



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2012

## What's On...

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon

### 'Come What May'

Led by Members of the Congregation

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon

### 'Stonehenge - Meaning & Mystery'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 12.30pm

### Small-Group Communion with Sue

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2.00-3.00pm

### Nia Technique with Sonya

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon

### 'Growth through Reflection'

Service led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August, 12.30-1.45pm

### 'Finding Our Voice'

Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon

### 'Open or Closed?'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 11am-noon

### 'The 99 Labels for God'

Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon

### 'A Line Dividing Good and Evil?'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
with special guest Marian Partington

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 12.15pm

### Small-Group Communion with Jane

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1.00-4.00pm

### 'Salvaging the Sacred'

Workshop with Marian Partington

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2.00-3.00pm

### Nia Technique with Sonya

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 7.00-9.00pm

### Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon

### 'Reconciliation: A Path to Peace'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30-1.15pm

### 'Finding Your Voice'

Singing workshop with Margaret.

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 4pm

### Equinox Walk: Richmond Park

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 11am-noon

### 'A Harvest & Equinox Celebration'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 7.00-9.00pm

### Book Group:

'Proust Was a Neuroscientist'

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon

### 'Spirit in Practice'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 12.45-2.30pm

### 'Life's Ultimate Questions'

Workshop with Jane and Sarah

## A Message from our Minister:

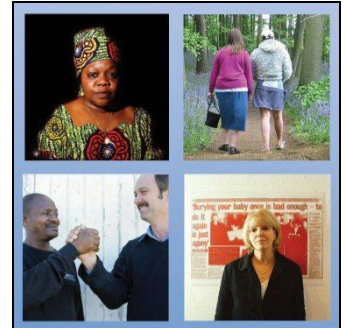
### That F Word

Are there aspects of your past that still have the power to make you cringe with embarrassment if you happen to think about them? In the interests of brevity I'll avoid a full confession here. But when it comes to that word 'forgiveness' I carry a certain amount of healthy shame. In my defence you could say that I was young and knew no better. Living in Sheffield in my twenties, I was part of a personal growth group that ran workshops, one of which focused on the importance of forgiveness. I remember waxing lyrical about the power of letting go, of forgiving and forgetting, etc etc. I did not realise then that it's only easy to talk about forgiveness when in one's own life there is little to forgive. My life to that point had been quite gentle and so it was easy enough to speak of forgiving the annoyances of school and family life, of friendships and of living in a relatively benign society.

Then I attended the first Forgiveness Conference at Findhorn – a whole week's immersion into this complex topic, with 400 other people from all over the world. People there spoke of the most terrible atrocities, of lives turned upside down by the cruelty of others. We heard of some people's quite remarkable ability to transform dreadful and dark occurrences into the possibility of light and love and understanding. The stories told at Findhorn were humbling, inspiring, shocking - and left me in no doubt that forgiveness is a hugely demanding and emotive subject, difficult even to define, never mind achieve. That's why the exhibition we're hosting in September is so valuable. By bearing witness to the struggles of others to comprehend and come to terms with what has occurred in their lives, both as victims and perpetrators, this exhibition makes everyone think more deeply. Empathy, that our world so sorely needs, is helped to develop when we hear another person's life story.

'The F Word' was created in 2004 by journalist Marina Cantacuzino, who gathered together people's stories and accompanied them by powerful photographs by Brian Moody. It's been shown in 350 venues around the world and, as part of the Forgiveness Project, it has done much to bring this important issue into public awareness. The Forgiveness Project also runs pioneering projects in schools and prisons. They describe forgiveness as 'part of a continuum of human engagements in healing broken relationships' and seek to show that there are alternatives to resentment, retaliation and revenge. Since my enthusiastic 20s life has thrown plenty of experiences my way, some of them extremely painful. There's still much work for me to do in the realm of forgiveness and I now understand that only the individual themselves can choose that path and in their own time. So you won't hear me telling you to forgive but I do recommend a visit to this exhibition and to the various linked events we've organised in September. It might change your life.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



## In this month's newsletter...

\* 'The F-Word' Exhibition and Week of Events \* 'Living Faith' RE Course Report \*  
'Impressions of Essex Church' by Ellen McHugh \* 'The Poppy' by Stephanie Saville  
\* 'The Maidstone Missionaries' by Gisela Boehnisch and Jo Ridgers \* Charity News \*  
'Making and Sharing a Good Life' by Veronica Needa \* 'Enough' by Howard Hague  
\* 'UUs & More on the East Side' by Jo Ridgers \* Betty's Birthday \* 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.



