



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2011

## What's On...

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August, 7-8.30pm

### Music and Meditation (1/2)

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 11am

### 'For Ever and Ever, Amen'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August, 11am

### 'The Cellist of Sarajevo' Service

Led by Sarah Tinker and Joy Croft

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August, 12.30pm

### Small-Group Communion

Led by John Hands & Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 7-9pm

### Creativity Group:

'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 7-8.30pm

### Music and Meditation (2/2)

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August, 11am

### 'Moses and His Interesting Life'

Service led by Juliet Edwards

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August, 12.30pm

### 'Finding Your Voice'

#### Singing Workshop

Led by Margaret Marshall

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 11am

### 'Treasures of Heaven'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August, 7-9pm

### Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 11am

### 'Do the Benedictine Vows

#### Have Anything to Teach

#### 21st Century Unitarians?'"

Service led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 11am

### 'Gathering of the Waters'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 12.15pm

### Small-Group Communion

Led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30pm

### Congregational Lunch

(further listings on page 2)

## A Message from our Minister:

# The Importance of Dissent

As Unitarians we come from the dissenting tradition. Our roots stretch back to those who were brave enough to speak out against the mainstream. They risked, and indeed some lost, their lives to win the freedoms we now take for granted. In the world around us it seems that dissenting voices are shouting ever more loudly, determined to be heard.

This year the BBC's Reith Lectures were given by Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese pro-democracy leader, who has spent so much of her life under house arrest. She filmed the lectures, entitled 'Securing Freedom' secretly and a BBC film crew then smuggled them out of Burma. She speaks powerfully of the importance of dissent and the need for people to fight against the 'unfreedom' that so many still face in their daily lives around the world. In defining dissenters she writes that "we are dedicated to the defence of the right of individuals to free and truthful life. In other words, our passion is liberty." Her lectures are available as podcasts.



Suu Kyi is no longer under house arrest but still has only a limited right to move within her country. Meanwhile we read in the news that a 13 year old Syrian boy, Hamza Al-Khatib, has been tortured and killed seemingly for just standing near to a group of protestors at a check point. In Bahrain a 20 year old woman called Ayat al-Germezi was imprisoned after reading a poem at a demonstration. She is currently in a military hospital because of injuries sustained whilst under arrest and her family fear for her safety.

The Russian poet Anna Akhmatova wrote powerfully of the repression she and her friends faced under Stalin. When her son was imprisoned she would often queue for hours to deliver him food packages and to plead on his behalf. In one of her journals she describes standing outside a stone prison:

*"One day somebody in the crowd identified me. Standing behind me was a woman, with lips blue from cold, who had, of course, never heard me called by name before. Now she started out of the torpor common to us all and asked me in a whisper (everyone whispered there): 'Can you describe this?' And I said: 'I can.' Then something like a smile passed fleetingly over what had once been her face."*

Perhaps we who enjoy freedom have a responsibility to describe what we learn, to bear witness to the struggles going on in the world around us and to use every method at our disposal to shine light in dark and repressive places of the world. In the few days that I have been thinking about this column Amnesty International announced that Ayat al-Germezi has been released, although with conditions attached to her release. Let us hope that one day peaceful protest will be accepted the world over and that the right to speak with a dissenting voice will have been won for all. In the meantime, may we give thanks for all the everyday freedoms we enjoy, and for the brave dissenters who won those freedoms for us.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this month's newsletter...

\* Unitarians and the 'Charter for Compassion' \* 'Perspectives on Jesus' Course \* Reflections on 'Compassionate Life' Course by Stephanie Saville & Carolyn Appleby \* 'Memory, Teach Me' by John Hands \* Unitarian Christians in Conversation \* Causes We Support - 'The Hand Society' by Will Lyons \* 'The Book of Books: 400 Years of the King James Bible' - Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker \* and much more...

# Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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Notting Hill Gate  
London W8 4RT

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

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

## What's on this Summer *(continued)*

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2-3.00pm

**Nia Technique:** Holistic Movement with Sonya Leite

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9.00pm

**Adult RE: 'Perspectives on Jesus' (1/5)**

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 11am

**'Loving Our Enemies'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30pm

**Singing Workshop:** led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9pm

**Creativity Group:** 'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 7-9.00pm

**Adult RE: 'Perspectives on Jesus' (2/5)**

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 11am

**'Love and Krishna Consciousness'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Prashant Joshi

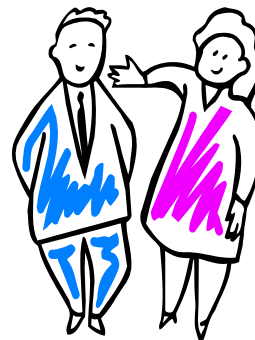
Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9pm

**Reading Group:** 'How to be a Woman' by Caitlin Moran

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9.00pm

**Adult RE: 'Perspectives on Jesus' (3/5)**

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

7 <sup>th</sup> August:	Will Lyons
14 <sup>th</sup> August:	Tristan Jovanović
21 <sup>st</sup> August:	Veronica Needa
28 <sup>th</sup> August:	Christine Joshi
4 <sup>th</sup> September:	Veronica Needa
11 <sup>th</sup> September:	Gina Bayley
18 <sup>th</sup> September:	Natasha Drennan
25 <sup>th</sup> September:	Arthur Krebbers

### Coffee:

7 <sup>th</sup> August:	Margaret Darling
14 <sup>th</sup> August:	Caroline Blair
21 <sup>st</sup> August:	Ruth Okine
28 <sup>th</sup> August:	Carol Sheppard
4 <sup>th</sup> September:	Margaret Darling
11 <sup>th</sup> September:	Caroline Blair
18 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jane Blackall
25 <sup>th</sup> September:	?

### Greeting:

7 <sup>th</sup> August:	Arthur Krebbers
14 <sup>th</sup> August:	Susan Smith
21 <sup>st</sup> August:	Gina Bayley
28 <sup>th</sup> August:	Diana Ward
4 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jo Ridgers
11 <sup>th</sup> September:	Ann Mamak
18 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jo Ridgers
25 <sup>th</sup> September:	Diana Ward

In recent months, we have been circulating the rota list via email, and this seems to be working well.

Please contact Jane with your email address if you are willing to receive this email once a month.

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

## In Praise of Our Children's Leaders



*A bumper turn-out for Sunday school on 3<sup>rd</sup> July!*

Thanks to Jennie and Jordan for being with us each week, for planning such interesting activities, and for managing the children's sessions. Can you spot the nine youngsters in this photograph who were here one Sunday in June? Their ages spanned from six months to 14 and luckily several of them remained safely in their carry seats throughout the proceedings. One of them, Auralia, has invited congregation members to her welcome ceremony on August 21st. If you'd like to attend just ask her Great-Uncle David Francis Darling about it as he will be conducting the ceremony (more information below).

