



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2012

## What's On...

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 11am-noon  
**'Unitarian Approaches  
to Biblical Studies'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 12.15-12.50pm  
**Recital with Trevor and Peter**

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1.00-2.45pm  
**'Shaping the Future'** Workshop  
on the future of Unitarianism

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**'Living Faith' (1/4)**  
Course led by Jane and Sarah

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July, 11am-noon  
**'Would Plato have  
used Wikipedia...?'**  
Service led by Caroline Blair

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by John Hands

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2.00-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique**  
Holistic movement with Sonya

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**'Living Faith' RE Course (2/4)**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 11am-noon  
**'Enough'** service led by  
Sarah Tinker and Howard Hague

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July, 12.30-1.45pm  
**'Finding Our Voice'**  
Singing workshop with Margaret

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**'Living Faith' RE Course (3/4)**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 11am-noon  
**'Playing the Game:  
The Spirituality of Sport'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 12.30pm  
**Congregational Potluck Lunch**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**Reading Group: The Book of Amos**

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9.00pm  
**'Living Faith' RE Course (4/4)**

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 11am-noon  
**'Images of Transformation'**  
Led by Sarah Tinker & Heidi Ferid

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 12.45-2.30pm  
**'Colour and Imagination'**  
**Art Workshop with Heidi Ferid**

## A Message from our Minister:

### Not What We Expected

Midsummer Day carries with it some expectations – sunshine perhaps, warmth even. So it was with concern that we scanned the weather forecast on that day and noted the threat of heavy rain. But the rain held off. Instead, and probably without divine intervention, we walked over Hampstead Heath for several hours and not a drop of precipitation fell from the sky until we neared the restaurant at the end of the walk. We were not basking in brilliant sunshine, and some people wished they'd brought a coat, but the Heath was at its greenest best and the view of London from Parliament Hill Fields was truly stunning. It was good to get out and about in cheery company with others.



Some of my colleagues joke about ministers' tendency to comment on something specific and then broaden outwards with a sweeping statement of "it's a bit like life really". It's funny because it's true. It's true that ministers are forever making these connections and it's true that everything can reflect on everything else. So the unexpectedly pleasant midsummer walk on a wet day in June is a good way to remind myself that things rarely turn out quite how I expect, or intend.

I'm going to keep this in mind as we move toward the Olympic Games at the end of the month. It'll not be how I expect.

My natural inclination is to fear the worst – transport chaos, embarrassing disorganisation, cringe-worthy opening ceremony etc etc. But, just maybe, that Olympic spirit could win the day after all, could bring a sense of a world community celebrating together, of sporting prowess overcoming national differences and economic concerns. And maybe, instead of dreading the potential chaos, we'll find a way to join in and truly welcome all those who will be visiting our busy city. Quite how many of them will find their way to church remains to be seen but there will always be newcomers here in London looking for a place to be and the quality of our welcome can make such a difference to their lives. I've been reading this month about the work of Jean Vanier, the Canadian Catholic who established L'Arche communities. Here are his inspiring words about the difference a welcoming community can make in someone's life:

*"One of the marvellous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing."*

Happy summer everyone.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this month's newsletter...

\* 'It All Started with a Ladybird...' by Gisela Boehnisch \* Poems by John Hands \*  
The Spiritual Bookshelf: 'Invisible Cities' recommended by Tristan Jovanović  
\* Midsummer Walk Photos \* Report from LDPA Meeting in Lewes by Howard Hague \*  
'Foundations of our Faith' Report \* July's Good Cause: 'Yes to Life' – Annie Fowler  
\* 'Living Faith' Course \* 'Jubilee' – 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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Web: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

"They say you can't define 'beauty.' Rather, 'you just know it when you see it.' The same can be said of Unitarian Universalist Spirituality. It's an attitude more than a set of beliefs. A way of being in the world more than specific convictions about the nature of the world. One UU theologian put it simply, 'It's an openness to life.' At First Unitarian, we often talk about it in terms of 'living and loving boldly.' Our ministers point out that the word 'spirit' when used in the biblical texts is almost always linguistically related to the word 'breath' or 'wind.' So think about what 'breathes' life into you and, from a UU perspective, you're in the realm of spirituality. None of us wants to live lives that feel shallow, empty or 'flat.' We regularly hunger to 'go deeper,' to 'get beneath the surface of things.' That for us is the work of spirituality."

From the Website of the First  
Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

1 <sup>st</sup> July:	Howard Hague
8 <sup>th</sup> July:	Natasha Drennan
15 <sup>th</sup> July:	Gina Bayley
22 <sup>nd</sup> July:	Jim Blair
29 <sup>th</sup> July:	?

### Coffee:

1 <sup>st</sup> July:	Gill Hague
8 <sup>th</sup> July:	Juliet Edwards
15 <sup>th</sup> July:	Ruth Okine
22 <sup>nd</sup> July:	Caroline Blair
29 <sup>th</sup> July:	Sue Smith

### Greeting:

1 <sup>st</sup> July:	Annie Fowler
8 <sup>th</sup> July:	Carol Sheppard
15 <sup>th</sup> July:	Veronica Needa
22 <sup>nd</sup> July:	Carol Sheppard
29 <sup>th</sup> July:	Gina Bayley

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)

## Congregational Lunch

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 12.30pm



There will be a congregational potluck lunch after the service on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July – all are welcome – so why not plan to bring a friend along to the service and lunch?

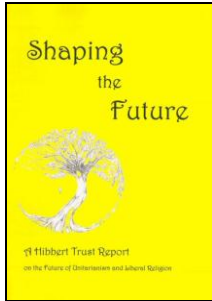
Please bring along some food or drink to share. Look out for a sign-up sheet in circulation this month and let us know what you are planning to bring so that we can make sure we've got a balance of savoury/sweet dishes.

A workshop this summer at Essex Church:

# ‘Shaping the Future’

## Prospects for Unitarianism and Liberal Religion

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 12.45-2.30pm



On the first Sunday in July we will be having an afternoon workshop exploring issues raised by the ‘Shaping the Future’ report recently published by the Hibbert Trust (founded in 1847 under the will of Robert Hibbert, a Unitarian, to further public interest and private scholarship in liberal religion). This report was the result of a collaborative inquiry into the future of Unitarianism and Liberal Religion and it offers an overview of the challenges that our denomination is facing and suggestions as to what might be the best course for future development.