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

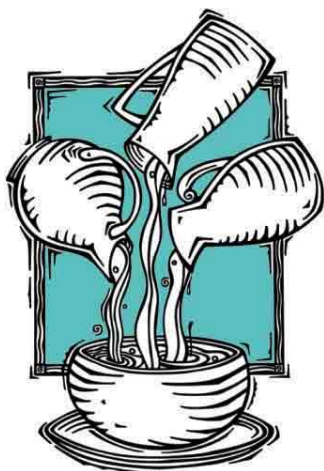
Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

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

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

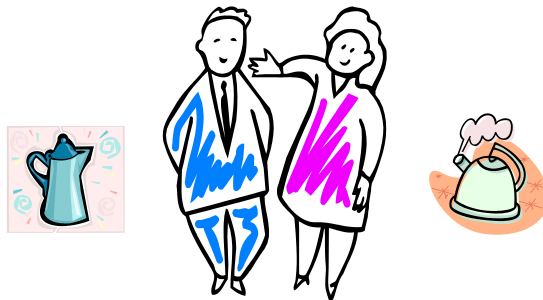
# Gathering the Waters

During the Harvest Service  
on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012



Wherever you travel over the summer months, please remember to collect a little water in a bottle, and bring it back to this special 'gathering of the waters' ceremony. We will be holding it a little later than usual this year, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, due to our forgiveness week events.

# Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



## Stewarding:

5 <sup>th</sup> August:	Jim Blair
12 <sup>th</sup> August:	John Hands
19 <sup>th</sup> August:	Annie Fowler
26 <sup>th</sup> August:	Veronica Needa
2 <sup>nd</sup> September:	Natasha Drennan
9 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jim Blair
16 <sup>th</sup> September:	Veronica Needa
23 <sup>rd</sup> September:	Howard Hague
30 <sup>th</sup> September:	Gina Bayley

## Coffee:

5 <sup>th</sup> August:	Caroline Blair
12 <sup>th</sup> August:	Margaret Darling
19 <sup>th</sup> August:	Juliet Edwards
26 <sup>th</sup> August:	Jo Ridgers
2 <sup>nd</sup> September:	Sue Smith
9 <sup>th</sup> September:	Caroline Blair
16 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jane Blackall
23 <sup>rd</sup> September:	Gill Hague
30 <sup>th</sup> September:	?

## Greeting:

5 <sup>th</sup> August:	Gisela Boehnisch
12 <sup>th</sup> August:	David Darling
19 <sup>th</sup> August:	Gina Bayley
26 <sup>th</sup> August:	David Darling
2 <sup>nd</sup> September:	Annie Fowler
9 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jo Ridgers + ?
16 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jo Ridgers + ?
23 <sup>rd</sup> September:	Tristan Jovanović
30 <sup>th</sup> September:	Annie Fowler

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)

# Betty Evans' 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations



It seemed so appropriate that we should celebrate Betty's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a church lunch in the Lindsey Room, where Betty has been so welcoming to so many people over the years.

Described by one of my friends as 'a remarkable, wise and wonderful woman' Betty brings a spiritual depth to conversations, along with a deliciously quick sense of humour. We all enjoyed Harold's beautiful rendition of the ever romantic 'street where you live' to end the service on Sunday, but perhaps not all of us then heard Betty's response of 'oh dear, I'm going to have to move house!'

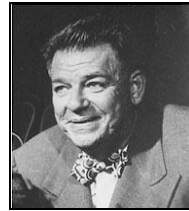
When you next meet Betty, ask her how she came to join Essex Church.... and for the recipe for that perfect trifle, said to contain at least a half bottle of sherry.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**



"A very powerful question may not have an answer at the moment it is asked. It will sit rattling in the mind for days or weeks as the person works on an answer. If the seed is planted, the answer will grow. Questions are alive."

**Fran Peavey**



"I don't believe anyone can enjoy living in this world unless he can accept its imperfection. He must know and admit that he is imperfect, that all other mortals are imperfect, and go on in his own imperfect way, making his mistakes and riding out the rough and bewildering, exciting and beautiful storm of life until the day he dies."

**Oscar Hammerstein**

## 'Life's Ultimate Questions'

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 12.45-2.30pm  
Workshop at Essex Church**



At the first of our 'Life's Ultimate Questions' sessions, held back in March, the group spent a few hours generating questions of a theological, philosophical, or ethical nature which we care about. Here is a selection of the challenging questions that came up for us:

Why do terrible things happen in the world?

How do we choose one path over another in life?

Is there an afterlife? Or reincarnation?