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Service of Thanksgiving

for Auralia May Mason-John

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2011 at 2pm



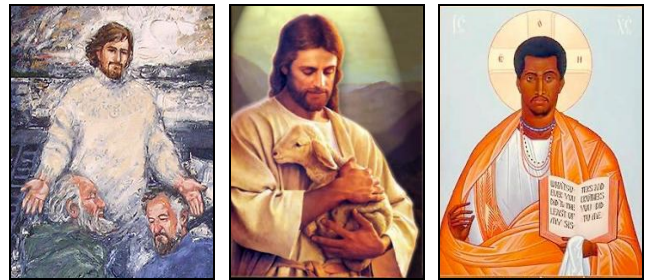
On Sunday 21st August here at Essex Church there will be a thanksgiving service for, and baptism of, our newest and youngest attender, Auralia May Mason-John.

This short service will be conducted by her Great -Uncle, our own David Francis Darling. Auralia's parents Amy and Luther would be pleased to see as many people as possible from the congregation at the service and light refreshments afterwards.

*A New Adult RE Course at Essex Church this Autumn:*

## 'Perspectives on Jesus'

Five Thursday evenings from 15<sup>th</sup> September



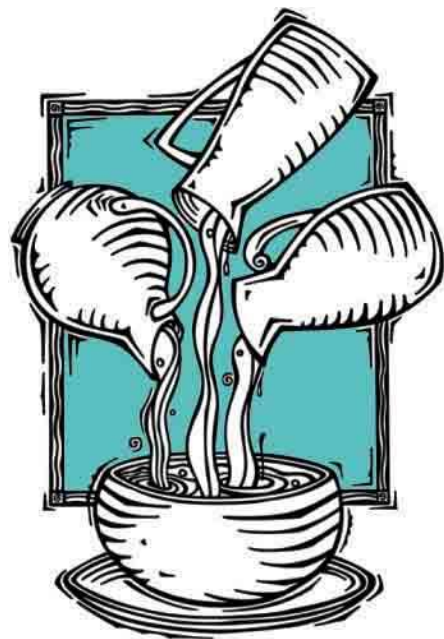
The next five-session adult RE course here at Essex Church will be led by five different facilitators each bringing their own 'Perspective on Jesus'. There'll be opportunities for reading, conversation, silent reflection and other exercises designed to help us deepen our understanding of this enigmatic and radical prophet.

Please let Sarah or Jane know if you want to join this group and we'd ask people to be able to commit to attending at least 3 of the 5 sessions.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Gathering of the Waters

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011



We will be having a 'Gathering of the Waters' service, as is our tradition here at Essex Church, to welcome people back after their various travels over the summer. Wherever you go over the summer months, we would ask you to collect a small amount of water from that place, and bring it back home for this simple ceremony.

# London Statue for Nobel Winner Rabindranath Tagore



At a service in June we celebrated the life and works of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. The 150th anniversary of his birth is being celebrated by UNESCO this year and the United Nations have praised Tagore's Universalist message. In July Prince Charles unveiled a statue of the poet in Gordon Square, central London. The sculpture, by Shenda Armery, is located close to Tavistock Square where six years ago one of four suicide bombers detonated a bomb in a bus.

Unveiling the bust on the anniversary of the 7<sup>th</sup> July bombings, in which 52 people were killed, Prince Charles said the date "marks a dark anniversary".

"From this darkness, perpetuated only a stone's throw away from here, the inscriptions on this bust will shine out as a beacon of tolerance, understanding and of unity in diversity," he added.

Tagore was the first Asian to win the award, in 1913, which was for his collection of poems titled Gitanjali. Here is one of his poems that we often use in worship here at Essex Church:

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

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

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

*I feel my limbs are made glorious by the  
touch of this world of life. And my pride is  
from the life-throb of ages dancing in my  
blood this moment.*

If you missed the service you can still listen to it or any other service on our podcasts or ask Sarah for a copy of it if you don't have internet access.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

# Essex Church Reading Group 'How to be a Woman' by Caitlin Moran



Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's June session will be based on 'How to be a Woman' by Caitlin Moran. **Please note: this book contains strong language and adult themes!** An excerpt of the Guardian review:

*"Before we start, let's be clear: this is a great big hoot of a book. There are lines in it that will make you snort with laughter, situations so true to life that you will howl in recognition. It is very, very funny. So, you could read it just for that, for the entertainment value. However, if you are female, and particularly if you are a female under 30, then, tucked around the jokes, Moran has provided you with a short, sharp, feminist manifesto. It's not academic: she doesn't present a research paper into gender differences in pay or interview women who have suffered domestic abuse. Instead, she uses her own life to examine the everyday niggles of everyday womanhood – hair removal, getting fat, tiny pants, expensive handbags – as well as the big stuff such as work, marriage and kids. She pins each topic out like a live, wriggling, sexist frog, ready for dissection. But, instead of scalpel it into little bits, as, say, Germaine Greer would, Moran tickles it so hard that the frog has to beg for mercy and hop off... The joy of this book is just that: the joy. What Moran is really arguing for is more female happiness. Women spend too much of their time worrying, beating themselves up, going along with time-wasting, restrictive, often expensive, sexist mores. The triumph of How To Be A Woman is that it adds to women's confidence. It reminds us that sexism, and all that is associated with it, is not only repressive, it is tedious and stupid. It is boring. Best give it a body swerve and get on with having fun."*

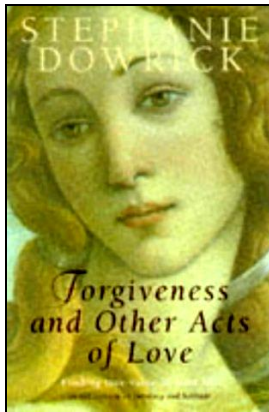
The group takes special care to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to. Members come together to share our diverse views and appreciate our differences in a spirit of curiosity and respect. The group has a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere and newcomers are always most welcome to come along to any session. The group has been meeting monthly since 2003. We take turns in choosing a book for everybody to read so we tackle a wide variety of material. For more information see:

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

A New Adult RE Course at Essex Church this Autumn:

## 'The Humane Virtues'

Six Thursday evenings from 3<sup>rd</sup> November



This autumn we will be running a course based on the book 'Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love' by Stephanie Dowrick. In turn we will consider a number of what she calls the 'great humane virtues'.

3<sup>rd</sup> November – Courage  
10<sup>th</sup> November – Fidelity  
17<sup>th</sup> November – Restraint  
24<sup>th</sup> November – Generosity  
1<sup>st</sup> December – Tolerance  
8<sup>th</sup> December – Forgiveness

Please let Jane or Sarah know in good time if you would like to take part so that we can get enough copies.

