



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: November 2012

What's On...

Sunday 4th November, 11am-noon
'Paradise Defined'
Service led by Caroline Blair

Sunday 11th November, 11am-noon
'Remembrance Sunday'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 11th November, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by John Hands

Sunday 11th November, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Monday 12th November, 7.00-9.00pm
'Rediscovering the Bible'
Bible-reading with David and Jane

Sunday 18th November, 11am-noon
'An Inner Guide'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18th November, 12.15pm
Short Meeting about EC Election

Sunday 18th November, 12.30-1.45pm
'Finding Our Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 25th November, 11am-noon
'Giving and Receiving'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 26th November, 7.00-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 27th November, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:
'Nothing to Envy' by Barbara Demick

Dates for Your Diary:

Thursday 6th December, 7-9.00pm
'Step into Christmas' Course (1/3)

Sunday 16th December, 11am
Carol Service & Christmas Lunch

Saturday 22nd December, 10.30am
Winter Solstice Walk

Monday 24th December, 5pm
Candlelit Christmas Eve Service

A Message from our Minister:

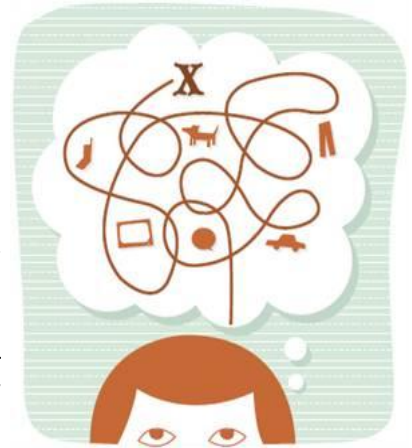
Permission to Daydream

What's your reaction to guided visualisation or meditations? You know the kind of thing, where someone talks you into a relaxed state and then makes suggestions of things for you to imagine – a garden perhaps or a journey, a particular landscape or looking down on your life from a distant vantage point. They're not everybody's cup of tea. It's sometimes hard to keep up with the pace of someone's suggestions or difficult to imagine anything at all. And sometimes some rebellious inner streak just refuses to do what you're told to do. Which is why I found it so refreshing on a training course last month when the trainer introduced the guided meditation she was about to lead us on by saying "and of course you have permission, indeed complete freedom, to daydream or write your shopping list or think about the opposite of what I am about to suggest". In some ways she was stating the obvious. Of course we have such freedom, because no-one can see inside our minds. In our minds we are always free, or as free as we can allow ourselves to be, given our circumstances. But still it made us laugh to be given this permission and the phrase 'permission to daydream' has kept popping into my head since the training course.

There are all sorts of areas of life where daydreaming is not advisable: driving, using power tools, crossing roads, to mention but a few. But I hope you find some time during your day for a bit of reverie – the blank staring out of a window perhaps, maybe musing from a bus or tube seat, or that delightful realisation that though you still have a book in your hand, you haven't read a word for several minutes. For it's in these moments that our inner creativity may have time to expand and explore, when new ideas may emerge or new feelings or ways of thinking can assert themselves.

I suspect that the best sort of daydreaming does not come to order – it's more anarchic than that. But perhaps sometime in the dark months of winter that stretch ahead you might have some deeply creative thoughts about our church community and about how best to reach out to the world around us or about the best use of our building and the links we might forge with other spiritually minded communities. Indeed such daydreaming may be the ideal way to spend our Sunday mornings in church. If I spot you staring vacantly at the walls I'll know what's happening – you've just given yourself permission to daydream.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



In this month's newsletter...

'An Unexpected Pilgrimage' by Jeannene Powell * Worship Studies Course for 2013
* 'Rediscovering the Bible' group * 'How I Came to Essex Church' by Annie Fowler *
'Those We Have Loved: Vilmar Beltram' by John Hands * GA Executive Elections
* 'Step into Christmas' course * 'A Restless Curiosity' sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker *
'SimpleGifts' Social Action Lab in Bethnal Green * Booking for FUSE * and more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians are a community of kindred souls who meet each week at Essex Church in Notting Hill Gate to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey. We are proud to be part of a worldwide and historic liberal religious tradition.

Our main activity is Sunday worship and we hold a service each week at 11am. All are welcome. Services are usually themed and include readings from a variety of sources, prayers, music, singing, stillness, and a short sermon. Our children's leaders provide an alternative programme of activities for younger people.

Small-group activities are another key part of our programme. We offer courses and one-off workshops exploring spiritual and religious matters and considering life's meaning together with others on the spiritual journey.



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
112 Palace Gardens Terrace
Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Christmas at Essex Church



Carol Service and Congregational Lunch Sunday 16th December, 11am

We will be having our Christmas Carol service and festive lunch on 16th December. This is always a most enjoyable occasion so why not invite a friend to come along? All are welcome.

Candlelit Christmas Eve Service Monday 24th December, 5pm

As is our tradition here at Essex Church we will have a special candlelit service at 5pm on Christmas Eve. A small group are also planning to go for dinner at a local restaurant after the service. Please speak to Jane if you would like to come along.

Small Group Communion



Sunday 11th November 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. We hope that a team of volunteers will continue to take turns in leading the services so we can experience different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

11th November – Led by John Hands

9th December – Led by Tristan Jovanović

13th January – Led by Jane Blackall

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

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

4 th November	Tristan Jovanović
11 th November:	Alice Lambert
18 th November:	Annie Fowler
25 th November:	Natasha Drennan

Coffee:

4 th November	Juliet Edwards
11 th November:	David Talbot
18 th November:	?
25 th November:	Carol Sheppard

Greeting:

4 th November	Carol Sheppard
11 th November:	Jo Ridgers
18 th November:	Gina Bayley
25 th November:	Jim Blair

We circulate the rota list each month by email.
Please contact Jane with your email address
if you are willing to be on the rota mailing list.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

A short course at Essex Church for Advent...

'Step into Christmas'



A three-part course to help us move towards Christmas in community with others...

Thursday 6th December, 7-9.00pm:

'Build your Own Christmas': for the majority of us who do not fit the advertisers' ideal images Christmas may not be a 'jolly holly' filled time. In this session we will consider how to create a Christmas that works for us, the pitfalls we had best avoid, and other good ways to take care of ourselves at this time of year.

Thursday 13th December, 7-9.00pm:

'Telling the Old Stories': biblical narratives, other legends, and the stories of our own lives – come and join us for an evening of fellowship and storytelling, with mince pies and candles.

Thursday 20th December, 7-9.00pm:

'Entering the Myth': in the final session we will play with elements of the Nativity Story and explore ways in which the characters and symbols might have a special meaning or message for us this Christmas.