What is the nature of the soul?

What is true love?

Is war ever right?

Why are some people so nasty?

Why is there not a level playing field?

How do we reconcile differing needs and wants?

How far should we go to accept other cultures in the world when we think they are doing bad things?

What do we mean when we say 'God'?

What is the purpose of life (if there is one)?

We have already tackled a few of these questions and aim to work our way through the list in future sessions. The next one will be held after the service on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September from 12.45-2.30pm. Please put the date in your diary now and let Jane know if you intend to come: email [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

# The Maidstone Missionaries



Five women got on a train together  
To Maidstone, no less, braving the weather.  
The River Medway we only saw from the shore  
Fortify Cafe made up for it with cakes galore.

Five women were welcomed and given the tour  
Of the historic chapel, but wait, there was more:  
Sarah's words inspired us to each do our best,  
We shared words of hope and felt truly blessed.

Five women sang along to the hymns  
Played on a CD player (for our sins).  
We savoured the silence, so peaceful it was  
Enjoying the company of seekers just like us.

At the end of the day five women agreed  
It had been a wonderful Sunday indeed.  
The Unitarians of Maidstone we hope to see again  
At Essex Church as soon as we can!

**Gisela Boehnisch**



What a great day – with such congenial company ending with a lovely service in a beautiful little chapel. Gorgeous. Perfect! It was an extra-special day for me – a trip down memory lane. As a child (9-16) I attended Rye Methodist Church so that I could sing in the choir. I had no interest at all in the religion but I tolerated it so that I could sing – until I was 16 when the arrogance of (my) youth took over and I left, never to return.

Whereas it's true that I didn't return I carry with me the memories of those years – precious memories indeed. Included was the experience every summer of taking part in the London and South East Music and Arts Festival. Every summer from when I was 9 until I left in 1966 I sang in the choir, in duets and as a soloist. I painted in water-colours and took part in the handwriting competition. I also did bible reading. I was good at it and loved it. I missed all that when I left.

Maidstone was one of the places we travelled to – in a coach! There were that many of us! We went north-east to Chatham and Rochester as far north as Lewisham and Catford and south-west to Hastings and Eastbourne. This was TRAVEL to my 1950s/60s self. London, although only 62 miles away was a very long way. Another planet! Places were farther away in those days. Right?

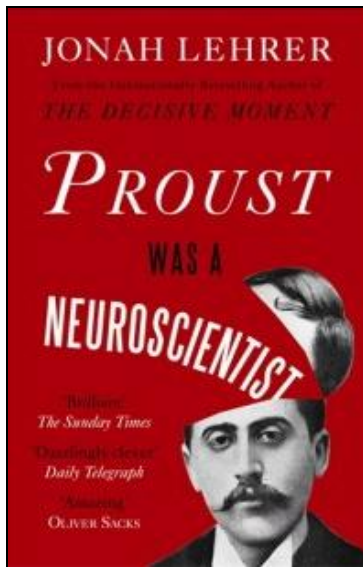
I had only a vague memory of the church in Maidstone but felt sure it was the same place...albeit modernized. When I checked it on the internet the Methodist Church was in a different place so either my memory is very poor or they moved it that day! My memory is second to none usually so... hmmm? The building I saw and connected with is now the United Reformed Church but I'm sure it's one of the places I sang in. What's important though are they memories it triggered for me. It put an extra shine on an already lovely day. The train ride – the walk along the canal in the rain – tea and cake at the Fortify Café – the Youth Brass Band at the bandstand (we followed the sounds from the High Street – a joyous secret, our own discovery). The day ended with Sarah's Service in the delightful and so lovingly kept Maidstone Unitarian Chapel. We belted out those familiar hymns swelling the numbers by 5 in that beautiful chapel. It was a truly Grand Day Out – Wallace and Gromit eat your heart out!

**Jo Ridgers**



## Essex Church Reading Group

# 'Proust was a Neuroscientist'



**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 7.00-9.00pm**

The reading group's June session will be based on 'Proust was a Neuroscientist' by Jonah Lehrer. This was suggested by Jane Blackall and will be the 95<sup>th</sup> title discussed by the reading group. Please don't be put off by the title as it is not a particularly heavy read at all!