You will need to read the report (just 21 pages) or at least the executive summary (4 pages) before coming to the meeting. It is freely downloadable from the Hibbert Trust website or we can print a copy for you if needs be (please contact Jane).

To download a copy of the report please visit:  
[www.thehibberttrust.org.uk/about.htm](http://www.thehibberttrust.org.uk/about.htm)

# ‘Colour and Imagination’

Art Workshop with Heidi Ferid  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 12.45-2.30pm



No previous experience necessary, we will use a few simple exercises to start our own process. Materials will be provided, but bring your own if you want to.

Heidi Ferid

“There’s a common misunderstanding among all the human beings who have ever been born on the earth that the best way to live is to try to avoid pain and just try to get comfortable. You can see this even in insects and animals and birds. All of us are the same.



A much more interesting, kind, adventurous, and joyful approach to life is to begin to develop our curiosity not caring whether the object of our inquisitiveness is bitter or sweet... To lead a life that goes beyond... always wanting to make sure that everything turns out on our own terms, to lead a more passionate, full, and delightful life than that, we must realize that we can endure a lot of pain and pleasure for the sake of finding out who we are and what this world is, how we tick and how our world ticks, how the whole thing just is. If we’re committed to comfort at any cost, as soon as we come up against the least edge of pain, we’re going to run; we’ll never know what’s beyond that particular barrier or wall or fearful thing.”

Pema Chödrön

A four-part course at Essex Church this summer:

# ‘Living Faith’

Begins Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 7.00-9.00pm



This summer we will be offering a new four-part course which will provide an opportunity to reflect on your own faith, how your spiritual and religious outlook is integrated into the rest of your life, and what it means to be part of a Unitarian faith community.

Over four Thursday evenings in July we will consider different dimensions of our faith and how it is expressed in our lives:

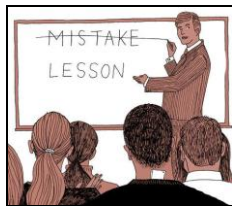
- theology and spirituality
- community and relationship
- action and service
- practice and commitment

We would encourage you to attend all four sessions to get the most out of the course and please sign up in advance by speaking to Jane or emailing [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)



A forthcoming London lecture you may be interested in...

## 'Errors'



Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at 8:00 pm

The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, W1T 1DG

How, and under what conditions is error productive, and is there anything consistent to its productiveness? What kinds of errors and mistakes are constitutive, for instance, of science, political praxis, art, philosophy and psychoanalysis? What are the different theoretical/practical orders of error? By focusing on 'error', are we better able to reflect on practices, their conditions and the movement of thought itself? John Roberts is Professor at the University of Wolverhampton.

This event is free. For more information see: [www.bigj.org.uk](http://www.bigj.org.uk)

## Water Now (for 'Water Aid')



I am with you  
In  
A sudden shower  
A dribble of rain down my window  
A plop of fish submerging in a pond  
Children splashing through puddles  
Swish of traffic in the rain  
Spray of fountains in a park  
Rain splashing on my hair and cheek  
Rinsing clothes beside a river  
Bucket down a rural well  
Swans in serene lake flotilla  
Moorhens in water-thrashing argument  
Children larking by the plunging tide.

At all times and in all places  
Where water wakes refreshing thoughts  
There, where you all are, bestowing  
Water  
I am with you.

John Hands

## Essex Church Reading Group

### 'The Book of Amos'



Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's June session will be based on the Book of Amos. This was suggested by Sarah Tinker and will be the 94<sup>th</sup> title discussed by the reading group.

From the description on Wikipedia:

*"The Book of Amos is a prophetic book of the Hebrew Bible, one of the Twelve Minor Prophets. Amos, an older contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, was active c. 750 BC during the reign of Jeroboam II, making the Book of Amos the first biblical prophetic book written. The Book of Amos is set in a time when the people of Israel have reached a low point in their devotion to YHWH (the God of Israel) - the people have become greedy and have stopped following and adhering to their values. The wealthy elite are becoming rich at the expense of others. Peasant farmers who once practiced subsistence farming are being forced to farm what is best for foreign trade, mostly wine and oil. YHWH speaks to Amos, a farmer and herder, and tells him to go to Samaria, the capital of the Northern kingdom. Through Amos, God tells the people that he is going to judge Israel for its sins, and it will be a foreign nation that will enact his judgment."*

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)

## London District Quarterly Meeting in Lewes



Our London and South-Eastern District (which stretches from St Albans to Dover) usually meets quarterly when members and friends from our 28 or so individual congregations come together in fellowship. By tradition the summer meeting is held outside London. In 2010 it was held in Brighton, in 2011 in Godalming and this year on 16 June at our chapel in Lewes in East Sussex. The Westgate Unitarian Chapel on the High Street is situated in a very historic building, parts of which date back to 1595. There are associations with the radical writer and political theorist Thomas Paine who lived nearby and used the library in the chapel, which served as the library for the town. It is now the minister's vestry.

The afternoon started off with a service led by the Rev Andie Camper, who currently leads the congregation in Lewes. In his address he talked about the history and role of the chapel and its close links with the town over the centuries. The service also featured the chapel's organ which is in effect partly 'played' by a computer (*see the full description in The Inquirer for 3 March 2012, page 5!*). There then followed a fairly brief Extraordinary General Meeting of the District, the purpose of which was to ratify the changes to the LDPA Constitution which had been agreed after much debate at the AGM held on 24 March 2012. These changes to the Constitution were agreed unanimously, with the exception of alterations to the LDPA 'Objects' which were withdrawn following Charity Commission advice, and will now be discussed separately and then considered at the 2013 AGM.

Those present then divided into seven groups and we had a wide-ranging discussion on the role of social action in our various congregations throughout the LDPA. This is currently a District focus, not least because of the interesting developments which are now taking place at our chapel in Bethnal Green in East London, which is situated in the middle of a very ethnically and religiously diverse local population and which has a long tradition of social service going back to the 19th century. Further details will be found in the July-September 2012 issue of *Impulse* (the LDPA's quarterly magazine) which has the theme 'Social Action in the Community'. Copies have recently arrived at Essex Church and will be found in the entrance lobby.