Jane Blackall



Cultivate Virtue in your own person,  
And it becomes a genuine part of you.  
Cultivate it in the family,  
And it will abide.  
Cultivate it in the community,  
And it will live and grow.  
Cultivate it in the state,  
And it will flourish abundantly.  
Cultivate it in the world,  
And it will become universal.

Tao Te Ching

## Music and Meditation

4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> August from 7.00-8.30pm  
Here at Essex Church



Come and enjoy our new sound system and bring some favourite music to share with others. We'll use the music as an aid to meditation and then have time to talk, with refreshments. Make a note in your diaries of the dates and let us know if you plan to join us.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## Small Group Communion



Sundays 14<sup>th</sup> August and 11<sup>th</sup> September,  
at 12.30pm in the Church Library

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the church library. A number of members of the congregation expressed interest in having a regular opportunity for communion here so, since the autumn, we have been experimenting with services led by a variety of different people, and we have been very encouraged by the experience so far.

We hope that different people will take turns to lead the small-group communion services so that we can experience a number of different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

14<sup>th</sup> August – John Hands and Sarah Tinker  
11<sup>th</sup> September – David Francis Darling  
9<sup>th</sup> October – Jane Blackall  
13<sup>th</sup> November – Tristan Jovanović

If you would like to find out more about these small-group communions then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

## Unitarian Christians in Conversation



*Rev. Dr. Victoria Weinstein and Jim Corrigan of the UCA*

It was good to have twenty or so of us being welcomed by Golders Green Unitarians for an evening of conversation with visiting Unitarian Universalist minister the Rev Dr Victoria Weinstein who is over in London for a month visiting various congregations and groups.

Vicki, as she likes to be known, clearly knows her stuff when it comes to Christian theology and has faced many of the issues Unitarian Christians face here in the UK when finding quite how to fit her faith into a movement that is currently quite strongly humanist. I remember saying to a friend some years ago that it was strange to be part of a religious group that appeared to have an allergic reaction to God and that readings from a sacred scripture from any faith would seem to be far more welcome in some Unitarian congregations than a reading from the Bible. Yet in matters of spiritual expression we all go through phases and I do sense a growing interest in exploring a specifically Unitarian Christian theology in our congregations today.

Look out for mention elsewhere in this newsletter of our next small group adult RE course 'Perspectives on Jesus' and come and join our monthly Communion - all ways to re-connect with our religious heritage and make it once more our own.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Congregational Lunch

After the service on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September



After our traditional 'Gathering of the Waters' service on 11<sup>th</sup> September we will be having a congregational lunch. Why not invite a friend along to join us on this day?

## Essex Church Creativity Group 'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Tuesdays 16<sup>th</sup> August and  
20<sup>th</sup> September 2011, 7.00-9.00pm



We have been experimenting with a new format for the creativity group since early 2011.

Instead of having a specific organised activity every month, which takes quite a lot of planning, we have decided that (most months) participants will simply be invited to bring their own art and craft projects along and enjoy the support and fellowship of the group. We are still intending to offer a specific activity once in a while and will work on projects for the church from time to time.

As ever, all are welcome, and the sessions are sociable and encouraging (with plenty of snacks to share).



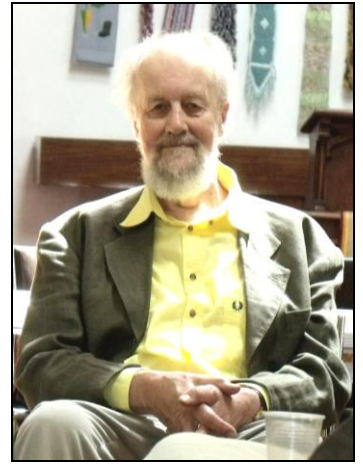
**A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms  
Sessions led by Sonya Leite**

**Second Sunday of the Month  
from 2-3pm: 11<sup>th</sup> September, 9<sup>th</sup> October  
(note: there will be no class in August)**

An hour of whole-body conditioning, done barefoot to diverse music. Delivering a cardiovascular workout for any level of fitness. Specific routines allow you to experience - the power of the martial arts, the stillness of the healing arts and the joy of movement through dance. Cost now £8 (£5 members). **Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.**

# “Memory, Teach Me”

*This is the first in a new series of articles on the theme of memories which teach us something we may need to know about our lives. Many thanks to John Hands for the excellent suggestion. Please get in touch if you would like to contribute an article.*



Many years ago, when I was still fairly new to taking part in group therapy, I was a member of a weekend group using psychodrama as the medium of therapeutic learning. It had been a very good group, with a lot of “work” as it is called, done by many of us. We had been especially helped in this by a Polish member. He had been resourceful and helpful, comforting and always present to help out in different ways. But, he had taken no time for whatever he may have hoped to work on from his own past experience.

Almost at the end of our time together, “Peter” the group facilitator spoke to “Adam” (not their real names), thanked him for all the help he had given us, and offered to give the last twenty minutes or so of group time just to him. At first Adam smilingly brushed aside the offer, saying it didn’t really matter etc. But Peter was firmly insistent, and while Adam was still trying to brush aside his opportunity he propped up a large cushion against the wall and sat down with his back to him, inviting Adam to just sit facing him for a few minutes. I think all of us were somewhat puzzled by this, and wondered what might happen. For a few long minutes Adam and Peter simply sat in front of each other, making, as it seemed to me from my position, full eye contact. Then quite abruptly, we saw Adam’s shoulders begin to heave, then with his head bowed, he started to weep, fulsomely, in a way I had never seen a man weep before. As far as I can now remember he made hardly any sound during this period of intense weeping. I thought of the biblical phrase: ‘Let me pour forth my tears before thy face’. I felt we were all immensely moved by what we were witnessing, indeed participating in, for we had all been able to contribute through our presence there that day, to Adam’s short, cathartic experience. Throughout it all Peter never seemed to take his eyes off Adam. He simply slowly nodded his head and gravely murmured: ‘Yes, yes’ as if Adam were communicating urgent words to him, whereas actually he said nothing. Towards the end of the experience he said to Adam, ‘You have seen some terrible things which we can’t know more about now, and I am so glad you have been able to share your grief with us.’

Adam wiped his eyes, blew his nose, and the two men embraced each other. When he turned to us we saw Adam’s face was shining, and he looked as if he had been able to relieve himself of an immense burden of unconfessed, or unacknowledged sorrow. I have no doubt we all shared in the letting-go of his experience.

I felt, and feel, I had learned a great deal from my memory of this experience. I won’t spell it all out now. I think that the most important thing I learned was that, as men, we should not leave the women in our lives to do our sorrowing, our crying. A man may weep as fulsomely as a woman, as women are often, not always, but often in closer touch with their feelings. And I also had one of the most important lessons I have ever had on the immense value of simply listening to someone in distress, without being anxious about saying something appropriate, and certainly without moving, or withdrawing eye-contact, or doing anything to distract the distressed person in front of us from his or her intense concentration on the pain of his emotional confession.