From the book description on Amazon:

*"Is science the only path to knowledge? In this sparkling and provocative book, Jonah Lehrer explains that when it comes to understanding the brain, art got there first. Taking a group of celebrated writers, painters and composers, Lehrer shows us how artists have discovered truths about the human mind – real, tangible truths – that science is only now rediscovering. We learn, for example, how Proust first revealed the fallibility of memory; how George Eliot understood the brain's malleability; how the French chef Escoffier intuited umami (the fifth taste); how Cezanne worked out the subtleties of vision; and how Virginia Woolf pierced the mysteries of consciousness. It's a riveting tale of art trumping science again and again."*

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)

*New Course for the autumn here at Essex Church:*

## 'Spirit in Practice' Starting Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012

Make a note in your diaries of the dates for our next small group course – running for eight Thursdays, 7pm-9pm from 11<sup>th</sup> October – and 10am-4pm on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

The workshops that make up the Spirit in Practice series are based on three key ideas:

- That life is a spiritual quest and that exploring together can at times be more helpful than exploring alone.
- That this spiritual search can be more effective if we have some training and discipline—not to mention some practice, in both senses of the word—that helps us pay attention to the sacred.
- That everything in our lives that can serve as a tool for this exploration.

Drawing on a model developed by the Zen Mountain Monastery for the training of its students, Spirit in Practice focuses on eight spheres of holistic and wholehearted spiritual practices. These eight spheres are:

- Personal spiritual practices
- Communal worship practices
- Spiritual partnerships
- Mind practices
- Body practices
- Soul practices
- Life practices
- Justice practices

Our small group courses are a great way to deepen our connections with one another and with our Unitarian community. The course is open to anyone who would appreciate this sort of experience – you don't need to be a member of Kensington Unitarians or even regard yourself as a Unitarian – all you need is a willingness to join in an individual and group exploration of what spiritual practices you already follow and those you would like to develop.

We'd suggest that you check that you are able to commit to at least 6 of the 9 sessions and then get in touch with Jane to reserve your place: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

## Next Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the October issue is **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September** (slightly later than usual to allow for reports from the Forgiveness Project events). Please send your contributions to Jane Blackall or any committee member by then. Thank you!!!

Email your articles to: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

Good Cause Collection of the Month:

## Down's Syndrome Association

Collection on 26<sup>th</sup> August



The August collection will be in aid of the Down's Syndrome Association. This is an organisation that promotes a greater understanding of the issues surrounding children born with Down's Syndrome. It disseminates information concerning the educational problems associated with Down's children as well as providing essential back-up for the parents. It is a cause dear to my heart as my own godchild is a Down's boy.

**Harold Lorenzelli**

Collection on 23<sup>rd</sup> September



The organisation behind the 'F-Word' exhibition needs to raise funds to continue its important work in schools, prisons and the wider community. It aims to open up a dialogue about forgiveness and promote understanding through awareness, education and transformation. The September charity collection will be for this good cause.

**Jane Blackall**

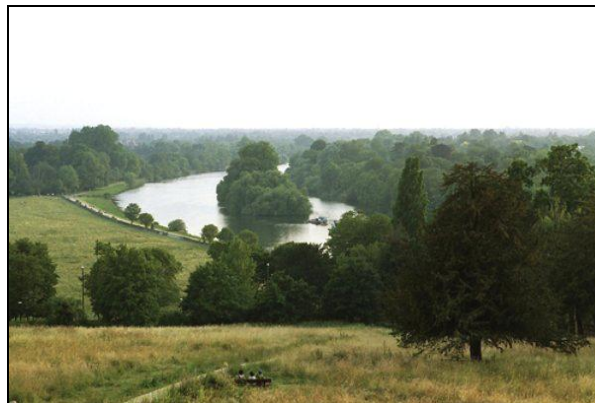
June Collection for 'Send the Net'



We are pleased to report that our special collection for 'Send the Net' in June raised £103.32 which will pay for 10 mosquito nets. If you missed this opportunity to contribute to this good cause you can send donations directly via the charity's website: [www.sendthenet.com](http://www.sendthenet.com)

## Equinox Walk: Richmond Park

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, meeting at 4pm



Following the success of our summer solstice walk we are planning to have another outing to mark the autumn equinox. This time we will explore Richmond Park, meeting at 4pm (meeting place to be confirmed), and expect to finish up in a café. Please let Jane know if you are intending to come along (and bring a friend!): email [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

## Unitarian Women's Group

### 'The Power of Anger in the Work of Love'

26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012

at the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

You are warmly invited to participate in the annual autumn weekend gathering of the Unitarian Women's Group, to be held at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, near Tideswell, in the wild and wonderful Derbyshire countryside. Non-members are welcome also.