After the discussion we repaired to the chapel's Hibbert Room where the Lewes congregation had prepared an excellent tea to help us recover from all that talking! My only regret about the visit to Lewes was that there wasn't sufficient time to see more of this lovely and historic old town. We must put it on the list for a return visit when we are able.

**Howard Hague**

## Midsummer Walk

Eleven of us defied the weather forecast and enjoyed an evening walk on Hampstead Heath which ended with a great view over the city on the longest day of the year. Photographs from Jane Blackall and Annie Fowler.



## Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the next issue is **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July**. Please send your contributions (articles, poems, news, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member by then. **N.B. Double issue for August-September**  
**Email:** [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

## Good Cause Collection of the Month:



### Collection on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2012

I was first made aware of YES TO LIFE by my friend Imelda who has an organic skincare shop in Marylebone. I kept seeing groups of women in there taking part in what looked like a lecture. When I asked her about this she told me they were women affected by cancer and chemotherapy and that she hosted YES TO LIFE events about non-toxic skincare and make-up that did not harm their skin and was helping them feel feminine again. Experts in make-up, diet and naturopathy take part and give of their time to discuss all areas of concern on a regular basis.

I asked Imelda for a YES TO LIFE collection box and for the last few years I filled it up with loose change on the basis that every little helps. Since leaving my job at the end of February I have had the time to support the charity in other ways by raising awareness and linking them with other like-minded organisations.

YES TO LIFE was started by Robin Daly after he lost his young daughter to cancer. The charity is about empowering people to help themselves, becoming proactive in their return to health, taking positive steps through lifestyle to combat hopelessness and getting them back in the driving seat of their own life.

The focus is on integrating complementary and alternative approaches into their orthodox treatment regime to extend their care, widen their choices and improve their results.

On 26th May several of us volunteered at a seminar held by YES TO LIFE in London where experts in their fields came together to discuss the benefits of integrative treatments for cancer. Amongst the attendees was a top medic from Sloan Kettering cancer hospital in New York. America like Germany and Israel is already taking the lead in integrative options. Sadly the UK has yet to catch up.

If you know of anyone dealing with cancer and who needs some rounded information to help them make the right choices please direct them to [www.yestolife.org.uk](http://www.yestolife.org.uk) where there is a Help Centre number and plenty of informative reading.

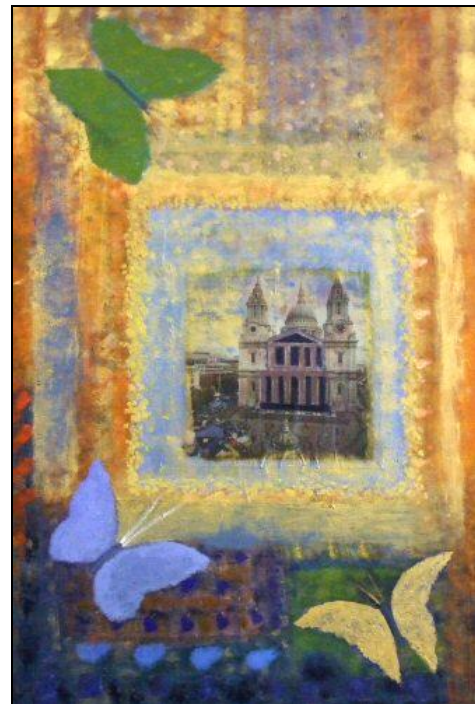
**Annie Fowler**

## May Collection for Brighton Unitarians



We are pleased to report that our special collection for the Brighton Unitarians appeal in May raised approximately £145. If you missed this opportunity to contribute to this good cause you can send donations directly to Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road, Brighton BN1 1UF.

## Art Exhibition/Open Studio Featuring our own Heidi Ferid

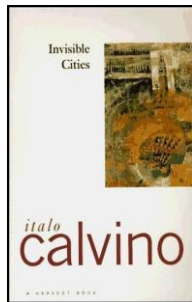


**Preview: Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June, 6-9pm**  
**Exhibition continues 30<sup>th</sup> June**  
**and 1<sup>st</sup> July, 12 noon-6pm**

**Space Studios, 142 Vauxhall Street, SE11 5RH**  
**Nearest stations: Vauxhall and Oval**

Our very own Heidi Ferid will be participating in this exhibition and she will be delighted to see you there. To see more of Heidi's artworks visit her website: [www.heidiferidart.co.uk](http://www.heidiferidart.co.uk)

The Spiritual Bookshelf:  
**'Invisible Cities'**  
by Italo Calvino



Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* is not a book one would immediately expect on a 'spiritual' bookshelf. A slim volume, it is a book about seemingly nothing: a series of descriptions given by Marco Polo to Kublai Khan of the places he has been. His descriptions are beautiful. Andria, for example, is a city so fantastic that every street follows a planet's orbit. Every action in the heavens dictates an action in the city and every action in the city causes a stellar reaction. Life in Andria is regulated by the stars, as a monk's life by the cycle of prayer.

So what makes such a book spiritual? The cities become meditations. For Marco Polo, each is a way for him to describe Venice. Some of us will find our own favourite cities in each description—even London, for in Chloe, the people are all strangers. They imagine things about each other but no one speaks. Or we may see the Underground in Eudoxia, where a crazy patterned carpet gives each inhabitant his own map of the city. Because the cities become meditations which plumb the depths of the mind, and the language, beautifully translated by William Weaver, is so rich, one cannot help but read some paragraphs over and over again. Thus, the imagination is so exercised, one is not reading a description but seeing the cities suspended from the sky or built upside down. Each page turn becomes a ritual begging the question raised in the description of Penthesilea: does an outside exist? Or, the further one moves away from the imagined land, will only another place of limbo spring up, thus entrapping the reader in a web of imagination?

The Marco Polo of the book could well be a Unitarian. Kublai Khan asks him if his entire journey takes place in the past. But Marco Polo realises that he is neither explaining the past nor the future. The past changes according to the route the traveller follows. Each new discovery in life leads one to the realisation of an unknown, unencountered past. The spiritual traveller is never a foreigner because each journey can be one to discover unknown history and recover the future.