'At one point, the sages of the Talmud say something remarkable. They say: *"One hour in this world is better than all eternity in the World to Come."* What do they mean?

I take that passage to mean that when we have truly learned how to live, we will not need to look for rewards in some other life. We will not ask what the point of righteous living is. Living humanly will be its own reward. The person who has discovered the pleasures of truly human living, the person whose life is rich in friendships and caring people, the person who enjoys daily the pleasures of good food and sunshine, will not need to wear herself out in pursuit of some other kind of success. No praise or promotion from strangers, no fancy car or lofty title could ever match the happiness she already knows.'

Rabbi Harold Kushner

Worship Studies Course

Foundation Step at Essex Church in 2013



We are planning to run the Unitarian Worship Studies Course (Foundation Step) in the district during 2013. The course will take place here at Essex Church over four full Saturdays:

16th March / 13th July / 21st September / 30th November

The course is for anybody who would like to be involved in leading worship in their own congregation or in churches around the district. It would also be useful for people who already lead worship and who would like to develop their skills and share hints and tips with peers. The course covers reflection on the meaning and purpose of worship; issues around speech, presentation and communication; the process of crafting a high-quality service; and other practical matters that worship leaders need to consider.

This is a nationally recognised course which will be run in cooperation with the GA's Local Leadership Training Action Group and utilising a variety of tutors. There will be a registration fee of £15, and a fee of £10 per session, and to receive the WSC foundation step certificate involves successfully completing an assessment process and attending at least three of the training days. It will also be possible for people not wanting to work towards the certificate to attend these training days.

We would like to hear from you by the end of November 2012 if you think you would be interested in taking part in this course so that we can decide whether we have a viable group of participants. Please contact jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to register your interest or with any queries you may have.

Rev. Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall

Winter Solstice Walk

Saturday 22nd December, 10.30am



Continuing our series of quarterly walks, have a think about joining us on 22nd December, for a gentle winter walk to celebrate the solstice and to get some fresh air at this dark time of year. We're planning to meet at Warwick Road tube at 10.30am and will then walk towards the east to Regents Park, along the Regent's Canal towpath. There we might have a welcome cup of tea and even an accompanying Honest Sausage, which proved popular on a previous walk. Please let Sarah or Caroline know if you plan to join us, just in case we have to change plans at the last minute.

Caroline Blair

'Each week [*in worship*] I come into this space, face to face with all of you and have the opportunity to examine my life. Am I living a life with purpose? I believe that the purpose of my time here on this planet is to connect people with one another, to remain open to the unknown, to question and challenge my assumptions, to bring joy and ease suffering, to connect with that which is greater than myself, to join with others to make this world a better place.

Each week I am given the gift of self-examination. I have the chance to think and rethink my purpose and to ask myself how I can do better, how I can be better. I am able to reflect on the past week – to grieve for those who have died, to smile for the new ones being born, to laugh at the jokes, and to cry with the pain. And each week I am reminded to be grateful for it all.'

UU Minister, Rev. Kelly J. Crocker

An event at St. Ethelburga's you might be interested in...

'What Matters To Us?'

A one-day workshop exploring personal, organisational, cultural and community values

Monday 3rd December, 10am to 5pm

**St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace
78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG**

Values have the power to unite but also to divide. Knowing and embodying our personal values gives us a sense of purpose and meaning, and guides the decisions we make and the lives we aspire to lead. Being part of a community with shared values gives us a sense of belonging and identity. And cultural values underpin some of our perspectives and approaches to life, sometimes without us realising. Relating to others with different values and value systems brings challenges and also opportunities to grow. If we succeed in understanding the different values of others, we build relationships from a deeper place.

This workshop uses personal stories and narrative, reflection, dialogue and shared enquiry to explore what matters to us most and to those around us. The day can be an opportunity to take time out to nourish our dreams, to reflect and refocus on what is important to us and how we are living. It can also be an opportunity to strengthen our bonds with others, to look at what unites us, and how we work together. There will also be valuable material for those working in diversity, community building or in faith or values-based communities. Open to all. The workshop will be in the Tent. Please bring a simple lunch to share.

Contact phone: 07989 545 958

Email: justine@stethelburgas.org

Standard price for individuals: £ 35.00

Some concessionary places are available for those with no income - please email tent@stethelburgas.org

'SimpleGifts' Social Action Lab



**A New Unitarian Venture in East London
Saturday 10th November 2012, 10.30am-3pm**

As part of its mission to foster and support Unitarian social witness, the newly established SimpleGifts: Unitarian Centre for Social Action will host a half-day "social action lab" from 10:30am until 3pm at their offices at Mansford St. Chapel in East London.

The programme will include a speaker/panel discussion and 3 "lab" style workshops (i.e. informal, round table discussions) to include:

- A Brief Introduction to SimpleGifts and its "New Unitarian Mission".
- A Short Theological History/Historical Theology of Unitarian Good Works.
- Congregational Best Practices and "Pulling Together in 2013" for Unitarian-inspired Social Action/Social Justice

There will be time for a shared, leisurely lunch and a tour of the historic Mansford St. Chapel and Mission to the East End of London. A £25 fee will cover lunch and materials cost (a £15 student/low income concession also available).

**For more information, visit the website:
www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk**

or to register contact Rev. Rob Gregson
(rob@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk) or Ann Howell
(ann@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk) or write to:
SimpleGifts, 117 Mansford St., London E2 6LX UK



How I Came to Essex Church



Annie with Dawson the dog.



Ray is the Chaplain at the Homeless Shelter; Ray has cancer and was homeless himself. Dawson is his Medical Aid dog. He doesn't like to miss UU on a Sunday so my friend Melanie often takes him.



Pot Luck Lunch at UU Santa Fe - prepared and served by the young folk who also took the service and were incredible.



Two beautiful elegant ladies I sat with.



African American and Native American come together here.

I was visiting Santa Fe in January this year to see a special friend I hadn't seen since she and her family re-located to New Mexico 6 years ago. She is American; her husband British. Melanie asked me if I wanted to go to "UU" and of course I had no idea what she was talking about but on the basis of trying anything once I said "yes"! (I also tried horse-riding but that's another story!). She told me she had started to go to UU to restore her faith in humanity.

And so we went in January and again when I returned to visit with her in March this year. I have to say now, hands up, I am not a believer in doctrines of religion, nor do I believe we were born sinners! I have faith, I believe in the spiritual, the mysterious, in the oneness, in love and in the basic goodness of everyone but you won't catch me reading or quoting the Bible! I went to the UU to support Melanie but I came away liking it for more reasons than that; for its liberalism and sense of social justice. In Santa Fe different faith churches also take it in turns to supply food at the homeless shelter during the winter months. Melanie has become a helper there and I was proud to be allowed to work a shift there too.