**John Hands**

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings

**12<sup>th</sup> August and 9<sup>th</sup> September,  
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church**

*The gatherings are led by graduates  
of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.*

Peaceful and Joyous connection with the Divine, the One Light at the Heart of All through music, meditation and inspiration from many spiritual traditions.

**For further information contact service hosts:**

Rev. Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980

Rev. Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

“There is strength in tears. We weep with gratitude over all the amazing gifts from God that come our way. We cry when we share moments of great elation with others. Tears enable us to get in touch with our deepest feelings. They help us express our grief at endings and the loss of those who are precious to us.

Alan Jones, dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, says these drops “are like the breaking of the waters of the womb before the birth of a child.” That’s a wonderful way to describe the connection between pain and joy.

Tears are a gift of grace from God, and their fruit is always joy. Weeping arises from the heart and signifies an open and softened heart. Perhaps that is why so many are embarrassed to cry; they do not want to reveal their vulnerability. Yet many of us have felt the rich communal dimensions of crying with others.”

**Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat**

# Unitarians and 'The Charter for Compassion'

**In our National Denomination:** The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches has been welcomed as a Partner of the Charter for Compassion, established to support the work of the well known religious commentator Karen Armstrong, in promoting compassion, the "Golden Rule" and inter-faith dialogue. On 24th June 2011, the General Assembly's Chief Officer Derek McAuley and Sue Woolley, Unitarian partnership link, received confirmation from the Charter for Compassion that their application had been successful saying: *"The Charter for Compassion team is thrilled to welcome the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in the UK to our Partner Network."*

The General Assembly voted unanimously at its Annual Meetings in Swansea in April to seek Partnership status reflecting the longstanding Unitarian commitment to compassion and inter-faith relationships. Initiatives currently being pursued include:

- Establishing a Charter for Compassion Engagement Group, which will have an online forum.
- Promoting the Charter through the General Assembly's website.
- Issuing a Worship Pack for use by Ministers and worship leaders including, opening words, chalice lighting words, prayers, reflections, meditations, children's story, a range of readings, closing words, benediction on the theme of the Charter principles entitled *'The Stirrings of Compassion'*.
- Designation of a Sunday in November as 'Charter for Compassion Sunday', on which congregations will be encouraged to either hold a service on the theme of compassion, or to go out and do something compassionate.
- The incorporation of the Charter's principles into the Chalice Award Scheme for children.

**Information from the GA Website:** [www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)

**In our London District:** The following message was read out by Rev. Dr. Richard Boeke at the recent interfaith 'Charter for Compassion' event at Golders Green Unitarians which brought together people of all religions in a celebration of the Charter and explored its significance in politics, international relations and in all our everyday lives.

*Karen Armstrong, the TED Prize team, the Fetzer Institute, and the global Charter community thank you for celebrating the Charter for Compassion in London today. This week we were delighted to formally welcome the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in the UK as a new Charter for Compassion Partner. We honour your "open faith community that celebrates diverse beliefs" and we respect your mission "to create a caring community where all feel supported in our search for meaning and value." We look forward to working with the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches "to find creative, realistic and, above all, practical ways of making the Golden Rule a dynamic and positive force for change in our troubled, polarised world." The Charter for Compassion team is also grateful for the support of the World Congress of Faiths, the International Association for Religious Freedom as well as the other individuals and organizations who are present here today. Please accept our warm wishes for a wonderful Charter for Compassion event. We'll look forward to hearing about the ideas and activities that unfold on this special day in London. Thank you.*

**Information from Rev. Dr. Richard Boeke**

**In the American UUA:** Karen Armstrong was invited to give the Ware Lecture at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly Meetings in this year. Video footage of her lecture, *'The Challenge of Compassion'*, can be viewed online at: [bit.ly/karenGA](http://bit.ly/karenGA)



*Karen Armstrong giving the Ware Lecture at the 2011 UUA GA*

**In our Own Congregation:** We encourage you to sign the Charter as an individual and start putting the principles into action. Karen Armstrong's book is full of practical exercises to encourage us to put compassion into action in our lives. Two responses to our recent 'Compassionate Life' course, from Carolyn and Stephanie, are on the opposite page. During the sessions we were also asked to think of people or organisations that inspired us and that made a difference in the world. Here is the list we made – City Lit for running such an excellent range of adult education classes, psychodrama in prisons; the founder of the Oxford hospice for children, Sister Frances Dominica; Steiner / Waldorf Education; the Camphill Communities that create homes and work for disabled adults; the Bishop of Livingston in Zambia and his emphasis on the importance of educating girls. Who or what inspires you?

**You can read more and affirm the charter at:** [www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org)



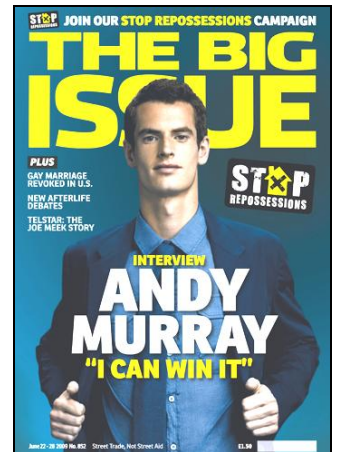
# 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life'

## Two Responses to our Recent Adult RE Course

### 'One Step towards a Compassionate Life'

When we started the RE course, following Karen Armstrong's book, "Twelve Steps towards a Compassionate Life" we all said something about what had brought us there. At the time I thought of myself as doing enough compassionate actions. Then, on one of my many leisurely days I was walking around central London with a friend, Chelsea, in fact. I noticed "Big Issue" sellers but ignored them. I was conscious of the uncomfortable contrast of their poverty and struggles and the opulence that surrounded us. At the time, I regarded the conversation with my friend and the fact that he did not stop to purchase as more important than the seller, although knowing that very few people make that stop to buy from them.

Pretty much as penance afterwards I decided that I would buy from every "Big Issue" seller I see from now on. They are a good read and I decided to leave the extra copies in public places, e.g. the tube. Even so, I did not find it easy to stick to my plan. I wanted to hurry to get to the next group meeting! The first two times it was too much bother to get my purse out of my rucksack. Happily, I found a solution. I put £2 into my pocket ready and found a seller standing in Notting Hill. I intend to keep up this practice and make sure I have spare change ready.



It might seem an expensive plan but I can always do without buying some little item or a drink out, having a cheaper meal or sandwich out. The boost it will give to each seller will be worth it: £1 for them, a conversation and recognition of their existence.