A meditation on imagination sounds almost ridiculous, even pretentious but this is not. The book becomes what it describes, an invisible city in the mind, shaping one's reflexive thoughts as much as Walter Benjamin would see the weight of this city pressing down on Londoners' daily lives. Like London, and like Zora, it is a book of cities that cannot be blotted out. Some of the places our minds travel to with Marco Polo are maintained via imaginary wormholes where experiences which perfectly reflect the layout of the streets can reside, readily reached in a moment's idleness.

However enchanted one becomes by these places, one should not allow a total reconstruction of one's own inner cities. Like the city of Thekla, they have taken a long time to build, and are never really finished, so that the destruction can never begin.

**Tristan Jovanović**

## The Forgiveness Project

9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September here at Essex Church



Look out for a special new leaflet detailing the week in September when we will be hosting the Forgiveness Project or 'The F-Word' exhibition as it is now known. It will run from 9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September and as well as opening the exhibition to the public there will be lots of other activities (see warden's report on page 13 for details).

It would be lovely to have as many congregation members involved as possible, not least because we want to have the church open all week. Do put these dates in your diary. We would be glad of any help you can offer in spreading the word about this event, perhaps distributing leaflets in the local area, so please do let us know if you're willing and able.

**Jenny and Sarah**

## 'The Line Dividing Good and Evil'

Forgiveness Project Annual Lecture  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July at 6.45pm  
Royal Geographical Society, SW7 2AR



The Forgiveness Project annual lecture this year is on 3rd July at 6.45pm at the Royal Geographical Society. The title of the lecture is 'The Line Dividing Good and Evil' and it will be given by Dr Gwen Adshead, Forensic Psychotherapist, of Broadmoor Hospital. Joining a panel discussion after the lecture and sharing their stories will be Marian Partington, Erwin James and Kemal Pervanic.

Tickets, priced at £10 each (plus booking fee) can be purchased online (see [www.theforgivenessproject.com](http://www.theforgivenessproject.com)) or send a cheque made payable to 'The Forgiveness Project, together with a SAE, including telephone number to: 42a Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 0RE.



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

**Second Sunday of the Month from  
2-3pm: 8<sup>th</sup> July, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 9<sup>th</sup> September**

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 £8 (£5 to members of church congregation).

## The Exterior Gargoyles on St. Mary's Church Bibury, Gloucestershire



"Mere effigies" you may say: "a sculptor's fantasies".  
Neck-stretched over the churchyard lawn – but  
With what labour once craftily chiselled and  
Sweatingly installed! Grotesque familiars the artists –  
Forever unknown to us – knew them as neighbours  
Peasants, paupers, vagrants, in villages and boroughs  
Bibury and Burton, Norton and Oxford, their painful dementia, their  
Taunting grimaces, leaning over graves of family and friends.

For centuries stretched out mocking us, imploring us  
"We had features once before the wind  
Gnawed and spat us, frost fractured, sun cracked and  
Scattered us. Peer through our skeletal cavities as if  
To remote constellations, and with your penetrant voices  
Shriek at what you see!"

"I glimpse a cosmic Blackhole!" – "I peer into boundless space!"  
"We cogitate speculative worlds beyond your conception"  
Wrong! Wrong!  
You truly see us simply for what we are;  
Frost-fractured, wind-blasted, sun-stricken wastrels waiting  
The imponderable hour when we – like you –  
Will fall and be scattered: unknown  
Dark derelicts of corruption and stone.

**John Hands**

## Small Group Communion



**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July at 12.30pm  
Downstairs in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. These services are led by different members of the congregation and we have been very encouraged by the experience so far. We hope that a team of volunteers will continue to take turns in leading the communion services so that we can experience different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

**8<sup>th</sup> July** – Led by John Hands

**12<sup>th</sup> August** – Led by Sue Smith

**9<sup>th</sup> September** – Led by Jane Blackall

**14<sup>th</sup> October** – Led by David Francis Darling

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

"Universalism is an exacting gospel. Taken seriously, no theology is more challenging – morally, spiritually, or intellectually: to love your enemy as yourself; to see your tears in another's eyes; to respect and even embrace otherness, rather than merely to tolerate or, even worse, dismiss it.

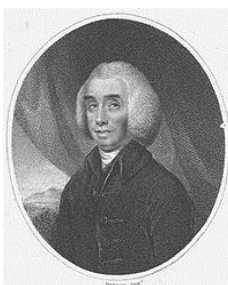
None of this comes naturally to us. We are weaned on the rational presumption that if two people disagree, only one can be right. This works better in mathematics than it does in theology; Universalism reminds us of that. Yet even to approximate the Universalist ideal remains devilishly difficult in actual practice."

**Rev. Forrest Church**



# Foundations of Our Liberal Faith

## Some responses to our recent evening course



I looked forward to these workshops but it wasn't long before I got the impression that the history of our denomination was considered to be pretty uninspiring stuff. Shame I thought, but there we are. The group for the first session was a mixed bunch from various congregations including Richmond, Hampstead and Watford; the home, I believe, of a formidable Unitarian historian. Before Sarah had a chance to outline the format of the three sessions out came the crotchet hook and wool in one part of the circle and then in another we had the latest technology to which the group would offer up their morsels of information for sacrifice on the altar of the i-pad and then we'd have extra, internet-gained information to enhance the commentary.

We scooted through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries during the three sessions. Sarah highlighted the movers and shakers in the dissenting fraternity, the reforming legislation, all against the backdrop of the education, science and social reform of the day. The group members introduced more food for thought as each century unfolded and so did the struggles, tenacity, courage and commitment of the ministers and congregations who took the Free Christian Church forward. The early Unitarian church began to emerge.

I was heartened to know that the Bible had been a significant catalyst for change in the 16th century and surprised to find out that it was primarily a reluctance to accept Church of England episcopal leadership and governance as well as the Trinitarian doctrine that moved the dissenting movement forward. It moved on but in a very complicated, and at times, confusing way.