I came home from Santa Fe and searched for a UU Church here in London. The only one that was anywhere close was Essex Church and I figured I could go once and if I didn't like it, I wouldn't have to go back! But I did like it and I have kept coming back. It is my time away; my time to remind myself about my own humanity and to feel part of something. It is a warm sense of community without the shadow of doctrine. It is all embracing and a place where I hope we can all find and give strength as appropriate.

As a child I went to a small school where we attended the usual Christian Services throughout the year and I was christened but not confirmed. Religion was not an issue at home but my parents and I agreed that you didn't have to make a public show of your private feelings whatever they may be. However I did have traditional services when my parents passed away.

My father served in World War II; when he came home he had a breakdown. His mother, my grandmother, suggested he go to Church with her. He refused on the basis that he didn't believe in God and who could blame him after six years of War. Instead he went fishing; and there he found his god and his peace. When he died I wrote on his flowers 'Gone Fishing' and that's what I like to think he is doing now. Today at Essex Church I felt his spirit with me and found myself smiling because I could hear what he was saying; I can't share that because it's between me and my Dad!!

Annie Fowler

Some words from the website of the UU congregation of Santa Fe:

We are Unitarian-Universalists seeking to create a loving community, inspire spiritual growth, and encourage lives of integrity, joy, and service. We welcome you to join us.

*We gather together to seek the truth freely,
To celebrate beauty, to ease the world's pain.
We're moved by compassion to service and to justice.
All life is our concern and love is our Way.*

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



Collection on Sunday 25th November

Freedom from Torture, formerly known as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, has been working for 25 years to provide direct clinical services to survivors of torture who arrive in the UK, as well as striving to protect and promote their rights. Since its inception, over 50,000 individuals have been referred for help.

Thanks to the dedication of staff and volunteers – as well as scores of passionate supporters and funders – thousands of torture survivors have been able to rebuild their lives in incredibly difficult circumstances.

Freedom from Torture's vision:

To be a highly effective agency counteracting the inhuman practice of torture and its effects through:

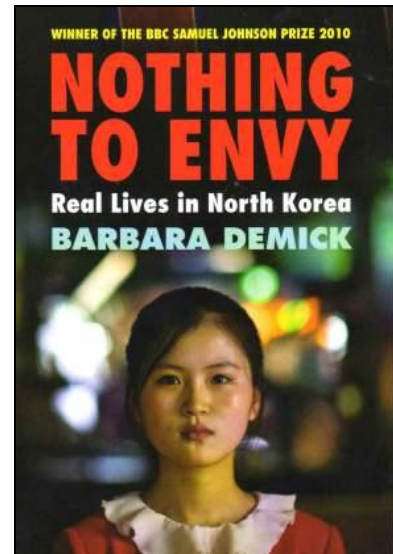
- healing and empowering survivors
- learning from and teaching others
- speaking and acting for human rights and dignity.

For more information: www.freedomfromtorture.org

Essex Church Reading Group

'Nothing to Envy'

by Barbara Demick



Tuesday 27th November 2012, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's November session will be based on 'Nothing to Envy' by Barbara Demick which was suggested by Gina Bayley. This will be the 97th title discussed by the reading group since it started over nine years ago.

More information from Amazon:

"North Korea is Orwell's 1984 made reality: it is the only country in the world not connected to the internet; Gone with the Wind is a dangerous, banned book; during political rallies, spies study your expression to check your sincerity. After the death of the country's great leader Kim Il Sung in 1994, famine descended: people stumbled over dead bodies in the street and ate tree bark to survive. Nothing to Envy weaves together the stories of adversity and resilience of six residents of Chongin, North Korea's third largest city. From extensive interviews and with tenacious investigative work, Barbara Demick has recreated the concerns, culture and lifestyles of North Korean citizens in a gripping narrative, and vividly reconstructed the inner workings of this extraordinary and secretive country."

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



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
11th November, 9th December, 13th January

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).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

Autumn Threnody



I don't like you autumn
Your leaves droop like wet children's socks –
Or teabags, from myriads of dangling twigs
Challenging me to believe in Spring.

I'd like to believe in winter rest, an interlude
Before the play of life resumes again – but that's
Too much to ask: your sullen proximity
Depresses me. I think of dead things: dead dogs
Cats, rats, moles, birds and squirrels: I think of dismal
Dead daffodils, shrivelled leaves, withered grass.

"Oh! the beauty of autumn foliage" I hear them
Rapturously exclaim: forgetting they
Will never feel their youthful Spring again.

John Hands
(Highgate Park: October 2012)

*An event for Unitarians aged 18-35:
Information from www.unitarian.org.uk*

BUYAN: Building a Diverse Community

British Unitarian Young Adult Network

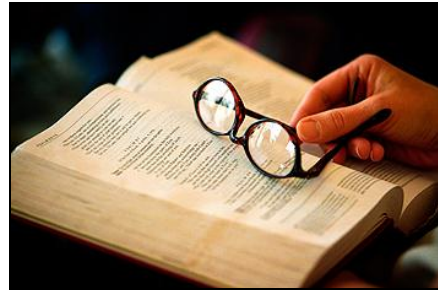
Saturday 3rd November, 12-6.00pm
Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY

As young Unitarians, we're scattered across the country, going through very different life stages from starting university or a first job search right through to parenthood, and may or may not be well served by a local congregation. How can we build a genuine and welcoming community? Should we in BUYAN focus on social events, on networking across the country, on exploring a wide range of spiritualities and modes of worship, or something else?

We'll try to answer some of these questions at "Building a diverse community", a free one-day session on 3 November 2012. Ages 18-35 welcome. Meet-and-greet from 12 noon, light lunch provided, day ends 6pm. Workshops and leaders to be announced. A small donation for food and other costs will be appreciated if possible.

'Rediscovering the Bible'

A monthly bible-reading group at Essex Church



**Meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7pm:
12th November, 10th December, 14th January**

Throughout this year there has been a bible-reading group in the London district, organised by Jim Corrigan of Golders Green Unitarians, which we have enjoyed being a part of. Sadly, this group has now come to an end, as Jim has taken up a new post as minister of Ipswich and Framlingham.

We thought that we would like to continue the good work of the Golders Green group here in our own congregation, and so are proposing to offer something similar at Kensington, for a trial period of six months beginning in November 2012. We will simply read through the bible together, pausing to reflect, and to share our own thoughts and feelings on what we read. Our intention is to start with the Acts of the Apostles.

Do contact us (email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you have any questions or just to let us know you're planning to come along. The bible-reading group is open to all who share a spirit of goodwill and curiosity about discovering the text anew – no particular theology will be presumed – please bring along a bible (any translation you like) if you have one.