**Places are limited and are booking fast so do contact the organisers as soon as possible if you want to go.**

The theme speaker, Bridget Rees, is a Welsh woman who increasingly finds the wilderness more sustaining than the mainstream – theologically, politically, ecologically – for justice and peace, feminism, liberation theology and world development concerns. A former teacher at the Anglican seminary at Mirfield, she has also worked in the Bradford Diocese and for Christian Aid and is active with the Quakers.

The cost for full-time attendance, including meals, is from £107 (shared room) to £132 (single ensuite) and there are a limited number of discretionary bursaries for women on low incomes.

**For further information contact: Sue Cooper  
on 01482-881765 or email at [suecooper26@aol.com](mailto:suecooper26@aol.com)**

# 'Living Faith' RE Course

A small-group course a bit like this was the first thing I got involved with in a Unitarian congregation, many years ago now. It impressed me then, as it does now, that people are so willing to speak deeply about complex issues if they're given a suitable way in to a topic. And that's what Jane is doing with this new 'Living Faith' course – creating ways to encourage us all to go a bit deeper, to listen more, to reflect, to pause amidst life's busy business and ask ourselves what it is we value most. How do our ways of living reflect our faith? Despite being co-facilitator of the course I hadn't at first realised that Jane was writing the whole thing from scratch rather than adapting some already existing materials! She's spent ages searching out suitable quotations from a wide range of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist sources. One of my favourites was written by Cathal Courtney, one-time Unitarian minister:

*"The problem with other people is that so many of them lack perfection! Building community with others would be easier if so and so were not around. I would find it so much easier if that person wasn't just constantly getting on my nerves. We all learn just how irrational we are when it comes to the annoying people in our lives. For every well-balanced, kind and entertaining person in the world there's a twit who can press buttons that turn them into neurotic savages. It's not always easy to reconcile the notion of spirituality with imperfection."*

Tom Owen-Towle takes another slant on the humanity of our congregations when he writes: *"There isn't a member of any congregation who doesn't also hold membership in the largest fellowship in the world – the communion of those who bear the mark of suffering and pain."* What's touched me in these Living Faith sessions is people's ability to share their struggles in gentleness and good humour – that for me is the special something that a faith community can offer the world.

**Sarah Tinker**

Like most engagement groups I attend, I have found the 'Living Faith' group to have been both encouraging and challenging. Not a bad thing! I've been encouraged by the sharing of spiritual experiences by other members of the group, especially by the variety of those experiences and by the fact that we are all still striving to integrate the spiritual into our everyday lives. None of us have yet achieved it. I've been challenged by realising how far I still have to go to relate my understanding of faith and being a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Unitarian with my interaction with the world. This group has been a safe place to explore these issues. One of the joys each week has been that Jane has provided us with a wonderful set of quotes from Unitarian thinkers. The one that really spoke to me was from the American UU minister Rev Tom Owen-Towle and reminded me how fortunate we are to belong to such a diverse religious community: *"We (Unitarians) are not a melting pot religion where there is essentially a blurring of differences. We are a stew pot faith where our theological distinctions are honoured as significant yet contributory to our larger community of faith, Unitarian Universalism, the stew."*

**David Darling**

I have discovered that the enthusiasm of my fellow-Unitarians in the group for what they call "social justice" (a phrase for what to me is political campaigning, which I'd never heard anywhere before this decade, and which I now suspect to be an American import), a priority I affirmatively do not share, comes from a motivation that I judge as good and which I do share, such as a desire to live in a more peaceful, loving, kinder, fairer world.

**Wade Miller-Knight**



I've only attended two sessions so far and already feel disappointed that I won't be able to attend the last session. Having attended courses run at the church before, I was quite familiar with the structure of having a medium sized group of people, a range of individual, small and whole group exercises, discussion and reflection. The first session really looked into what we consider our "spiritual/religious" identity to be. I found this really interesting, as not only were a variety of options, labels and names offered in consideration, but also that there wasn't just one "label" that made up my identity. The idea of having a mixture of what I consider myself to be, had never entered my mind. I found a kind of freedom in that, as before I'd thought that I had to be one thing or another. Now I realize that there's a lot more complexity to my "spiritual" (if that's even the right word!) identity than I had first thought and in fact, it's made up of a combination of various spiritual and religious traditions I've explored in the past as well as in the present. My identity isn't just composed of what faith or "spiritual" practice I currently follow, but is built on the historical religious and spiritual experiences I've had, researched and witnessed. For my multi-faceted and multi-coloured, spiritual identity I'm very pleased. And am so glad that through attending the Living Faith course, I've got to know it a little bit better.