At the end of the third session I think we ended on a note of dissension as well. It was suggested that Rowan Williams, head of the worldwide Anglican Church was perhaps a closet metaphorical Trinitarian – did I really hear that right or had my hearing aids gone on the blink!!! Someone else suggested that the present day problem for the Unitarians is leadership at the top!!! No change then, after at least 3 centuries and 3 Essex Church workshop sessions we are still talking about governance and trinity.

Having previously read, before these sessions, something about the history of our church this was a lively introduction to church history and we concluded with quiet reflection about the sacrifice and courage of those people who "led the way".

**Sue Smith**

I have long been aware that if Unitarianism were more like it was say about fifty or so years ago, I probably wouldn't have wanted to join it. Then the tide of Rationalism was still in full flow, and would not have been on this account very attractive to me with my supernatural leanings! Of course I know there are still those amongst us who lament that more-or-less full Rationalism isn't still triumphant. But those I know are amiable people and I have also long learned not to let people's fundamental beliefs get too much in the way of how I feel about them as human beings in this world. I am hopeful Unitarianism will go on evolving from its dissenting origins more and more into a truly liberal and accepting faith.

**John Hands**

The course gave some fascinating insights into little-known aspects of English history and made me realise how important it is that we are aware of the fact that liberal religion goes back quite a long time and has had an important influence on the political development in England.

**Heidi Ferid**

I found it interesting to trace the arc of Unitarianism from its Bible-based beginnings through to its elevation of reason and conscience over Scripture, and to see how this religious liberalism was hard won against the social and political turmoil of the times. And then to think how it has evolved into the religious pluralism and humanism we see today. Everybody on the course had their own unique perspective to contribute, and so the historical picture took on the aspect of a mosaic.

**Niall Doherty**

The course in Unitarian history was a delight, making so many connections between the English history I knew already and the Unitarian history which was unfamiliar to me. The tumultuous 17th century interested me the most because there we saw how our forefathers grounded their beliefs in reason and their reading of the Bible. They had to be strong to stand up for their beliefs and showed a great deal of courage. I admired their clarity of vision and found it fascinating that a religion that was fashioned over 400 years ago still feels so relevant today. I now have a better understanding of the term Dissenter and respect for my religion.

**Leighton Cole, Rosslyn Hill Chapel**

*Readers might like to look out for events at Rosslyn Hill this year as the chapel marks its 150th anniversary.*

## World Pride

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July from noon onwards



Organised by InterPride, WorldPride promotes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues on an international level through parades, festivals and other cultural activities... and it is coming to London this July!

Shiobhan Joseph (of New Unity Unitarians) has taken the lead in organising a Unitarian group to take part in the parade! The Parade begins at 1pm at assemblies in Baker Street. The route is approximately 2 miles long. If you would like to join in or show your support but are unable to walk in the parade, please get in touch with Shiobhan anyway (shiobhanr@hotmail.com) as there will also be a Unitarian Stall in Trafalgar Square which needs volunteers! This is a great opportunity to show our support for full equality and also get ourselves a bit better known. See Shiobhan's Facebook page: <http://on.fb.me/UniWP12>

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'Peace'



Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012  
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church

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

Come gather in healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come and help us to create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long – with music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved eternal self, family, children and friends. All are welcome.

These events are free.  
Donations for expenses are welcome.  
Any surplus will go to Childline

### For further information contact service hosts:

Rev. Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980  
Rev. Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

*'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'*

## 'English Women' Recital

with Trevor Alexander and Peter Crockford

After the Service at Essex Church on  
Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 12.15-12.50pm



We are doing a recital entitled 'English Women' at the CMP Festival in Brighton the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> July and will be previewing it at Essex Church after the service on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The main constituent of this recital is Arthur Somervell's setting of (part of) Tennyson's Epic Poem - Maud (this includes the famous one - 'Come into the Garden, Maud').

A narrative poem, 'Maud' is divided into three parts. It tells the tale of an unnamed protagonist, as he grapples with grief over the recent death of his father and his love for a beautiful young woman named Maud.

The first stage in his passion over Maud is when he tries to ignore her and retain his old exclusion and loneliness from society. He tries to abstain, seeing her as merely "splendidly null, dead perfection, no more".

Despite this, he is eventually touched by her beauty and singing, igniting a spark that "kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams, ready to burst in a colour'd flame", and what follows is love poetry, most famously in the section "Come into the garden, Maud".

This is dramatically halted after he accidentally murders Maud's brother. He flees, going through a stage of neurotic musing and rambling, where his heart eventually erodes to "a handful of dust." Early on, there is still some memory of Maud, firstly in a white shell he sees, which symbolizes beauty and endurance, but also death and waste (Kincaid), and also her ballad on a "pure and sweet" morning with "a dewy splendour".

Yet ultimately her presence fades out, dead, a silent figure "standing here at my head". Love is desolate and nihilistic, and it is War that finally closes the poem as the narrator finds redemption.

It is a beautiful cycle, full of lovely melodies.

**Peter Crockford**

## It All Started With a Ladybird...

It was one of those days I woke up not feeling particularly confident and a little homesick too. There was a fierce wind blowing, which made me want to crawl back into bed rather than braving the weather, and the world, outside. After breakfast I managed to drag myself out of the house anyway and took the Overground to Euston station, hoping my mood would improve once I had got going.



As I sat down on a seat opening my book I noticed that a ladybird had landed on my coat pocket. I extended a tentative finger and sure enough it started running along it, stretching its red little wings in the process. I was not sure how it felt about being released at Kilburn High Road, but chances were it would prefer the great outdoors to the confines of a stuffy train carriage.

As I stood at the door, waiting impatiently for it to open, my little passenger escaped onto a handrail. I struggled to get it back onto my finger in time, but when the door finally opened I blew on it lightly and it spread its wings and flew away. The door closed again and I smiled to myself. Maybe this was going to be a better day than expected.

From Euston I made my way to the London Welsh Centre where I wanted to inquire about Welsh evening classes. When I got there, I got given a warm welcome by one of the staff members and lots of useful information on upcoming courses and events. As it was lunchtime, I asked whether the sandwiches lined up on the bar were for sale and to my surprise got handed one free of charge, with compliments. How nice. I joined a group at a table and got chatting with them about the Welsh day course they were here for. Everyone was really friendly, I felt right at home.