This group is offered in conjunction with the Liberal Christian affinity group of the district association (LDPA) and we hope to see friends from throughout the region at these meetings.

David Darling and Jane Blackall



'There is nothing anti-intellectual in the leap of faith, for faith is not believing without proof but trusting without reservation. Faith is no substitute for thinking. On the contrary, it is what makes good thinking possible. It has what we might call a limbering effect on the mind; by taking us beyond familiar ground, faith ends up giving us much more to think about.'

William Sloane Coffin

'Those We Have Loved' – Vilmar Beltram

Vilmar Beltram was one of the most kindly and resourceful people I have ever met. She had quite a grim background. Born in Slovenia when this was still a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, her father was a judge, and her household language was German. After the death of her mother when she and her sister were young girls, he married again, but her step-mother didn't want his former wife's children around the house, so they were sent to be "educated" in a convent in Sarajevo, where they were harshly treated, and starved. Vilmar told me when they were taken out for exercise she and her sister picked leaves off trees and ate them. Somehow she survived but her sister died of malnutrition. Meanwhile they were still in Sarajevo when the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand took place, which fired off the sequence of events culminating in World War I.



However it must be said in favour of the Convent, that Vilmar did receive training as a Dispenser (although I am not sure if she received her training in the Convent or elsewhere), perhaps something more like a chemist in present-day terms. Sometime after the war Vilmar worked in this capacity till she met her husband Cyril. He was a Serb, and until the Yugoslav war in the 'nineties, I didn't realise what this meant in terms of ethnic relationships. But Vilmar and Cyril seemed to have got on pretty well, until the outbreak of world-war II.

In the village in Serbia where they lived they were occupied by successive waves of Italian, German, then 'red' and royalist troops or guerrillas. They somehow survived because of their personal courage: (of course Vilmar didn't actually say as much to me- but from what she told me of her life there, it was quite obvious this was the case). Cyril was a gifted handyman with tools, and managed to survive by "agreeing" to repair rifles and other military equipment for the various irregular forces who occupied their village. He was also a considerable folk-artist. I have a painting or two of his given to me by Vilmar, after their escape and Cyril's subsequent death in this country. I also have an exquisite model of a Serbian village house which he also made.

Finally after the war they both came under intense pressure to become active members of Tito's party and government. They were particularly keen for Cyril to confirm his sympathy with their regime by becoming a government artist. This browbeating reached the point at which Vilmar could stand it no longer. After a particularly humiliating episode in which a government lorry carted away their furniture and dumped it on a muddy patch of land, Vilmar exploded. 'I am leaving this xxx country' she told him. 'If you don't want to come with me you can stay here!'

After both of them showed amazing courage and ingenuity in doing so, they managed to escape to Trieste which was (just) in Italy. But for about a year or so they hardly dared to leave the relative safety of the refugee camp, because the Yugoslavs sent a number of lorries into Trieste at odd times carrying plains-clothes police. They were looking for refugees, and if they saw any they would be quickly hauled into their transport and hurried back to Yugoslavia. Finally Vilmar and Cyril were offered a British Council cottage in a village in rural Hertfordshire, and with much joy and thankfulness they eventually made their way there.

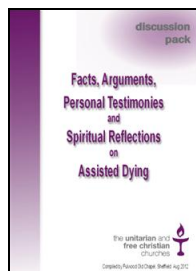
Sadly after about eighteen months Cyril died. He had been very restrictive, and largely it seems, kept Vilmar from getting to know the villagers, and learn English. After his death she must have felt more isolated than she had ever been. But she went into deep mourning for her deceased husband, and visited his grave twice daily in the local churchyard. This went on for several months. She was seen by the village policeman who very reasonably thought she needed to talk to people more. He had heard – though was not sure – that she did speak German, so he asked my wife (who was German) if she would visit Vilmar. She did so of course, and this is how we met her.

Both of our children were still quite young, and as both sets of their grandparents were living a long way away, they soon came to see Vilmar (whose married life had been childless) as a surrogate grandma. She looked after them so that we could visit friends, and the occasional theatre, and we quite often took her on our shopping trips to one of the local towns. She was an exemplary cook and made delicious food from Balkan folk-recipes. We were all especially fond of her apple-strudels, and cheese cake! We soon found that Vilmar was an unusually intelligent woman, and with our help she began to learn English so well, that she regularly read books which I brought her from the college library where I worked. She wasn't too keen on fiction, and much preferred historic, biological, and sociological books. Once I gave her Fritjof Capra's (then) much-discussed book about the relationship between the various sciences ('The Turning Point') as a birthday present. Sadly she had to go to hospital soon after this. When I visited her she clasped this book fervently to her bosom and exclaimed: "THIS book is my bible". As she was still a sort-of Catholic, I couldn't help wondering what the visiting priest thought of this devotion to her substitute Holy script.

There is much more I could say about Vilmar, her life in the village, and her fascinating background, which I gradually learned about in some detail. However I want to conclude by affirming her kindness of heart, and her unreflecting generosity. She made her little cottage a kind of cosy cynosure of warmth and friendliness to all who came to visit her. Till the end of my days I shall see her smiling features as she sat in her armchair, wrapped in the broad brown check blanket which I inherited and still use, with either a book or knitting in her hands, and often nearby, a crocheting or lace-making board : for she was nimble in of all these skills. She had both experienced and seen more suffering than most of us, who mercifully have not had to live through the two world wars and their appalling aftermath. She died at the age of eighty-six, and was buried with her husband in the same village churchyard. On her inscription on their shared tombstone my former wife had incised: 'loved by all her friends, for the love she gave us'. I know of no finer epitaph. God bless you dear Vilmar.

John Hands

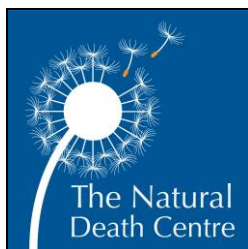
Assisted Dying Discussion Pack



A booklet of very useful materials about assisted dying has been put together by the congregation of Fulwood Old Chapel and distributed by our General Assembly for consideration by all our congregations. This is a follow-up to a debate on this issue at last year's GA annual meetings.

You can download the booklet via the GA website www.unitarian.org.uk or ask Jane or Sarah to borrow a copy. The topic will be the subject of our worship service on Sunday 13th January and of our 'Life's Ultimate Questions' workshop on Sunday 27th January.

The London Death Café



You might also be interested to know about some 'Death Cafés' that are planned soon in London. At Death Cafés people come together in a relaxed, safe and confidential setting to discuss death, drink tea and eat delicious cake. The objective of a Death Café is "To increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives".

