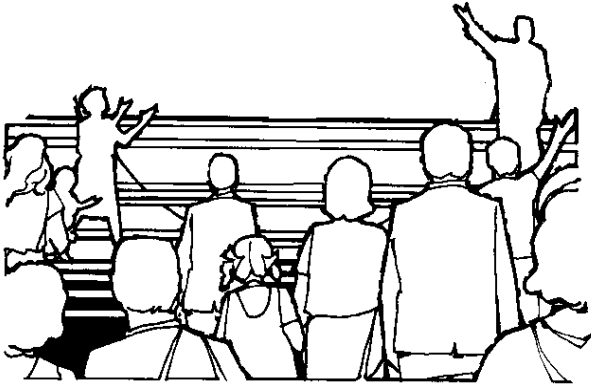
A sense of conscience as an inner compass and an inner directedness.

A quality of deep spontaneity, which can be responsive to others and to deeper realities.

You might be interested in reading the book of the course: "The Quest: Exploring a Sense of Soul" by Joycelin Daves, Janice Dolley and Ike Isaksen.

...a forthcoming Unitarian events in the local London District...

LDPA Course in Congregational Leadership



This is a forthcoming four-session course designed for London and South East Unitarians interested in assuming a more active leadership role in congregational life.

The four sessions will cover:

17th May

– Worship with David Usher at Sevenoaks

7th June

– Congregational Life with David Usher at Godalming

28th June

– Rites of Passage with Jane Barton at Brighton

19th July

– Leading Groups with Jim Robinson at Hampstead

The course is sponsored by PULSE (the London and South East District) and is free of charge to participants.

For information or to register contact David Usher:

District Minister:

Address: 5 Westerham Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 2PX.

Telephone: 01732 465248

Email: dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk

Foy Conference

2nd - 5th May 2008

at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow



‘The KEY to avoiding the need for KEYS!’

FOY is a Unitarian group committed to exploring key social issues in a liberal religious setting. They are a friendly and welcoming group and attending this conference would be a good way to visit the Nightingale Centre our Unitarian Holiday and Conference Centre in Derbyshire.

Paths to reducing offending and re-offending will be the study subject for this Conference. In addition during the weekend there will be free time for local walks, visits, worship/meditation and other activities. The Foy AGM is also scheduled to take place. The Conference begins on Friday evening and ends with lunch on Monday. Registration starts at 7 pm on Friday evening, with a buffet supper available from then onwards.

How much does it cost?

Adult: £136 / First-timer: £126 / Under 30: £68
Child 12-16: £60 / Child 5-11: £55 / Child 0-5: Free

A supplement of £7.50 applies for en-suite rooms and single room occupancy

Deposits: Please enclose £10 per person, cheques payable to: ‘The Foy Society’

Send your application to:

Emily Hewardine, Foy Conference Secretary
19 Hill Road, The Humbers
Telford, Shropshire, TF2 8NA

Email: emilyhewardine@hotmail.com

Bodywork Sessions:

Available on Mondays here at Essex Church between 10.00am - 4.00pm

Using a combination of massage, aromatherapy and craniosacral therapy, Fiona Watson (ITEC dip.) can provide individual sessions to meet each client's unique requirements. For full details please phone Fiona on 07960 758068.



April Multifaith Calendar

☪ 6th April – 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.)

☸ 8th April – Hanamatsuri – Buddhist

Mahayana Buddhists celebrate the Buddha Shakyamuni's birthday with this flower festival. Tradition has it that the Buddha was born in a garden, so floral shrines are created with an image of the infant Buddha. Theravadins celebrate Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing away all on the same day, at Wesak - at the full moon in May.

☪ 14th April – 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.

☪ 14th April – Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) – Sikh

The Sikh New Year festival celebrates the founding of the Order of the Khalsa, by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, in 1699. On this day the 'Five Ks' were instituted and the amrit initiation ceremony was introduced. Sikhs visit the gurdwara and parades are held. Many Sikhs choose to be baptised into the Khalsa order on this day.

☪ 18th April – Mahavira Jayanti – Jain

Anniversary of the birth of Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar and the founder of modern Jainism.

☪ 19th April – Hanuman Jayanti – Hindu

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

☪ 20th – 27th 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.

☪ 21st April – Ridvan – Bahai

First day of the commemoration of the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh and His companions in the Najibíyyih Garden outside Baghdád, subsequently referred to by the Bahá'ís as the Garden of Ridván.

☪ 23rd April – St George's Day – Christian

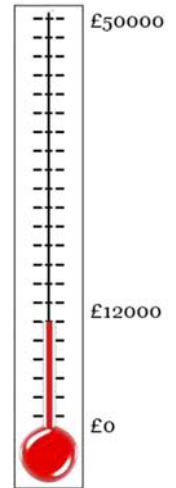
Although he lived and died in the Middle East, St George is the patron saint of England. All that is known for certain about St George is that he was martyred for his Christian faith and was a soldier. His red cross on a white background was adopted as a symbol after the Crusades.