A little later, I grabbed a coffee and headed to the Calthorpe Project Community Garden, which I had discovered on the way to the Welsh place. The weather was still blustery, but sunny enough to relax on a bench in a quiet corner of the garden. It was a hidden oasis amidst all the tall buildings and noisy cars rushing past. I ended up spending the best part of the next two hours leafing through a magazine, watching a bumble bee whizzing from flower to flower and a cat stalking through the tall grass.

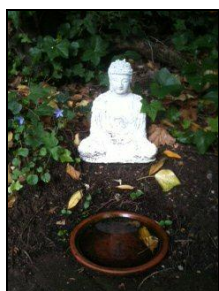
Having shared the rest of my lunch with a pair of curious pigeons, I gathered a few empty bottles that had been left behind. I was about to leave when two women came my way. I smiled at them and we started talking about the future of the project. It turned out they worked here and invited me in for a cuppa and a tour, which I gladly accepted.



When I returned to the London Welsh Centre for a half hour singalong of Welsh favourites (in Cymraeg, of course) about 40 people had already gathered in the Main Hall. Accompanied by a volunteer pianist we tried our best to get the melodies as well as the words right. This was no small feat, but a satisfying challenge. Humming the melody of Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau (Old Land of My Fathers), the Welsh National Anthem, to myself on the walk back to the Overground I felt completely refreshed and invigorated. Just like that, my gloomy thoughts from this morning had disappeared.

Having made it back home before the rain really started, I was glad I had given this windy day a chance. I could not have wished for a better afternoon. As I am typing this, I am already looking forward to a taster Welsh class next week and a gardening lesson a few doors down in the near future. Sometimes the smallest blessings do turn out to be the most unexpected sources of happiness. And it all started with a little ladybird...

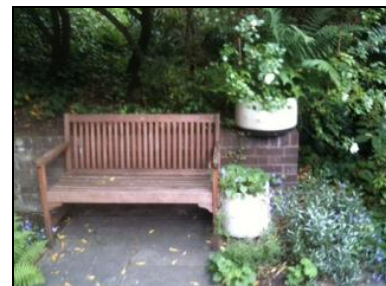
**Gisela Boehnisch**



## Gardening by Design

Our church gardener, Mark Ellis, has been doing a great job of keeping everything looking lovely in the church garden lately.

Mark is available for work involving designing, planting and maintenance and you can contact him via mobile (07805 382 330) or email ([markellis1960@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:markellis1960@hotmail.co.uk)).

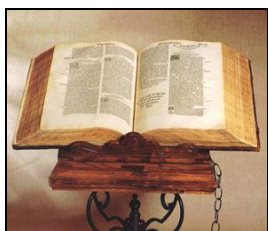


"Why do we worship? The answer is simple: We worship because, despite evidence to the contrary, we still have faith in the inherent goodness of humanity. We worship because our doubts are many but our hopes and ideals are even greater than our doubts. We worship because we know we don't know all there is to know. We worship because sometimes we are too happy, too sad, too excited, too afraid, too hopeful, to be alone, and we need to be in religious community. We worship because we love and need one another as much as we love and need our solitude. We worship because we are all born and live and we all have to die – and we want our brief existences to have meaning and purpose. We worship because worshipping together – shaping as a community the meaning and worth of our lives – is what human beings do. We worship because it just may be that worship is the most human activity of all."

**Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger**

*New study class in London District for 2012:*

## 'Fresh Approaches to the Bible'



**Mondays 16<sup>th</sup> July, 27<sup>th</sup> August,  
and 24<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm**

**Golders Green Unitarians,  
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London, NW11 8BS**

A monthly Bible-reading group started up in the London District in February. Organised by the London District Liberal Christian group, and led by its co-convenor Jim Corrigan, meetings are held at Golders Green Unitarians.

The plan is to start with Luke's Gospel, reading it chapter by chapter, with space for reflective discussion. No specific Biblical knowledge is required, just a willingness to engage with the texts. All are welcome. Jane and David from Kensington have been to most of the sessions so far and if you are thinking about giving it a try and want to find out more you could ask them about it.

The nearest underground station is Golders Green (Northern Line, Edgware branch), the church is 6 minutes walk away. Walk from the station northwards up Finchley Road, take the first turning to your left into Hoop Lane, and you will find the church about 60 metres along on the right.

If you require further information,  
please contact Jim Corrigan on 020 8361 1843  
or via email at: [jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk](mailto:jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk)

# July Multifaith Calendar

## ☪ 5<sup>th</sup> July – The Night of Forgiveness (Laylat al Bara'at) – Muslim

The Night of Forgiveness (Laylat al Bara'at) takes place two weeks before Ramadan. Muslims spend the night in prayer seeking God's guidance and forgiveness for their sins. Many Muslims believe that a person's destiny is fixed for the coming year by God, on this night. In some parts of the world Muslims visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional.

## ✠ 9<sup>th</sup> July – Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb - Bahá'í

This day remembers the death of the Báb, executed by firing squad at noon in Tabriz, Persia, on 9 July, 1850. Bahá'ís commemorate the day by gathering to read special prayers at noon. It is also a holy day of rest, when Bahá'ís should not work.

## ☪ 20<sup>th</sup> July - 18<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.

## ✠ 23<sup>rd</sup> July – Chokhor (Chokor Duchon) – 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.

## ✠ 29<sup>th</sup> July – 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.





## Warden's Column

At this stage of summer, I usually feel autumn will come all too soon and before I'm ready for it, but this year we've got a special project planned that is actually making me quite excited about getting to September.

Sarah and I have talked for years about possibly holding an exhibition at the church and this year the time finally seemed right. It's an exhibition we've both seen before elsewhere and been very impressed by: a collection of stories about people who'd struggled to find forgiveness in traumatic circumstances. There are people from South Africa, the US, Israel, Palestine, Northern Ireland, England . . . and the stories involve crime, terrorism, political persecution and bereavement. Each story is accompanied by a beautiful image of the teller.

As well as hosting the exhibition for a week (9-16 September) we've also organised a programme of events on the forgiveness theme. Some of these have been offered by our users: the Sufi meditation group, who meet in the library every Monday night will be giving a concert upstairs instead – with dance, poetry and traditional music; Beit Klal, our resident synagogue will be offering a storytelling performance and workshop after the service on 16 September (before their Rosh Hashanah celebrations get started that evening); the Interfaith Seminary and Nia will be theming their regular sessions.