Sunday 4th November, 2.30-5.30pm

Death Café London with Josefine Speyer and Jon Underwood to raise funds for the Natural Death Centre. Please email josefine@josefinespeyer.com with your name and phone number if you would like to take part.

Monday 26th November 2012

with Kate Hambleton and Anja Saunders.

Full details of these and other Death Cafés can be found on this website: www.deathcafe.com.

Warden's Column



Sarah and I sat down yesterday and had a brainstorm of everything that worried or annoyed us about the building. The leaking roof was sadly high on the list as usual: this has been much improved by a programme of regular gutter cleaning and judicious patching – so much so that we finally got the courage up to have the church redecorated – but it's still not perfect. If you look at the back of the church to the left of the altar you'll see the newest leak. Water has come through at this point twice since the redecoration and we need to get someone in to try and work out why.

Another serious worry is the boiler – apparently it's no longer acceptable for the flue pipe to exit into the outside stairs up to the manse because it's technically an enclosed space. We're hoping it will be possible just to extend the pipe, but in the worst case scenario we may have to relocate the boiler. That could cause a lot of disruption to the kitchen, but I guess the silver lining would be if it became more accessible: at the moment, whenever anyone needs access to it they have to go into the locked cupboard in the Lindsey Hall and then crawl through an access hatch into an understairs area where it's impossible to stand upright – I'm always really embarrassed when I have to explain this to workmen.

Other building issues we identified ranged from the routine – the annual resealing of the kitchen floor – to the aspirational: replacing the side window in the church with some beautiful stained glass. On a more practical level, it would be great to get some purpose built storage in the church (for hymn books, candles etc.) like we now have in the library and to get some warm curtains for the library and Hall before winter sets in in earnest. Another undecided issue is whether to replace the lightbulbs in the Hall and toilets etc. with LEDs (as has been done in the lobby). This is the eco-friendly option and should pay for itself in savings on electricity over the long-term – but would it have a negative effect on the quality of the light? Have you notice the difference since we put LEDs in the lobby?

Listing all the work still needed on the building can feel a bit overwhelming – but as the saying goes "A journey of 1,000 miles starts with a single step". Our small step this month is to replace the miscellany of kitchen tea-towels with a matching set from John Lewis. This was Sue Smith's initiative: she's recently taken over responsibility for keeping the Unitarian kitchen cupboard restocked and tidy.

Thank you Sue! And thanks to everyone who's loved and cared for this building over the years and helped to keep it available as a resource to Unitarians and other local and like-minded people.

Jenny Moy

'Let everything you touch be treated as if it were as precious as the altar vessels. Whenever you handle any equipment or any person, be reverent. Be full of care with everything entrusted to you. Everything you touch or see, everyone for whom you have responsibility, is to be viewed as something cherished by God, and thus to be cherished by you.'



Norvene Vest

'Let me tell you why I come to church.

I come to church – and would whether I was a preacher or not – because I fall below my own standards and need to be constantly brought back to them. It is not enough that I should think about the world and its problems at the level of a newspaper report or a magazine discussion. It could too soon become too low a level. I must have my conscience sharpened – sharpened until it goads me to the most thorough and responsible thinking of which I am capable. I must feel again the love I owe my fellow men (and women). I must not only hear about it but feel it. In church, I do.

We meet each other as friends and neighbours anywhere and everywhere, but we seldom do so in the consciousness of our souls' deepest yearnings. But in church we do – in a way that protects us from all that is intrusive, yet leaves us knowing that we all have the same yearning, the same spiritual loneliness, the same need of assurance and faith and hope. We are brought together at the highest level possible. We are not merely an audience, we are a congregation.'

Rev. A. Powell Davies

News of our National Unitarian Organisation:

GA Executive Committee Election



Our General Assembly has an Executive Committee that all members of congregations can vote to elect.

We'll be distributing the voting papers in mid-November to everyone who is on our list of members and encouraging everybody, in the interests of democracy, to cast their vote.

Candidates have written a short description of themselves to be included in a leaflet, but if you would like more information from people who know the candidates then have a chat with our minister, Outreach Officer or committee members. There'll be chance to do that after the service on 18th November when we will hold a short meeting for questions or feel free to ask any questions some other time.

Papers will be distributed from 12th November onwards and must have been returned by 14th Dec.

Bhagavad-Gita Study Group

Wednesday 7th November, 7.30pm
Golders Green Unitarians,
31½ Hoop Lane, London, NW11 8BS



A group to read and reflect on the Bhagavad-Gita, the most important Hindu scripture, will meet monthly on first Wednesdays at 7.30pm at Golders Green. First meeting: 7th November 2012.

For those who've never looked at the Gita, this is an opportunity to discover one of the great holy books of the world, and in friendly Unitarian company. For those who have, it's a gateway to fresh wisdom and insights from the Gita's eternal treasure-trove.

You are welcome to come to any or all of these meetings and brighten a dark evening.

Wade Miller-Knight

For more info see the GGU Website: www.ggu.org.uk

Sing Along With 'Sing for Joy'

Sunday 4th November, 2.30-5.30pm
Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust,
17 Stukeley Street, London WC2B 5LT

"A self-run community choir of people with Parkinson's Disease, MS, various other health conditions – and a troop of the able-bodied"

No auditions, no reading music. We sing everything from jazz, folk, gospel, pop, showsongs... everyone welcome, whatever your state of health or voice or age (sorry, no crèche). See for yourself how singing with others can help your voice, breathing, posture and mood!

At the Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust, 17 Stukeley Street, London WC2B 5LT. Central and Piccadilly Line to Covent Garden. From 2.30-5.30pm. £8 entry. Cake and drink included.

If you can't make it but would like to know more about Sing for Joy yourself or someone you care for, we'd love to hear from you. Contact us at choirsingforjoy@gmail.com.

There is limited space so please email to book!

Information sent in by Diana Ward

An Unexpected Pilgrimage

On a recent much-needed weekend break to Bath, I decided to "go with the flow" and experience whatever seemed interesting "as and when" the opportunity arose. It was a very busy weekend for Bath, what with the local university open day and a Jane Austin event which saw many visitors walking around the town in period costume. Having explored the town a bit on my way to indulge in the spa, steam rooms and roof top mineral pool of *Thermae Bath Spa*, I decided to visit Bath Abbey the next morning. I found being at the Abbey really interesting and having not been able to attend Kensington Unitarians for a while, even just looking around Bath Abbey connected me to how important having a "Spiritual Life" is for me, (even though not in the same way they practice it there).



I had noticed, in the foyer of the place I was staying, was a selection of leaflets and one was about tours to Stonehenge. Initially I wasn't too sure about booking on the trip then later, when told the tours were fully booked all weekend, the idea grew on me. Maybe it was simply wanting something that I didn't think I could have, but the more I thought about it, the more I thought the idea of going to Stonehenge would be "Really cool!"