**Jeannene Powell**

When you have been coming to the same church for several years, it is easy to get into a bit of a mental rut, and to stop questioning why you are there and if anything should be different. Just being asked to re-ask all the basic questions can feel quite surprising. For example, what is a religious community for? Surely not just so that I can enjoy singing some good hymns, listen to a nice, entertaining talk and eat a fair trade biscuit. So my reflections made me focus on everything from 'time out' of normal life, emotional support (both ways), moral values, spiritual reflection, a feeling of community, being confronted by beauty, whether in music, flowers, crafts, the garden, even food. Nothing revolutionary at all, but good to re-think in the company of other enthusiastic people. Sometimes it really does take a structured group to make me stop and think; either the group affirmed something I already felt (which is always a good feeling); occasionally people would even suggest something I never had felt or thought (which may be better). Re-examining Unitarian values is not always a matter of hard, intractable questions; it may be as simple as discussing what we tell our friends, if anything, about our church life; and if the answer is "nothing", why?

**Caroline Blair**

# Prayer to the Six Directions

Beneath the blue dome of sky I come to be with creation.

Wrapped in the embrace of the Great Spirit, I am.

I turn to the East,  
where each morning the sun rises bright with hope and promise  
and I give thanks for all beginnings.

I turn to the South,  
where each noon the sun is raised in brilliant glory  
and I give thanks for the things that are fulfilled.

I turn to the West,  
where each evening the sun slips into darkness  
and I give thanks for endings.

I turn to the North,  
where each night the bright stars rest in the heavens  
and I give thanks for the nurturing arms of healing sleep.

To the Earth I turn, provider of sweet fruit and blessed water

And for my life, filled with the fruit of love, I give thanks.

Here in this sacred space, I am at one with creation.

**Rev. Celia Cartwright**

*This meditation was used by Howard Hague in a service for Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church on 15 July 2012.*

Reproduced (with permission) from the 2002 edition of Stirrings, the annual compilation of prayers, reflections and meditations put together by the students of Unitarian College Manchester. It was in the section entitled 'Meditations for Everyday Spirituality'. The Rev Celia Cartwright has been minister to Kendal Unitarians since 2006. Between 1998 and 2006 she was minister at Rochdale.

"The revelation we offer to each other in the beloved community is not the revelation of the saved. It is the revelation of the lost. The fact is that many of us are walking around pretending that we've got it sorted, pretending that life makes sense to us somehow... The pretension can be so convincing that we even manage to convince ourselves for some of the time. The pressures to pretend are everywhere in evidence. The most generous thing we can do in this context is to share with those who come to us with their struggles just how lost we ourselves are... We can understand the beloved community to be primarily a community of brokenness – none of us quite fitting in to the straightjacket they call 'normality'."

**Rev. Cathal Courtney**



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

**Second Sunday of the Month from  
2-3pm: 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).

## Small Group Communion



**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August and  
9<sup>th</sup> September 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:

**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.



# My Impressions of Kensington Unitarians

How did my path take me to Essex Church?

In the 1990s when as a Senior Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages at Chelsea Register office I came along to the Unitarian church in my professional capacity to register a marriage with an American minister who was not qualified to do the civil part of the ceremony. The wedding was between a Catholic and a Jewish person, and I remember thinking, how special it was to combine two different faiths in a celebration of love and unity.



A decade or so later, I found myself as a visitor, at the church once more, due to my interest in different faith groups, practices and a curiosity that I have within, when I want to know more. I think my first visit was as a result of a conversation I had with a fellow student at Heythrop College, Jane Blackall, an esteemed member of this congregation.

I was raised a Catholic in London by my Irish-born parents, and was never forced or coerced to go to church. But have always liked sacred places, churches, mosques and temples. To be in a space, where I am quiet, reflective, and still for at least an hour a week, seems to enrich me and my encounters with others, in a rather simple but beautiful way.

As an older mature student, living in rather grand student accommodation in Kensington Square, with a chapel onsite, a place I often found myself sitting in. I attended the mass on a Sunday and the mass for students every Thursday. As an addition to this Catholic worship, Jane invited me along to a Unitarian service, I loved the singing, especially when Margaret Marshall and Harold Lorenzelli, did their West End type performances, I felt like I had a ticket to a London secret, the different themes of the service every week, left me thinking after the service, about the topics raised, with me, looking at the themes and readings again for my own personal development. The simple lighting of the chalice candle was a ritual I like to observe as a new start to the week ahead, a sort of weekly point of reference.