There are some wonderful people coming in from outside too: Shanah Rivers, who used to teach a Wu Tao dance here will be leading a day workshop using movement and music to release and explore emotion – see [www.heartdance.co.uk](http://www.heartdance.co.uk) for more information. We also have a speaker from the Forgiveness Project - Marian Partington, a Quaker whose sister was murdered by Frederick and Rosemary West. She will be leading an afternoon workshop after the service on Sunday 9th September. Marian has just published her second book "If you keep very still". Places for her workshop are limited, so please book to avoid disappointment.

Last but not least, Veronica Needa and Heidi Ferid from our congregation are collaborating on a Playback Theatre performance and workshop that will draw inspiration from some of Heidi's artwork. The workshop will be from 2-5pm on Thursday 13th September, contact [vneeda@gmail.com](mailto:vneeda@gmail.com) to book (no experience necessary) and the performance from 7-9pm. Playback Theatre is co-created with audience members by the actors inviting their true stories and re-enacting them with artistry & respect as spontaneous improvisation.

We're producing a leaflet to advertise the exhibition and all these events – so hopefully by the time you read this, those will be available in the lobby. Do have a look – and maybe get inspired to come to something - also if you're going anywhere that displays leaflets about exhibitions, workshops etc. please take some along. Although Essex Church is a very busy building, it's not usually open to the general public – so we see this exhibition as a real opportunity to make new people aware of us and what goes on here. Thanks for your support.

**Jenny Moy**

## Conscious Living Concert Success

Essex Church regularly hosts courses run by the London Meditation Centre and so when we heard that they were holding a charity fundraising concert in support of Save the Children we were glad to offer them a rent free evening and then to hear how well it had gone.

*"Over 70 people enjoyed a group meditation, live music and delicious snacks and tea afterwards. We raised over £700 for Save the Children including the rental fee for the Church - we are thrilled to be supporting such a worthwhile cause. Thank you for your support."*

*Jillian and Michael*

[www.LondonMeditationCentre.com](http://www.LondonMeditationCentre.com)

## Wall-Hangings



It is about five years since the church creativity group first made the seasonal wall-hangings which are displayed at the front of the church.

Over the years a few of them have got damaged or overstretched and worn so have had to be 'retired'. We are now starting to think about creating some more to refresh the display.

If you would like to contribute something to the wall-hanging then please bear these instructions in mind: each piece should be 150cm long but can vary in width up to about 30cm. Ideally the panel should represent a season or particular time of year (this may be expressed in a rather abstract way through your colour choices – it need not be pictorial). The pieces are hung from a pole so you should leave a loop or channel at the top for the pole to pass through. Whatever you can do to make the panel robust to handling would be a good idea. If you have any questions about this project please do speak to Jane.

**Jane Blackall**

# 'Jubilee'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012

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

We've just completed a small group here at Essex Church, focusing on the origins of our liberal religious faith. One of the surprises, for some of us on that course, was just how very biblically based was the faith of those early Free Christians. They believed the Bible to be the Word of God and they struggled to free themselves from church doctrine and return to the written word, the text. But it wasn't really until the 19th century that Biblical scholarship began in earnest and a more liberal, interpretative approach emerged, linked with other areas of study such as archaeology, history, literary studies and comparative studies of near eastern civilisations. In theology there is an issue known as Biblical Authority – which asks 'what is the Bible to you?' Here within our congregation of Kensington Unitarians we perhaps contain a more varied range of answers to that question than you might expect. But whatever our own views we probably share a concern for the way in which, both here in Britain and abroad – in our own time, not hundred of years ago – words of the Bible are being used to justify oppression of certain groups. Some people believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that every word of it is therefore true and then find Biblical passages that justify their particular moral stance.

An email that did the rounds on the Internet some years ago still seems relevant today. It's a reply to a right wing radio chat show host, Dr Laura Schlessinger, whose show was at one time the second most listened to radio show in the United States. She's known for her negative views on homosexuality and on modern pagan religious beliefs. She used the Old Testament book of Leviticus in particular to back up her views, advocating a "Biblical morality". Now Leviticus is primarily a book of rules for the Hebrew tribes people – some of these rules are highly relevant for life today – some perhaps less so. The guidance it contains has probably been in existence in oral form for centuries but was perhaps collected together by a priestly source between 600 and 400BCE. So the Book of Leviticus is at least two and a half thousand years old. Here are just a few extracts from the spoof email – a letter to Dr Laura:

*Dear Dr. Laura:*

*Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and I try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When people try to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate.*

*I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the specific laws and how to follow them:*

*a) When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odour for the Lord (Lev.1:9). The problem is my neighbours. They claim the odour is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?*



*b) I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?*

*c) Lev.25:44 states that I may indeed possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighbouring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?*

*d) I have a neighbour who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself?*

*e) A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev.11:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this?*

*f) Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die?*

*g) My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev.19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread - cotton/polyester blend. He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them (Lev.24:10-16)? Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev.20:14)*

*I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.*

The email letter made its point – it is hard to cite Biblical authority for some passages of the Bible and then conveniently ignore others. But for me that doesn't mean we should therefore disregard *all* that is contained in this collection of books that together make the Old and New Testaments. And it is the Book of Leviticus that contains the idea of the Sabbath and of a jubilee year.

All of which is a long winded way to make the link with the recent celebrations of our queen's diamond jubilee – marking Elizabeth's 60 years on the throne and linking in with the celebration of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in June 1897. The two longest serving monarchs in British history. Descriptions of Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations include mention of her visit to Kensington, when 30,000 children from local Sunday Schools lined the railings of Kensington Gardens to wave at the Royal parade as it made its way to the Albert Memorial. And what is the connection between royal celebrations and an ancient Biblical text?