For me, Stonehenge was somewhere various groups I'd been part of throughout the years had mentioned going to visit, especially coming up to the Solstices or Equinox's, but I'd never gone as it didn't hold much significance for me. Fortunately, possibly because I was a lone traveller, there was room for me on Scarper's afternoon tour, so off I went. On the journey the tour guide pointed out hillside chalk carvings, burial mounds and other sights of interest. As I got closer to our destination, I became aware of a growing understanding inside me that this was not just a place that's, "cool" to visit, but that for 1000s of years people had visited the site – a site that they consider sacred and holds deep meaning for them. It's then that it struck me, that without intending to, I was on some form of pilgrimage.

We arrived, parked up and due to being part of the tour, didn't have to queue. We were told to meet back at the minibus in an hour and proceeded to pick up our audio tours of the site. Sticking with my "go with the flow" theme, I listened to 30 seconds of the audio tour and decided, instead, to simply "be" at the site, look at the stones and indulge in the experience. Walking up to the stones, I could sense an energy which felt like a powerful presence. A kind of majestic quality, quite hard to describe.

Arriving as part of a group, I had an opportunity to have my photo taken, which I readily agreed to. I found myself smiling from ear to ear, pleased with being there - and in the silence, due to everyone else intensely listening to their audio tours. Breaking slightly away from the group, but still following the crowd, I wandered around looking at the stones from a different side, however I started having an overwhelming feeling that I was going the "wrong way".

So after acknowledging my fears of "being perceived as strange" by the other 100+ visitors walking in the opposite direction to me, I held my head up and started walking. I soon bumped into a staff member, and after a brief chat about the site, I bid her farewell in which she expected me to walk the same way as her and everyone else. "Oh, no, I'm going this way" I told her, pointing towards the oncoming crowd. "Well you're going the right way" she replied, "Clockwise!"

I felt stunned and so very pleased, that I was more in contact with my "Spiritual Life", (which had been heavily influenced by Wiccan traditions in the past), than I give myself credit for. So, from there, I continued walking around the great circle of stones, realising I'd got so much more out of visiting Stonehenge than I'd ever expected.

Jeannene Powell



UPCOMING DATE FOR YOUR DIARY: Avebury Stone Circle – Friday 15th March 2013

We're planning a trip to Avebury in the spring to visit the stone circle there. There's also the option to visit the museum and manor house with lovely gardens (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury). Look out for more details in the next newsletter.

A local event to be held here at Essex Church:
Kensington and Chelsea Borough-Wide Event

'From Depression to Recovery'



Thursday 1st November, 9.45am-4pm
Essex Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace,
Notting Hill, London W8 4RT

The focus is on local support for those experiencing depression and the event will feature speakers and workshops relevant to this topic with excellent food and entertainment provided.

There will be opportunities to hear about latest developments in local mental health services and to share your views and get your questions answered. Contact the Service User Network (SUN) office if you would like more information:

Kensington & Chelsea Mind Service User Network

Office 8, 7 Thorpe Close, London, W10 5XL

Telephone 020 8964 1333 extension 8

Email: sun@kcmind.org.uk / **Website:** www.kcmind.org.uk

In Memory of Edward Thomas

Yes, I remember Adlestrop – the name
Because one warm afternoon in August late
I cycled there; name and poem engraved upon the gate;
Excitedly I read and longed to ask – but no-one came

Yes, I remember Adlestrop, because of its invigorating stream,
Bore of water cold and clear, in which I stripped and bathed,
Whilst crack of cricket balls resounded through
The nearby glade: (I felt relieved that no-one came!)

Yes, I remember Adlestrop, because afterwards I spread
My clothes and revelled in the sun, pondered my koan
'What is life?', sipped the stream, smoked
mused upon the station and its poet – both alike long dead

Yes! I remember Adlestrop because I struggled to conceive
An answer to my question there; but no rejoinder came.
Poet and train both paused here – but did he and they
Really die that we might live? – is that the answer to believe?

John Hands
(August 1978)



FESTIVAL of UNITARIANS in the SOUTHEAST

8th-10th February 2013

Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing

Information from the District Association (LDPA)

The inaugural Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) 2012 was a great success. Were you one of the 129 people who came together from throughout the South East, plus others from as far afield as the West Country, East Anglia, the Midlands, the North West and Scotland for a weekend of inspiration, education and celebration? If so, you will probably be keen to come again. If you missed the first one, you will not want to miss FUSE 2013.

FUSE 2013 will be held again at Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing, over the weekend of 8 – 10 February. Rev. Bill Darlison will be the preacher for the Main Service, and will also present an optional workshop on the Friday afternoon. His workshop is titled 'The Celestial Journey of the Soul' and will be based on his book "The Gospel and the Zodiac" in which he propounds his theory that Mark's gospel is astrologically based. Robin Ince will again be the Keynote Speaker, this time giving a presentation on "The Importance of Being Engaged", a timely tribute to one of his heroes, Charles Darwin.

Planning is already well under way, with a full programme of Workshops, Worship, Presentations and Contact Groups, as well as time to relax and network. Attendance is expected to be even higher, so book early at fusefest.org.uk/registration-form.

There is an early bird discount for registration before 1st November. Applications for bursaries must be received no later than 1st December.

FUSE website: www.fusefest.org.uk



'Worship invites not only transformation of individuals but also the transformation of the community.

Worship is a form of spiritual practice. Just like any spiritual practice, one deepens with consistency, rather than doing it just when one feels like it. It's not all that different from friendship. If you are there only when you want to be, the friendship does not deepen. But if you are there when the friendship needs you, and you show up whether or not you it is your primary desire, the friendship will take on deep meaning and significance.

Without you knowing it, there may be someone here that needs your presence, to hear your joy or sorrow, or to have their joy or sorrow heard by you, or to talk even briefly after service, to touch your hand or receive your smile. You add to the worship experience.'

Rev. Alan Taylor

One Light Spiritual Gathering



Friday 9th November 2012
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church

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

Come gather with us in healing connection to Spirit to encounter this mystery of life, finding our way home to deep worship in the One Light, One Love for which we all long. There will be music, chanting, Spiritual Transformation Journey and inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved, worshipful self, your family, children and friends.

Our honoured guest is Dada Jyotirupananda - a meditation teacher for over 25 years, working with Ananda Marga, a global spiritual and service society.

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'

Sarah Tinker says: "The Annual 'Gifts of Light' service is always a delight and this year is on Friday 14th December with a meal afterwards."

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 18th November, 20th January,
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.