☪ 27th April – Easter Day / Pascha – Orthodox

The date of Easter is calculated on a lunar calendar, but as many Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches still use the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar the calculation of dates differs from the Western churches, so at present there is no consistent relationship between the dates of the Orthodox and Western Easter.

Fundraising Ideas

Our Accessible Building Fund continues to grow, but perhaps a little slowly as the building work is due to commence at the end of July this year. Thank you to everybody who has made contributions in the last month. The total raised so far is now over £13,000, leaving just £37,000 for us to raise.



We are raising money in many different ways:

- Individual donations, for which many thanks
- Silent Auction, for which a few tasks still need to be completed and money given to our treasurer; thank you to everyone for all the interesting, and lucrative, tasks that have been completed
- Applying to assorted trusts and charities for grants (no luck so far but we live in hope)
- Setting aside 10% of our lettings income

Do you have a good idea of another way to raise money? Our minister is about to write 100 letters to people she knows enclosing a single piece of toilet paper, stamped with our new stamp "Property of Kensington Unitarians", and asking them to make a donation of £10. Her commitment is to raise £1,000 by 1st May and not to write to anyone who receives this newsletter!

We look forward to hearing of some other inventive ways to raise money for this vital building project.

Juliet Edwards



"Life becomes religious whenever we make it so: when some new light is seen, when some deeper appreciation is felt, when some larger outlook is gained, when some nobler purpose is formed, when some task is well done."

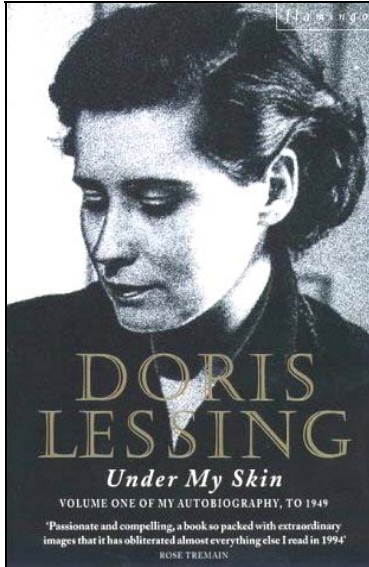
Sophia Lyon Fahs

Reading Engagement Group

“Under My Skin”

by Doris Lessing

Thursday 24th April, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next topic of discussion will be “Under My Skin” – the first volume of Doris Lessing's autobiography. This book was chosen by Juliet Edwards and will be the focus of our next reading engagement group meeting on **Thursday 24th April**.

Information from Library Journal:

“What is better than a really good biography? Not many novels,” says Lessing in her first chapter of what is destined to be one of the best autobiographies of our time. Although Lessing has incorporated her life into nearly all of her novels, most notably the Martha Quest series, and has published some short autobiographical sketches, this is her first full-length autobiography, with a second volume projected to cover 1950 onward. From her childhood in the wilds of what was then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) through her young married life in Salisbury to her Communist years during World War II, Lessing is able both to capture the immediacy of her youthful feelings and to comment on her past self with both compassion and the distance that maturity brings. This is a wonderfully vivid memoir that reveals the origins of a remarkable writer. It also gives the reader a direct connection to the physical and emotional experiences of childhood and youth that are universal and timeless.”

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. Members of the group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material.

Broken Ceramic Tiles



I am in need of odds and ends of coloured ceramic tiles – and possibly other broken ceramic bits and pieces like plates or mugs – to use in a mosaic project at this year's Hucklow Summer School. If you might have something suitable that you'd be willing to donate to the cause then please let me know so that I can have a look and arrange collection. Thank you!

Jane Blackall

Hold on to April



Hold on to April; never let her pass!
Another year before she comes again
To bring us wind as clean as polished glass
And apple blossoms in soft, silver rain.
Hold April when there's music in the air,
When life is resurrected like a dream,
When wild birds sing up flights of windy stair
And bees love alder blossoms by the stream.
Hold April's face close yours and look afar,
Hold April in your arms in dear romance;
While holding her look to the sun and star
And with her in her faerie dreamland dance.
Do not let April go but hold her tight,
Month of eternal beauty and delight.

Jesse Stuart

Believing and Belonging



I am starting work on the dissertation for my Masters Degree in Contextual Theology. Its working title is 'Believing and Belonging' and it is a study of our congregation here at Essex Church. I want to research people's religious beliefs and reasons for belonging to our faith community in the context of 21st century Britain with its declining involvement in religious organisations yet increasing interest in what might be described as 'spirituality'. How do we fit into this picture?

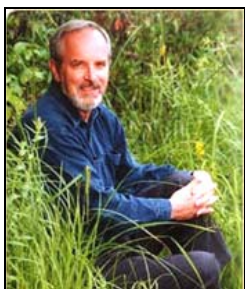
I am hoping that as many congregation members and friends of Essex Church as possible will take part in this research, which will involve a short questionnaire and three evening sessions, with a few follow up interviews.