## 'Jubilee' by Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

We heard a few extracts earlier on from chapter 25 of Leviticus. In that chapter the Hebrew tribespeople, newly settled in the land that Yahweh has promised them, are given important guidelines for the ways they must live. A Sabbath day of rest must be observed each week. The land must be given a Sabbath year of rest every seventh year. And when seven times seven years have been completed, the 50th year must be declared a Jubilee, a time of radical re-alignment – primarily to do with land ownership. Yahweh says to the people, “the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Lev.25.v.23). The jubilee was to be announced by the blowing of the ram's horn – blown to this day by Jewish communities to mark Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. We have a Jewish community, Beit Klal Yisrael, that has been meeting in our church building since 1990, and the sound of that horn is indeed a wake up call. The horn is known as the 'jobel' and it is here that we have the root of the word jubilee. But early on in Christian history the Hebrew word 'jobel' was confused with the Latin word 'jubilo' meaning 'I rejoice', and the radical challenge of the Hebrew concept became less clear.

I'll quote now from an excellent blog written about the recent jubilee celebrations by Nick Spencer, Research Director for the Theos Think Tank, a group committed to a sensible exploration of the place of religion in society and culture.

*“The 'jobel' was an idea of such transformative power that Jesus used it, via the prophet Isaiah, to announcing his ministry in Luke 4: “he has anointed me...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”*

*It was an idea as brilliant in its simplicity as it was far-reaching in its repercussions. Having distributed the land equally among families, clans and tribes, the people were called, once every fifty years, to stop. Debts were cancelled, people returned to their ancestral lands, the land itself given the chance to rest. In a single stroke, the poor were to be lifted up, the lost reintegrated, creation given a moment to breathe, and the birthright of future generations secured.*

*The genius of the idea was not in its utopianism but its realism. Early Israel did not pretend the people were naturally selfless or communistic. On the contrary, it presupposed a market economy but tempered its tendency towards inequality and exclusion by basing it on ineradicable 'stakeholder' foundations. Every family knew that no matter how hard the times they fell on, their basic stake in society could not be lost for good. Conversely, the successful knew that no matter how well they did for themselves, they would never simply be able to rest on inherited wealth.”*

Many Biblical scholars would probably question whether the nation of Israel ever managed to mark a jubilee in this radical way. But these passages from Leviticus offer humanity an ideal, an aspiration, an encouragement to strive

towards greater equality in a world society that is so very unjust. You may recall the Jubilee Debt Campaign that began just before the millennium in 1999. Its three key aims are to:

- **Cancel the unjust debts of the most indebted nations**
- **Promote just and progressive taxation rather than excessive borrowing**
- **Stop harmful lending which forces countries into debt**

These aims were badly needed back in 1999. And much progress was made in the cancelling of Third World Debt as it was then known. But when we consider the world now in 2012 there clearly is much, much restorative work still to do. We need a jubilee, though perhaps less of the flag waving kind than the strident, call-to-justice kind.

In a work that I've been reading recently, *Proclaim Jubilee! ~ A Spirituality for the 21st Century*, theologian Maria Harris explores what guidance a jubilee might hold for us, individually and collectively. It's an inspiring book on many levels, not least because she uses the ancient rules from the Book of Leviticus and makes them relevant for us today. She advocates making times for rest and reflection, she encourages us to re-engage with that which is Holy, she reminds us of the importance of forgiveness and the righting of wrongs. She makes a valuable link between celebration and gratitude. Harris does not shy away from the difficult parts of the ancient concept of Jubilee, one section of which calls for the giving of liberty to all Hebrew slaves but keeping captive any slaves from neighbouring nations. Her view of Biblical authority is similar to mine. We know that this collection of books, our Bible, is a historical text. Some may consider its writers to have been divinely inspired. But I have to feel free to pick and choose the elements of the Bible that I'll use as a moral compass and the elements I cannot accept as relevant for life today. And what makes this 'pick and choose' approach different from Dr Laura's selectivity in choosing texts to inform her 'Biblical morality'? For me it comes down to love. If someone is using the Bible to support views that are based on hatred or fear or that may increase hatred or fear in others then I think that is a misuse of the text. If someone is using the Bible to support views that are based on love and acceptance and justice – well that's got to be worth waving a flag for.

I wonder what you think?

### **Words we said in unison:**

May there be a time of jubilee, for all peoples of the world;  
for all those who are wrongfully imprisoned  
or economically burdened,  
for anyone who is not allowed to be who they truly are,  
or who is judged unfairly.

Let us join in building a world for all people,  
a world where justice shall roll down like waters and peace  
like an ever-flowing stream. And so may it be. **Amen.**

# Sunday Services at Essex Church

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 11am – “Unitarian  
Approaches to Biblical Studies”**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The Bible can be approached from many different academic stances. Today we'll consider the historical and literary elements of Biblical Studies and ask ourselves how we view this sacred text. Favourite stories, key passages, powerful characters – bring them along to today's service as there'll be a chance to share your thoughts.

**8<sup>th</sup> July, 11am –  
“Would Plato have used Wikipedia,  
and might Unitarians benefit from both?”**  
Service led by Caroline Blair

In this service, led by Caroline Blair, we are promised “a strictly non-academic look at how we approach a debate.”

12.30pm - **Small-Group Communion**,  
led by John Hands (lasting ~20 minutes)

**15<sup>th</sup> July, 11am – “Enough”**  
Service led by Sarah Tinker & Howard Hague

Based on the book by John Naish, with a sub-title of 'breaking free from the world of excess', this service will reflect on Naish's powerful message that we sometimes have too much – too much 'stuff', too much information, too much food – to mention just a few of the modern issues he confronts. And when might 'less' be 'more'?

**22<sup>nd</sup> July, 11am – “Playing the Game:  
The Spirituality of Sport”**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As London prepares itself to host the Olympic Games, we shall explore the religious meaning of the ancient Olympic sports and the role sport plays in contemporary society.



**29<sup>th</sup> July, 11am –  
“Images of Transformation”**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker & Heidi Ferid

Heidi's background in art and personal growth work will helpfully guide us through the rich imagery of transformation and the ways in which change can manifest in our lives.

# ‘Finding Our Voice’

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

**Sundays 15<sup>th</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> August  
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 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.



# Room Required

*Message from Jo Ridgers on behalf of a friend*

Mature, professional man, urgently requires a room in a quiet house in west (or north-west) London.

Honest, reliable and respectable, non-smoker, can provide excellent personal and employment references, also CRB-checked. Please contact Allan: 07941 708 917