Next Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the December/January issue is **Sunday 11th November**. Please send your newsletter contributions to Jane Blackall or any committee member by then. Thank you!!!

Email your articles to:

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'A Restless Curiosity'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 14th October 2012

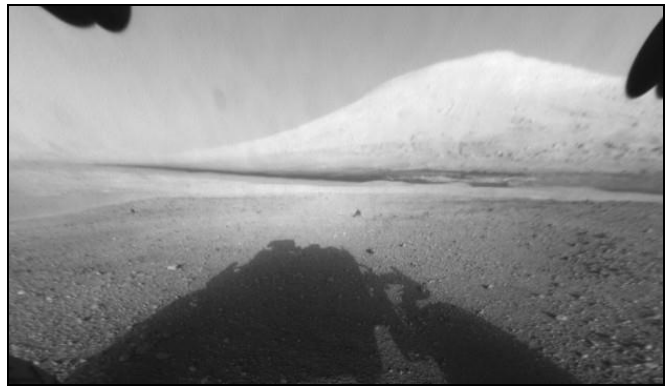
An audio podcast of this sermon is available on our website.

If you happen to be out this week shortly after sunset, (*you should still be able to see Mars just above the horizon after sunset in November*) look up into the sky towards the south west and you will see a crescent moon. And just below the crescent moon and to the right a bit will be the planet Mars. On the front of your order of service sheet for today there's a picture of the NASA Mars Rover which is, as we speak, gently trundling across the landscape of Mars, the so called Red Planet, sampling rocks and taking photos. It's taken a photo of its own shadow here and in the far distance you can see Mount Sharp, one of the places it's heading to on its tour of Mars. The robot has been aptly named Curiosity and its mission is planned to last one 'Mars year' – about 23 earth months. Only this week, Curiosity has found an unusual rock on the surface of the Red Planet – a rock which has now been called Jake by the scientists back at Mission Control.

Whilst we're looking at the order of service sheet there's a lovely quote from Stephen Fry from his book **The Fry Chronicles** extolling the virtues of curiosity: *"there is no reason why anyone should understand how it works... and of course no reason why anyone should care ... unless you are curious, in which case I love you, for curiosity about the world and all its corners is a beautiful thing."* It's a very human quality curiosity – yet it's also a delightful quality to observe in animals – so perhaps it's more accurate to say that curiosity is a quality of being alive – a way of being truly and fully alive to our surroundings.

It's the quality that made me fall in love with a rat – at least for a while. When I lived in Sheffield my office desk looked out into the garden and one Monday morning I was musing on the work we'd done over the weekend – completely changing the shape of a rockery – moving stones and shrubs around. That morning I watched entranced as a good size rat made its way across the rockery – stopped midway, stood up on its back legs and surveyed our work – had a good look round as if he was saying in a ratty voice – "oh dear me, no, I wouldn't have put the rock rose back there".

If we consider the history of humanity and our relentless exploration of, and expansion across, our planet earth home – it's clear that some basic needs were the driving force behind our explorations – a need for more land, more food, a mate etc. Yet there seems to be another quality that also drives us on and the Vikings have a word to describe it – *aefintyr*, which is translated as 'restless curiosity'. That is the spirit that compels humanity to go exploring, to take the road less travelled, to set out bravely towards an unknown horizon even at a time when people believed that our earth was flat and that you could, therefore, reach the end and fall over the edge into the abyss. Still those ancient mariners set off to explore they knew not where. And today our scientists continue to explore – as the Curiosity Rover makes its way across the planet Mars and the Hubble telescope brings us images of far distant galaxies – meanwhile we are exploring ever deeper depths of our oceans and ever more minute explorations of our own biology. Neuroscience and MRI scans are allowing us glimpses of the workings of our brains. There is a lot of exploring going on.



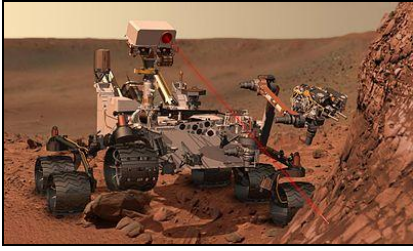
Author T H White wrote about the young king Arthur and his advisor Merlin in his book **The Once and Future King**. In this passage Merlin encourages Arthur to explore as a way of learning. *"And one of the reasons we explore is because we want to learn, to know more, to understand better. The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then – to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn."*

The learning that Merlin is advocating here is not the dull routine of reciting your 9 times table, (although over a cup of tea later on, do ask me about the exciting 9 times table secret that I only learnt a few years ago). Merlin is advocating a learning that excites, that brings a sense of wonder. And a sense of wonder can be stimulated by travel – by the actual taking of a journey. But awe and wonder can also be our natural orientation in life – they can be the qualities through which we view the world – our lens. Anyone who has spent time with a young child knows their irrepressible curiosity about the world – they want to know for themselves that the fire is hot, that the knife is sharp, that the dog has teeth – and it's a healthy parent who can balance the need to protect a child with the need to allow their freedom to explore. Such exploration can surely not just be the preserve of the young? Author Jostein Gaarder, who wrote the introduction to philosophy for teenagers called **Sophie's World**, believes that philosophers too must retain this child-like sense of wonder. *"So now you must choose... Are you a child who has not yet become world-weary? Or are you a philosopher who will vow never to become so? To children, the world and everything in it is new, something that gives rise to astonishment. It is not like that for adults. Most adults accept the world as a matter of course. This is precisely where philosophers are a notable exception. A philosopher never gets quite used to the world. To him or her, the world continues to seem a bit unreasonable - bewildering, even enigmatic. Philosophers and small children thus have an important faculty in common. The only thing we require to be good philosophers is the faculty of wonder..."*

This is the philosopher's task – to remain child-like in their approach to life. It's a path of not knowing, of not being sure or certain – of accepting that state of not knowing and being open to the paradoxical nature of our existence. For there is so much we don't know.

'A Restless Curiosity'

by Rev. Sarah Tinker *(continued)*



Yes we are clever enough to build a robotic Rover called Curiosity and send it to the planet Mars – yet if you are anything like me there is rarely a day that goes by where I don't find myself asking at some point 'why on earth did I just do that?' or 'why did that person say that?' or 'why do we humans make such a mess of things?' as I hear yet another news story that leaves me shocked or confused – you'll have your own versions of these questions I suspect.

And it is this sort of curiosity that for me is an essential part of the spiritual life – it's not so much a restless curiosity – more of a compassionate sort of curiosity – a compassionate curiosity that is willing to turn inwards and ask searching questions of myself, prepared to turn to another and engage in gentle enquiry that asks someone to say more about what is going on for them. It's the kind of curiosity that notices things – like stars in the sky, like falling leaves, the behaviour of an animal – be that a much loved pet in our home or a bird that settles on a nearby fence. We tend to live our lives as though things will proceed much as they always have done and yet part of us knows the truth – that in reality we don't have a clue what is going to happen next. We know that the path of life can turn in an instant.