Carolyn Appleby

### 'Compassion in One Easy Lesson'

It was a course of six sessions, of which I attended the last two. Going the first time, and habitually early, I sat outside watching the expressions on the faces of passers-by before going down to the library. The seven or eight already there made me welcome, and we started to discuss the manner of debate – the aggressive approach, going in all guns blazing, intent on demolishing the opponent's argument – or the more subtle technique, listening, drawing him out, aiming at consensus, the compassionate approach. Peace, and war – is there any such thing as a "just war"? Compassion for the enemy – easy when seeing the individual, caught up in a situation that may have nothing to do with his conviction – like oneself perhaps.

And so to compassion for oneself. This was a totally new concept for me. Oh, I am skilled in making excuses for myself. I know about denial. But compassion for me – this was something!



Home, and in bed, it suddenly dawned on me that the meeting should have started at 7pm. I had arrived at 7.25, oblivious. Offered no apology. Showed no trace of guilt or embarrassment. Not one of those good people evinced the merest trace of annoyance. It was careless, it was a mistake, intentional rudeness it was not. And then I remembered that message "we need to show compassion to ourselves too." So I did. What a gift – thank you Karen. Thanks too to the benevolent souls who suffered in silence.

Stephanie Saville

## Next Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member before that date.

Thank you!!!

"Look at your hands. They are a history book of where you've been and everything you've touched and worked for. Think of the handshakes you've shared and pause for a moment to remember how they felt — some weak or strong, others soft or rough. Through their hands, you felt some of the other person's character and even the kind of work they've done. Remember how your hands feel when you hold a small baby or someone of any age. They are filled with love and beauty."

Ardath Rodale

## Brief Lives

A short life you may say  
Pecking, digesting, excreting, fetching  
Stuff for their nest  
Around or in for something  
The live summer long always  
Here – but where  
Are we?

II

So do you believe  
There are worlds you may not enter  
if love were your companion  
Faith your guardian  
Hope your smiling  
Always watchful guide?

John Hands

## Committee News



1. The church building continues to attract lots of booking enquiries. Jenny is able to select those that look best for the church, and will be able to catch up with some tasks when the bookings go quieter over August.
2. The garden has been much admired recently; Sarah has been pursuing a gardener to clear the bramble patch in the back garden.
3. Various enquiries are still under way re the perennially leaking roof.
4. The congregational book 'Kindred Pilgrim Souls' has been selling very well. There may even be a second edition.
5. It was agreed that Church Secretary Jane should be put on a permanent contract instead of (as at present) a rolling 12 month contract with the Church. It will not make any difference to her excellent work for the church, but it is nice to think that it will be permanent.

Caroline Blair

The next meeting of the management committee will be held on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August at 7pm.

*A new initiative in the London District:*

## 'Rainbow' LGBTQI Unitarians in London and the South East



### Draft Calendar of Events, 2011

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August:** Social Trip to Brighton. Meet at Brighton Unitarian Church, 12 noon, for a short act of worship and meditation to start things off. For location details, see [www.brightonunitarian.org.uk](http://www.brightonunitarian.org.uk)

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September:** Building a Welcome for LGBTI Unitarians – ideas, priorities. Meeting here at Essex Church.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October:** Official Launch of Rainbow - Service led by Rev Ant Howe. New Unity Church, Islington, 5pm. For travel/location details, see: [www.new-unity.org](http://www.new-unity.org)

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November:** Planning meeting: goals and objectives for 2012, Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church, 5pm. For travel/contact details please see: [www.rpuc.org.uk](http://www.rpuc.org.uk).

[www.unitarian.org.uk/rainbow](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/rainbow)

## Open Windows

Through this open window  
We peer into worlds  
A thousand light-years beyond.  
We also peer at each other  
As remote, as obscure  
As prisoners in a cage  
In a far-distant  
Unfathomable  
Inaccessible land.

John Hands

# WCF Interfaith Celebration of Animals

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 3.00pm  
Golders Green Unitarian Church  
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS



This event will be the eighth interfaith celebration of animals hosted by Golders Green Unitarians (GGU) on behalf of the World Congress of Faiths (WCF). The first ever interfaith celebration of animals in this country took place at GGU in 2004. This is not an animal blessing service but a small number of domestic pets are welcome.

**WCF Website: [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org)**

## A Cause We Support: 'The Hand Society'



This is supposed to be about charities we support and this is not exactly a charity but Sarah asked me to let people know a little more about the work of The Hand Society, the short name for the British Society for Surgery of the Hand.

My daughter Julie recently returned from a three week stint in Sierra Leone where she worked as theatre sister for a team of medics operating on people with hand problems. Julie's speciality is bio-mechanics and in the UK she works mostly with joint replacement operations.

The Hand Society strives to improve the care of patients who suffer from hand injuries and hand disorders through education and research, and by promoting and directing the development of Hand Surgery. Partly through the Healing Foundation they sponsor much research as well as trips such as Julie's work in Sierra Leone, helping people to cope better with disfigurement and loss of function especially in face and hands. Maybe we could start another newsletter column - people we're proud of - and I'm certainly proud of my daughter and her work.

**Will Lyons**

## 'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 21<sup>st</sup> August and 18<sup>th</sup> September  
12.30 to 1.15pm, at Essex Church



Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. Along with Harold Lorenzelli she has been singing in our choir here at Essex Church for over thirty years now and we're delighted that she is now leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice.

These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound and Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential.

Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

"Every moment, if we are awake to it, is another beginning. Every instant is a recreation of possibility and of hope. As existence unfolds, in every moment we have choices; we have the ability to set our sail.



Though we are shaped by the past, we are in no way bound by it. "*The past,*" as H. G. Wells once wrote, "*is but the beginning of a beginning, and all that is and has been is but the twilight of the dawn.*" When we allow ourselves to look honestly at ourselves, our relationships, our community and our society, we become open to the discovery of the future, to a renewal, a recreation, another beginning, a dawn of hope and possibility and promise.

Yes, it means commitment on our part. If the atonement of our heart is true, and if the renewal of our spirit is real, than our every relationship will be changed. The more we grow in this way, the more we will look outside of ourselves and of our disparate communities, the closer we will come to wholeness. As we come closer to wholeness, we begin to bind the wounds of humanity and of our planet."

**UU Minister Rev. Daniel Schatz**

# Multifaith Calendar of Festivals for August/September

## ☾ 1<sup>st</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> August – Ramadan – Muslim

During Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. The Muslim year is a lunar year, so Ramadan moves forward by ten or eleven days each year. Fasting (sawm) is one of the five pillars of Islam, requiring self-discipline and giving everyone some experience of deprivation. Those who are not able to fast give charity to compensate for the lost days. While children may be encouraged to fast, the full fast is not compulsory until maturity. The fast is traditionally broken each evening by taking dates and water after the custom of the Prophet.