I remember one service that I attended, an older lady got up to share her thoughts on transplants. She had a nice hairdo, and went on to tell a story about her hairdresser, who had been ill and waiting on a transplant, if that man, had not had his transplant, he would probably have died, and her hair would have been a mess! It was a simple story, but I remember it, as it made me laugh. It was a reminder of all the things we take for granted. Our health, our friends and family, the train drivers, the hairdressers, the street cleaners, who all make a difference to our world, we only notice them, when they are not available and absent.

Then I found myself attending Essex Church a bit more, becoming a regular on Sundays, doing singing workshops, attending book club, having tea and biscuits, attending NIA dance classes, all of these activities have opened up new friendships, and have been lots of fun, it has made me want to invite the outside in, every time I have had visitors I have brought them along to a church service, and they have always wanted to come back.

I am so looking forward to the Unitarian summer school, and spending time getting to know even more Unitarians! In September I am going off to live in Malta for a year as an Erasmus student, and apparently Malta has more than 365 churches, so I will need the address of the Unitarian church over there...

Essex Church is more than a simple church, it is a living and breathing supportive community, that I will continue to pop into when I am visiting London, a home from home. It is funny where you end up, and I'm so glad I ended up here!

**Ellen McHugh**



“Every person needs to take one day away. A day in which one consciously separates the past from the future. Jobs, lovers, family, employers, and friends can exist one day without any one of us, and if our egos permit us to confess, they could exist eternally in our absence.

Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us. We need hours of aimless wandering or spates of time sitting on park benches, observing the mysterious world of ants and the canopy of treetops.

If we step away for a time, we are not, as many may think and some will accuse, being irresponsible, but rather we are preparing ourselves to more ably perform our duties and discharge our obligations. . .

A day away acts as a tonic. It can dispel rancour, transform indecision, and renew the spirit.”

**Maya Angelou**

# The F-Word: Images of Forgiveness

9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at Essex Church



Marian Partington's younger sister Lucy was a victim of the serial killers Frederick and Rosemary West. Her story is one of those documented in a powerful exhibition "*The F-Word: Images of Forgiveness*" which will be on display in the church in September.

Maria Cantacuzino, founder of the Forgiveness Project writes "After hearing Marian's story, I realised that the ethos behind my own project could never simply be to present inspiring stories which drew a line under the dogma of vengeance, but rather must provide a place of inquiry for people to explore the limits and complexities of forgiveness."

On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September Marian will be co-leading the service "A Line Dividing Good and Evil" with Sarah and in the afternoon she's offering a workshop on "Salvaging the Sacred: Exploring Life's Meaning and Purpose" where she will guide us in meditation, conversation, work with art materials and simply being present together.

*We're advertising the exhibition and related events widely and expect this workshop to be heavily over-subscribed, so please book early to avoid disappointment.*

Marian recently published a book about her experiences "*If you Sit Very Still*" a copy of which is in the Church Library.

**The F-Word Exhibition will be on display at the Church from Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September and we've planned a full programme of events in conjunction with it. Here are some highlights...**

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9pm

## Concert: Traditional Turkish Sufi Music

With poetry in Persian & English Translation and contemporary dance. Delicious middle eastern snacks in the interval. Closing with Sufi Zikr meditation.

This event has been curated by Khaled Hakim, a member of the Ansari Sufi group that meets in the library here to chant every Monday evening. The dance piece (pictured below) was originally commissioned for the Hajj exhibition at the British Museum.



Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9pm

## Playback Theatre Performance

Playback Theatre is a unique form of improvisational theatre, co-created with audience members by inviting their true stories, which the actors re-enact with artistry and respect as spontaneous performance.

This performance has been organised by Veronica Needa, a member of Essex Church congregation and founder member of the London Playback Theatre Company:

[www.londonplayback.co.uk](http://www.londonplayback.co.uk)

The performance will take forgiveness as a theme and also feature artwork from Heidi Ferid, another congregation member who painted the angels in the Lindsey Hall.

On the afternoon before the performance (2-5pm), there's a chance to explore the playback theatre method for yourself in a workshop given by Veronica. No previous drama experience is necessary for this, but please register in advance [vneeda@gmail.com](mailto:vneeda@gmail.com)

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September, 9am-4.30pm  
**Heartdance Meditation Ritual**

Heartdance was created by Shanah Rivers (*centre, photo below*) who trained to facilitate rites of passage rituals with Malidoma and Sobonfu Some. She's also a qualified teacher of Wu Tao and Ecstatic dance.

Heartdance is a welcoming space for people to authentically and safely express themselves. It's a space to feel, move & heal, so that we can manifest our true selves. It's a space free from judgement and with little instruction on how to dance. In this day workshop, our focus will be exploring the areas in our lives that yearn for compassion and forgiveness.