Robert Fulghum puts it clearly when he writes that, "*Surprise is the core of existence. It's true. You never really know what's coming next.*"

Perhaps the writers of all those cautionary tales we heard earlier on, that warned of the dangers of curiosity, were in some way trying to protect humanity from this oft-times painful reality of an uncertain world. Yet hopefully no amount of warning can fully dampen our exploring spirits – the spirit in us that wants to know more – about ourselves, about one another and about, not just our world but, the universe itself.

Let us be brave and compassionate explorers, filled with a compassionate curiosity, and never too afraid to ask 'why'?

Unbeliever's Prayer

Almighty God
forgive me for my agnosticism;
For I shall try to keep it gentle, not cynical,
nor a bad influence.

And O!
if Thou art truly in the heavens,
accept my gratitude
for all Thy gifts
and I shall try
to fight the good fight. Amen.

Sent in by Rick Taylor

*This prayer is from the end of John Gunther's 1946 memoir
'Death Be Not Proud', about the death of his son, who wrote this prayer.*

A Missive to Mars

What distresses me is your almost completely dead and breathless
Surface Mars: give or take a few faint fluttering arctic snowflakes
And maybe, maybe some subterranean insects still aimlessly
Muzzling beneath your arid carapace. Such is the life our
Space-obsessives, after mammoth efforts and expense determined
So far to discover: you a dead or dying planet hostile to every
Living venture.

Say, is it because you're dead or dying they come to probe
Your bleak un twitching corpse? Because their planet too is dying?
Because dreading to remain on their doomed titanic vessel
They conned millions of desperate human ants into believing
Their voyage is for our benefit? That they at least should be provided
With life-boats: to sail away to your hugely distant, red-hued
Deaded disc, and maybe colonise your bleak and barren island
Drifting through oceanic space? Is this their undivulged motive, buried
So far beneath their abstracted, mathematically impoverished minds
They can no longer disinter it? Lives for no life bartered for your hostile
Bitter refuge, while under your crass auspices we battle to survive
A few of us conspire to jet into your scorching, embracing arms.

It may be, just maybe Mars
In a million or so years, some legless capsule from a world none of us can
Conceive will land on your repulsive, dry and arid surface and
Amazedly, amazingly discover a curious metal and plastic contraption
With round, revolvable discs, extended wires, and crooked arms all
Stretched out, half-interred in your waterless canyon floor. Then creatures
We could never imagine might crawl from their capsule and eagerly
Chatteringly transmitting wonder, wonder, what kind of aberrant creatures
Once crawled through your desolate, life-less caverns Mars.

John Hands

Sunday Services at Essex Church



**4th November, 11am –
‘Paradise Defined’**

Service led by Caroline Blair

It has always been easier for people to imagine 100 kinds of hell than one paradise. What does it show us about ourselves that we find a convincing paradise so hard to envisage, and how has the challenge been tackled?

**11th November, 11am –
‘Remembrance Sunday’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for our annual day of remembering all those who have lost their lives or well-being because of warfare. Do bring a photograph to add to our table if you would like to remember someone and perhaps tell us their story.

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

**18th November, 11am –
‘An Inner Guide’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Most of our summer migratory birds will have left by now for warmer climes, whilst flocks still arrive to winter here in the UK from colder, more northerly parts. What inner promptings of the spirit can we humans rely on to guide our paths in life?

**25th November, 11am –
‘Giving and Receiving’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our lives flow between our giving and receiving – ideas, attention, material things, love and indeed our every breath. In this service we will consider ways to ensure that this is a healthy and balanced flow.

Multifaith Calendar

✠ **1st November – All Saints' Day – Christian**

All Saints' Day is also called All Hallows'. The work and witness of all Christian saints is remembered with thanksgiving, recognising that not all are known or specially celebrated. Many churches stress All Saints' Day rather than Hallowe'en, which falls the day before, by holding events for children.

✠ **2nd November – All Souls' Day – Christian**

On All Souls' Day those who have departed this life are remembered and prayers offered on their behalf. From the beginning Christians have prayed for the dead. In the year 998, All Souls 'the faithful departed' began to be remembered in the Church calendar on this day.

11th November – Remembrance Sunday

The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day, when those who died in the two World Wars and subsequent wars are remembered.

☸ **12th November – Anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh**

The founder of the Bahá'í Faith was born in Tehran, Persia, in 1817, the eldest son of a Persian nobleman.

🕯 **13th November – Diwali (Deepavali) – Hindu**

Diwali (Deepavali) is the Hindu New Year celebration lasting from one to five days. A festival of light, celebrated with fireworks, Diwali is generally associated with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, or with the victorious return of Rama and Sita after their exile.

🕯 **13th November – Diwali (Deepavali) – Jain**

Diwali has special significance for Jains, as on this day in BCE 527 Mahavira gave his last teachings and attained ultimate liberation. Lamps are lit and children are given sweets by their parents. Some devout Jains fast for the two days of Diwali, following the example of Mahavira.

🕯 **13th November – Diwali (Bandi Chhor Divas) – Sikh**

Sikhs also celebrate Diwali, as the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, was released from prison on this day. He refused to accept release unless fifty-two imprisoned Hindu princes were also released. The Emperor set a condition that only those who could hold on to his cloak could leave prison, so the Guru had a special coat with long tassels made. Diwali is a time for presents, sweets and new clothes. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is illuminated and firework displays take place.

🕯 **15th Nov – Al-Hijra - New Year's Day (1434 AH) – Muslim**

This day commemorates the Hijra, or migration of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from Makkah to al-Madinah in 622 CE. Muslim years are dated from this event and termed AH (After the Hijrah).

🕯 **24th November – Ashura – Muslim**

Ashura is a day of mourning for some Muslims, particularly the Shi'ite communities, because of the martyrdom of Hussein, the second son of Ali and Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. The festival is celebrated by the Shi'ite communities in Iraq, Iran and the sub-continent of India.

🕯 **24th Nov – Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (1675) – Sikh**

In 1675, the ninth Guru was executed in public, in Delhi for upholding an individual's right to worship in the manner of his or her choice.

🕯 **28th November – Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469) – Sikh**

Important anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus are referred to as Gurpurbs. They are marked with an akhand path, an uninterrupted reading of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, completed on the morning of the festival, kirtan (musical recitation of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib Ji) and katha (lectures on Sikhism). The congregation will share a meal (langar) from the free kitchen, and the celebrations often include firework displays and illumination of the gurdwara.