## ✿ 3<sup>rd</sup> August – Chokhor (Chokor Duchen) – Buddhist

A Tibetan and Nepalese summer festival that commemorates the Buddha's first Turning of the Wheel, the first teaching concerning the Four Truths. Statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures are carried around with music and festivities, to symbolise the spreading of the Buddha's teaching. The whole community joins in the processions and picnics that follow.

## ✝ 6<sup>th</sup> August – The Transfiguration – Christian

The Transfiguration commemorates Jesus being transformed in the presence of three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, on a mountain top. The disciples saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased - listen to him' (Mark 9:7b). The Transfiguration is a major festival for Orthodox Christians.

## ★ 9<sup>th</sup> August – Tisha B'Av – Jewish

Tisha B'Av is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. A full day fast is held at the conclusion of three weeks of mourning and reflection, focusing on the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem, and other tragedies in Jewish history.

## ✧ 9<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> August – Farvardigan (Muktad) – Zoroastrian

The final ten days of the Zoroastrian year can be regarded as all souls days when the fravashis (spirits of the dead) are welcomed and entertained. Prayers of remembrance are recited and the farohars (guardian souls) are invited to join the community of souls, both living and departed, during the special Hamaspathmaidem Gahambar, a communal feast.

## ☾ 13<sup>th</sup> August – Raksha Bandhan – Hindu

Raksha Bandhan is about brotherly protection ('raksha' means 'protection', and 'bandhan' means to 'tie'). On this Hindu festival, traditionally, sisters tie amulets of coloured thread, symbolising protection from evil, around their brothers' wrists and give them an Indian sweet. In return brothers give their sisters gifts.

## ✝ 15<sup>th</sup> August – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Christian

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates Mary being 'taken up', body and soul to heaven. Roman Catholic communities often mark the festival with processions. Orthodox Christians celebrate the Dormition, Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary, meaning her death and bodily resurrection, on this day.

## ☾ 22<sup>nd</sup> August – Janamashtami / Krishna Jayanti – Hindu

The birthday of Krishna is widely celebrated by Hindus. Many will fast till midnight, the time of Krishna's birth, when he is welcomed with singing, dancing and sweets. In some homes and temples an image of the baby Krishna is put in a cradle and special sweets are offered and distributed.

## ☾ 27<sup>th</sup> August – Laylat-ul-Qadr – Muslim

The 'Night of Power' when Muslims commemorate the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) receiving the first revelation of the Qur'an. Many Muslims will spend the night praying and studying the Qur'an at their local mosque. Laylat-ul-Qadr is usually celebrated on the 27th day (the night of the 26th) of Ramadan.

## ☾ 31<sup>st</sup> August – Id-ul-Fitr – Muslim

Id-UI-Fitr marks the breaking of the fast for Muslims at the end of Ramadan. Lasting three days, it is a time for family and friends to get together, for celebrating with good food and presents for children, and giving to charity. The charity of the fast - Zakat-ul-Fitr, which is paid during Ramadan, must be paid before the Id prayer. 'Id Mubarak' - a happy and blessed Id, is the traditional greeting.

## ✝ September / October – Harvest Festival - Christian

Special services are held around this time of year to thank God for his goodness, in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvest of the fields.

## ☾ 1<sup>st</sup> September - Ganesha Chaturthi – Hindu

The birthday of Ganesha (also Ganupati), the elephant-headed deity, seen as the remover of obstacles, is especially observed by Maharashtrians. Ganesha is worshipped by Hindus at the beginning of something new, for example taking exams, moving house or getting married.

## ☾ 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> September – Paryushan – Jain

Eight days of intensive fasting, devoted to study, prayer and meditation, concluding with a period of confession and forgiveness. Often monks will be invited to give teachings from the Jain scriptures. Paryushana means 'to stay in one place', which signifies a time of reflection and repentance. The practice was originally primarily monastic.

## ☾ 28<sup>th</sup> September – 5<sup>th</sup> October

### – Navaratri / Durga Puja / Dasserah – Hindu

This Hindu festival, known by different names, is one of the few celebrated across India. Navaratri means 'nine nights', the length of the festival - the final three days being the most important. In the north of India, particularly in Bengal, the goddess Durga is worshipped on the eighth day.

## ★ 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September – Rosh Hashanah – Jewish New Year's Day 5772

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self-examination during which G-d sits in judgement on every individual. The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue as a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac.

# Singing in Community with Jo McAndrews



**Weekend of 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> October 2011**  
**Saturday 10am-5pm/ Sunday 2pm-6pm**  
**At Essex Church – Organised by Veronica Needa**

A weekend full of song! Singing together creates connection, deepening of listening, and opening of hearts. We welcome everyone with an inclination to sing whether experienced or a beginner. This is an opportunity to learn many and playful ways to make harmony together as a large group – a capella!

For anyone who loves singing, this is a wonderful chance to fill the beautiful space of Essex Church – the home of the Kensington Unitarians – with our voices and meet people from all over the world. This is a weekend to learn lots of songs and song-games to generate a deep sense of community to support our work. As an optional extra, on Sunday morning, those of us who wish to can make an offering of some of our songs during the service. This is a workshop open to everyone.

**Fees: £65 & £45\*\***

\*\*Concessionary fee for low-waged, students & OAPs; unwaged by donation; all welcome.

Call +44 (0) 7221 2694 or email:  
playbackschoolUK@gmail.com

**About the Trainer:** Jo McAndrews has a warm, playful and inclusive approach to singing. She is interested in the sheer enjoyment of singing in harmony with others and has developed an encouraging and informal style of teaching. She leads StroudSong community choir and was part of the extraordinary a capella group Naked Voices based in Bristol. She has sung with community choirs for 11 years and runs singing workshops around the country. She has been involved in Stroud playback for some years and loves the way playbackers throw themselves into singing for warm ups and group building.

[www.playbackschooluk.org](http://www.playbackschooluk.org)

## Warden's Column

The quietest time of the year is just starting, with many of our regular groups taking a break for the summer. In fact it's so quiet in August, that it seems feasible to do a complete survey of the "die-hards" who keep going all year round.