So do put the following dates in your diaries:

Thursdays 15th May, 5th and 19th June

from 7.00 to 8.45pm here at Essex Church. Thank you.

Sarah Tinker



“One of the best ways to deal with temporary insanities is to incorporate the nonrational into your daily life. You can note signs of things to come in your ordinary environment. You can take your intuitions seriously. You can even experiment with traditional forms of insight like

astrology, runes, or the I Ching. In a post-modern world, where reason and fact are no longer the primary sources of knowledge, it shouldn't be difficult to see the intelligence in these traditional ways of spurring the imagination. The more you live in the realm of soul instead of mind, the more familiar you will be with the moods and fantasies that suddenly seize you and throw you in a short-term dark night of the soul.”

Thomas Moore

Backroom Bits and Pieces

News from the Church Trustees and Committee



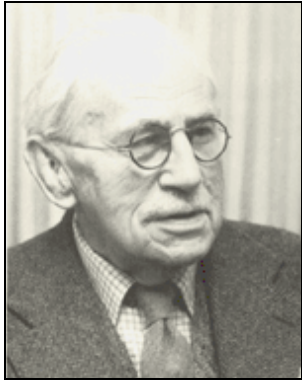
Every month about 10 of the church trustees and management committee meet to discuss issues regarding the running of the church. Here are some issues that have been discussed in the last month.

1. The architects have measured up the kitchen and toilets in preparation (we hope) for the grand re-building project later in the year. The kitchen has lasted very well for 30 years, but is looking much past its best today. We may be able to squeeze a dishwasher in next time!
2. The front garden is looking a bit sparse at the moment. Once the paving is properly finished we can think about more planting, though the ground cover plants that have been put in will spread out over time.
3. We discussed the problems faced by the stewards. Sarah is going to discuss the best way to arrange the chairs with Gitana (who sets them out on Saturday night); at the moment the stewards often have to scurry round looking for vacant chairs in distant corners. We also need to find a way to make late-comers feel genuinely welcome (as we do know what long, difficult journeys some people have) without allowing quiet periods of the service to be disturbed.
4. When the manse flat was built, it was a huge financial undertaking for the church. We were pleased to learn that it is now fully paid for, which is a credit to everyone involved in the financial management of the church. The repayments have been completed a year ahead of schedule, for which we should give special thanks to Jenny and David, the wardens, for organising the lettings so efficiently, and to Sarah and (particularly) Juliet for taking so much trouble with the general finances of the church.

Caroline Blair

The next meeting of the Essex Church Management Committee will take place at 7pm on Tuesday 8th April.

The Alister Hardy Society



The London branch of the Alister Hardy Society has been meeting here at Essex Church for many years and is well known for inviting very interesting speakers to their meetings. Here are some dates for your diary:

Thursday 10th April, 3.00pm

Talk: "The Healing Energy: Science of Mysticism?"

by Robert Ginsberg



Followed by an optional shared supper
and an evening discussion

Cost £6.00 (£5.00 concessions)

Thursday 11th September, 3.00pm

Talk: "Religion in Exile"

by Diarmuid O'Murchu



Thursday 28th October, 3.00pm

Talk: "Opening Doors to the Spiritual World"

by Dr Charles Whitehead

The Alister Hardy Society is holding a summer meeting on Saturday 7th June in Oxford from 10.30am to 4.30pm. Its theme is The Boundaries of the Secular, the Religious and the Spiritual and speakers include Marcus and Mary Braybrooke and Edward Bailey, author of 'Implicit Religion'. For more information, and to book, please contact John Franklin on 020 8858 4750.

Sunday Services at Essex Church

**6th April – "John Biddle:
17th Century Thinker"**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

John Biddle is sometimes described as the 'father of English Unitarianism'. His life story gives a remarkable insight into non-conformity and into the influence one individual may have. In this service we will be celebrating Biddle's life and the legacy he has given to us 21st century religious liberals.

13th April – "Living Our Tradition"

Service led by Rev. Daniel Hughes

An opportunity to reflect upon and explore the themes of authenticity, sacrifice, change and new beginnings within the life of Theophilus Lindsey who opened Essex Street Chapel on April 17th 1774 – the congregation that we have a living connection with. Through the life of Lindsey and the early history of our congregation, we shall draw out any contemporary spiritual relevance for our lives in 2008.

20th April – "Hindu Paths to The Infinite"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Hinduism traditionally used the term 'yogas' to describe the various paths humanity might take in seeking oneness with the divine ~ the paths of love, of work, of bodily mastery and of inner exploration. In this service I will be exploring these different forms of yoga and relating them to our own spiritual journeys.

27th April – "Books We Cherish"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This service, originally scheduled for March, was moved so that people would have more time to take part in the accompanying Essex Church Book Swap. This will be a congregational service so do get in touch with our minister if you would like to take part.

May Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 13th April**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

Thank you!!!