On Monday evening, we have a Sufi chanting group in the library – meeting every week is part of their commitment to their guru, though we do often ask them to take a week off over Xmas/New Year when we close the building completely. On some Mondays and Tuesdays we also have another meditation group, run by a couple who live locally, in the Hall. Initially we had some trouble co-ordinating this quiet meditation upstairs with the periodically noisy chanting below, but with some adjustment on both sides we've now found an amicable arrangement. Michael and Jillian are running quite a few August sessions this year, because in September they're leaving for a six-month sabbatical in India. On Wednesdays the Tse Qigong Centre continue their year round programme of Tai Chi, Chi Gung and Kung Fu in the Church and the Beit Klal synagogue continues to meet on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

Also meeting on Friday and Saturday is Seicho no Ie: a very unusual group. They're mainly Brazilian, but a few years ago they started running an English service in the Hall in parallel to their main Portuguese service in the Church. The movement started in Japan in 1930 and is a synthesis of Christianity and Buddhism. Their main meeting here is on Saturday night and they regularly have around 80 people, on Friday evening they hold a study group in the library. They're very friendly, helpful and warm. These articles of faith/rules of daily conduct are taken from their website:

- 1<sup>st</sup> - I am grateful to all beings in heaven and earth
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - I am always my natural self.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - I am sincere in every word and action.
- 4<sup>th</sup> - I am considerate toward all people, things and circumstances.
- 5<sup>th</sup> - I always see the bright side of people and things, never their dark side.
- 6<sup>th</sup> - I always win over my egotistic self.
- 7<sup>th</sup> - I believe my life to be God's life, and I go forth with faith in certain victory.
- 8<sup>th</sup> - I practice Shinsokan [meditation] at least once a day to enlighten myself.

The only other regular weekly group to keep going over the summer are the Eritrean cultural support group, another Muslim group, set up by refugees, who meet on Saturday evenings in the library. Going on to monthly groups: the Interfaith Seminary continue to hold their services at 6.30 on the second Friday of each month. Nia dance classes continue on second Sundays from 2-3pm. Richard Sylvester is holding his monthly lecture on Non-duality in the library on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2-5pm and the Unitarian Creativity and Book groups continue to meet as usual on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays. As for one-off events: Lolly Stirk is running a pregnancy yoga course on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August; David Darling's niece has her baby-naming on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> and the following weekend is the Notting Hill Carnival, when we're pleased to once more be serving as a rest station for London Buses staff as they try to cope with the immense demands of getting people in and out of the carnival zone smoothly and giving them the information they need. On Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August, the recommencement of the Heruka Buddhism course in the library marks the end of the quiet zone as our regular weekly users start coming back. The Church trustees will also be meeting that evening in the Hall.

Hmm . . . writing down the whole month of bookings like that in one go, makes it still seem like quite a lot, but it's really incredibly quiet compared to the rest of the year. Sometimes we've taken that opportunity to do major building work, but this year (apart from resealing the floors in the kitchen and bathrooms) we're just giving ourselves and the building a rest!

Jenny Moy

# 'The Book of Books'

## 400 Years of the King James Bible'

### Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2011

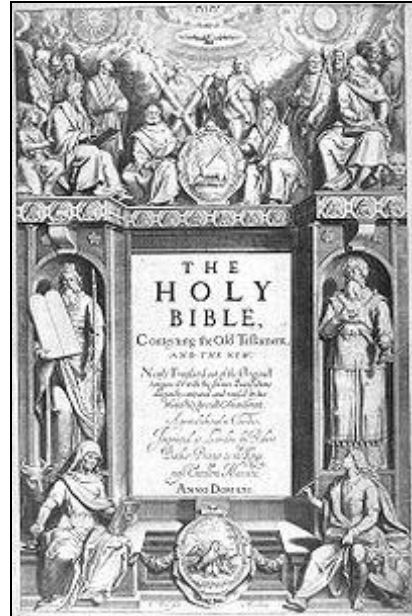
*An audio podcast of this sermon is available on our website.*

I wonder what your relationship with the King James Bible has been. And how has that relationship evolved over time? It's been around all our lives – and for most of us, of a certain age, it held an important place in the British culture of our childhoods. Over the years I've listened, enthralled, to its stories, absorbed its imagery, snickered at all the 'begatting', felt irritated by language I didn't understand and been tongue tied by all the 'thees' and the 'thous' and 'thithers' and 'whithers'. In Religious Studies lessons as a teenager the New English Bible arrived on the scene and we were all delighted to have at last a translation we could understand.

But understanding isn't everything. A bit like Melvyn Bragg, in the reading we heard earlier on from his work 'Book of Books', as a child in primary school I was asked to read a Bible passage in school assembly. The day before, our headmistress Miss Foster handed me the opening passage of John's Gospel that Stephanie read for us – 'in the beginning was the Word'. She said to me quietly 'I think you're a girl who'll be able to make sense of it' and I swelled with pride. Having read it through I was too shy to admit I didn't understand it one little bit – and so I battled through – reading it slowly and clearly as Miss Foster had told me to, in front of the whole school.

I didn't know then what I know now. That the King James Bible had been designed for just that purpose – to be read aloud, at times by people and to people who wouldn't understand it all. Its translators had been told it was to be authoritative, with a uniform voice, suitable for reading aloud in churches, and to be, if possible, a force for unification in the English church. The 16th and 17th centuries were turbulent times and religion was one of the causes of strife. The history of biblical translation in this country is full of brave scholars who wanted to bring the Bible to ordinary people, full also of political and religious authorities who used the Bible as a source of power and wanted it to remain in archaic Latin that only they could interpret. Many a liberal minded scholar ended up languishing in jail or being executed for their work of translating the Bible into English – perhaps most notably William Tyndale, who was executed in 1536. Also worthy of mention is John Wycliffe, the Oxford scholar who back in 1382 had organised the very first translation of the Bible into English and lost his life because of it.

Yet by the early 1600s various translations of the Bible into English were circulating in private, and still hidden, ownership – especially Tyndale's and a version known as the Geneva Bible. When new monarch King James brought a group of church men and scholars together at Hampton Court, in the hope of avoiding the religious strife that had plagued Elizabeth the 1st's reign, the idea emerged of creating a new translation – an authorized translation of the Bible into English, that perhaps could bring the people of England together – through the power of the word.



It was an immense task, and a remarkable feat of collaboration by all accounts, carried out by six different groups of scholars in Oxford, Cambridge and London. They made their separate translations – based often on the Geneva Bible and Tyndale's work, and then came together to create one document published in 1611, 400 years ago – the King James Bible. Those 54 scholars could not have imagined that their work would have lasted into the 21st century and have held such sway over British culture for so very many years. No book written in English has sold more copies and even though it has been superseded by later translations – yet its imagery stays with us, even now.

'To lick the dust', 'seeing through a glass darkly', 'the skin of my teeth', 'a man after his own heart', 'fight the good fight', 'well done good and faithful servant', 'a fly in the ointment', 'casting your pearls before swine', 'how are the mighty fallen', 'a voice crying in the wilderness', 'no peace for the wicked', 'go the extra mile', 'wolf in sheep's clothing', 'to rise and shine' and of course 'let there be light'.

According to linguist David Crystal there are 257 everyday phrases such as these to be found in the King James Bible – from two main sources. Some were everyday idioms of the time whilst others were created by the translators who went back to medieval manuscripts and made literal translations of Hebrew imagery. Our language today is made more poetic by their work. Crystal writes that the King James Version has "contributed far more to English in the way of idiomatics or quasi-proverbial expressions than any other literary source".

Interestingly the style of English that the translators chose to use was considered old fashioned even in the early 1600s – they stuck to 'thees' and 'thous' – even though 'you' was by then in popular usage; they did not use the pronoun 'its' which had by then arrived in everyday speech. Perhaps intentionally, by using somewhat archaic forms of language their translation had an authoritative feel from the start, some gravitas. It was designed to read aloud. Sentences were short and simple in structure yet the translators used quite complex rhetorical features so that passages had a cadence, a rhythm that pleased the ear.

# 'The Book of Books: 400 Years of the King James Bible'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

Listen to these opening verses from the Book of Genesis...  
*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

The translators reduced the stylistic differences between the various books of the Bible and between the Old and New Testaments – so effectively that to this day some people imagine as the George Bernard Shaw quote on the front of today's order of service states – that this is one book - the Bible, with one author, God.

*"They made a translation so magnificent that to this day the common ... citizen ... accepts and worships it as a single book by a single author, the book being the Book of Books and the author being God."*

The translators of the Geneva Bible had filled it with footnotes – containing commentary on the wording and the translation. King James did not want footnotes – again a way to make this translation easy to read and with a seeming authority – it was indeed to be seen as the word of God.

Any work of translation is affected by the era in which it was produced. The translators changed the Bible's linguistic style; they also to some extent changed the content. Its many references to polygamy and slavery were reduced and sanitised; its earthiness was softened. Yet even so, the history of the Bible with regard to its effect on women and slaves is a chequered one. This Book of Books was used for centuries to justify slavery; it was also used by abolitionists such as Wilberforce to campaign against slavery. It became a source of deep comfort to the slaves themselves – who found parallels to their own sufferings in the struggles of the Hebrew tribes people in both Egypt and later in Babylon. *'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept for thee Zion.'*

For anyone concerned with the position of women in society this translation of the Bible can be seen as a damning work of oppression, yet from the work of Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1700s to more recent years, feminist theologians have also found within it imagery of strong and resourceful women and a feminine form of the divine. And at a time when women were denied an education the Bible provided sometimes their only source of literary inspiration. Like any great work of literature the King James Version is endlessly explorable and open to interpretation and renewal. No wonder then that it has had such a profound effect not simply on the English language but upon literature itself. Over the centuries this Bible was oft times the only book that a family possessed. It was used in educational establishments throughout the English speaking world. Indeed Winston Churchill said of it:

*"The scholars who produced this masterpiece are mostly unknown and unremembered. But they forged an enduring link, literary and religious, between the English-speaking people of the world."*

If I try to sum up the influence that this work has had on my own life, three aspects of its message come to mind:

-it taught me, especially through the powerful imagery of the gospels, that there is a right and proper way to live my life

- it helped me to accept that there is a mystery at the core of existence that we humans are unlikely ever fully to comprehend

- and through the pleasure I've gained in exploring this and other translations of the Bible I've decided that we humans are at our best when knowledge is freely available and study is encouraged.

It is good to make sacred texts our own. Let's never forget the struggles for freedom that led to this translation in our own language, for it indeed is a 'pearl of great price'.

Amen

## FUSE – Festival of Unitarians in the South East

Dates for your Diary: 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at the Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing



Last January, the LDPA sponsored Light the Fire, a weekend event held at The Friars in Aylesford, Kent. More than fifty people came, not only from throughout the District but also from Ipswich, Southampton, Manchester, Bristol and Bridport. The weekend brought people together for a time of imagining, dreaming, planning and having fun (Caroline and Jim Blair attended on behalf of our congregation – you may have read Jim's article about it in our newsletter earlier in the year). What's next? – FUSE – the Festival of Unitarians in the South East. A planning group is busy putting the weekend together. Please put the dates (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> February 2012) in your diary and plan to attend. More details in the autumn.



"I think the people who say they don't believe in religion, and I've met a bunch of them in my day, mean something else. What they really mean is, they don't believe in having to say a creed to belong to something. Or they mean they don't believe in a God who loves some and hates others, often with little way to comprehend the reasoning behind this teaching. Sometimes they mean they don't like being told what to do, what to believe. We understand that. We are all people who don't believe in a religion like that!... Tell them about your discovery, our community of inclusive love – and don't just leave them hanging there, angry at God, angry at religion. Our religion is more like a roadmap than a house, like a journey instead of a destination. It's a unique way of doing things, of creating an understanding, a foundation for your life. To me, sharing about our religion is true evangelism; it is the true sharing of some really good news."

UU Minister, Rev. Eva Cameron

## Sunday Services at Essex Church

**7<sup>th</sup> August, 11am –  
"For Ever and Ever, Amen"**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

The traditional words of the Lord's Prayer echo through the centuries yet in recent years have been rarely heard here at Essex Church. We will consider the history of the Prayer of Jesus and its message for us today.

**14<sup>th</sup> August, 11am –  
"The Cellist of Sarajevo"**

**Service led by Sarah Tinker and Joy Croft**

Through this moving true story we will explore how music can give life meaning, even in the direst of circumstances.

12.30pm - **Small-Group Communion**,  
led by John Hands and Sarah Tinker (lasting ~30 minutes)

**21<sup>st</sup> August, 11am –  
"Moses and his Interesting Life"**

**Service led by Juliet Edwards**

Juliet says: "Apart from Jesus, Moses was the Biblical character that I learned most stories about when I was at school. I thought I would have a further look at his life as described in Exodus and see what more I could learn."

**28<sup>th</sup> August, 11am –  
"Treasures of Heaven"**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Based on the exhibition currently on show at the British Museum this service will be about relics and reliquaries in the Middle Ages and their relevance for 21st century spiritual and cultural life. There will be a chance to make your own relic if you wish.



**4<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
"Do the Benedictine Vows have Anything  
to teach 21st Century Unitarians?"**

**Service led by David Francis Darling**

David says: "Benedict's teachings for living in community for monks and nuns can also be useful tools for living in our modern non-residential spiritual community."

**11<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
"Gathering the Waters"**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Come and join us for our annual 'Gathering the Waters' service in which we bring back water collected from our travels and tell people where we have been. This is a chance to re-connect with our community so bring along a little bit of water, and join in the ceremony, even if your water is simply from your garden pond or kitchen tap. This service will be followed by a bring-and-share congregational lunch.

**18<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
"Loving Our Enemies"**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Those of us who attended our recent course on compassion struggled with the final exercise to 'love our enemies'. How might we bring this demanding practice into our daily lives?

**25<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
"Love and Krishna Consciousness"**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
and Prashant Joshi**

Prashant will be telling us more about his faith and leading us in a meditation on universal love where all beings are connected in the oneness of the Supreme.