All are welcome. Suggested donation £45/30/15 (pay what you can afford – please do not let the cost stop you attending) [www.heartdance.co.uk](http://www.heartdance.co.uk)

To register email [shanahrivers@googlemail.com](mailto:shanahrivers@googlemail.com)

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2-5pm  
**Stories at Rosh Hashanah**



Sef Townsend, from the Beit Klal Yisrael synagogue, will be telling traditional and not so traditional stories from around the world with themes of understanding, generosity & forgiveness. After a brief break for refreshments at 4pm Sef will also share some participatory exercises he uses in his international work with refugees.

## Forgiveness Week Leaflet

Information about the above and other events taking place here during the exhibition week can be found in our Forgiveness leaflet, on display in the foyer. We've printed plenty of these, so if you'll be visiting somewhere with leaflet racks, please take a bundle with you. We don't often have public events like this at the Church, so it feels like a real opportunity to make new people aware of us and all the exciting things that go on here.

We also need volunteer stewards during opening hours: 4-6pm Sun 9<sup>th</sup> - Fri 14<sup>th</sup> and all day Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September (please get in touch with Sarah if you think you could help with that – [sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)) but most importantly of all – do come and enjoy the exhibition yourself!

Jenny Moy

## We Need You!

Calling all friends and members of Kensington Unitarians – we need you! We need people to support these events and to put them in your diary now and come along to as many as you can.

We need stewards who can be in the building and welcome visitors each day. The exhibition is open during all the events but also specifically each day from 4 to 6pm, with extended opening hours of 10 to 6pm on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September. We'll have drinks on offer and it will be a good opportunity to be there for visitors and tell them more about us. It will also give you more chance to look at the exhibition yourself. It is worth repeat viewing.

We need people to take piles of leaflets and distribute them around London. Can you think of notice boards, shop windows, events etc. where you could advertise what's on? Do you have contacts who could help to spread the word? Would you like to help with door to door distribution in our local area? A few leaflets will be enclosed with copies of this newsletter – please pass them on to anyone who might be interested.

For all of this, let us know what you are able to help with – we have rotas on the office wall that are longing to have your name added to them!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

# Multifaith Calendar for August/September

## ✿ 2<sup>nd</sup> August – Asalha Puja / Dhammacakka Day / Turning of the Wheel of Teaching – Buddhist

This is a Theravada Buddhist celebration of the First Proclamation by Gotama to five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares. He taught about the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths.



## ☸ 2<sup>nd</sup> August – Raksha Bandhan – Hindu

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

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

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

## ✈ 8<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> August – Farvardigan (Muktad) – Zoroastrian

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

## ☸ 10<sup>th</sup> August – Janamashtami/Krishna Jayanti – Hindu

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

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

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

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

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

## ✈ 18<sup>th</sup> August – No Ruz – Zoroastrian

New Year's Day according to the Shenshai calendar. Many of the customs parallel the customs for the Persian / Iranian Jamshedi No Ruz (see March 21 in the calendar). The main difference is cultural, with celebrations based on the Indian Parsi Zoroastrian culture.

## ☾ 19<sup>th</sup> August – Id-ul-Fitr – Muslim

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

## ✈ 23<sup>rd</sup> August – Khordad Sal – Zoroastrian

The birthday of Zarathustra is celebrated according to the Shenshai calendar by Indian Parsi Zoroastrians.

## ✝ September / October – Harvest Festival – Christian

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

## ☆ 17-18<sup>th</sup> September – Rosh Hashanah / Jewish New Year's Day 5773 – Jewish

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

## ☸ 19<sup>th</sup> September – Ganesha Chaturthi – Hindu

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

## ☾ 20-27<sup>th</sup> September – Paryushan – Jain

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

## ☆ 26<sup>th</sup> September – Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) – Jewish

This is the final day of the ten days of repentance, the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar - 'the Sabbath of Sabbaths', and is marked with a total fast for 25 hours. The evening before and most of the day is spent in prayer, asking God's forgiveness for past wrongs and resolving to improve in the future.



## Warden's Column

August is a blissfully quiet time in the building. Most of the regular groups stop for the summer. Sarah's doing a baby-naming on the 11th and there's a Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness meeting on the 18th, but apart from that it should be very peaceful.

This relatively empty diary has enabled me to take a booking that's dear to my own heart – for a week long Contact Improvisation Dance intensive. Contact Improvisation is a dance form I've been studying for several years now and an important part of my spirituality. It's usually done without music and the fundamental principle is listening – to your own inner movement impulses and to information received through physical contact with a partner.

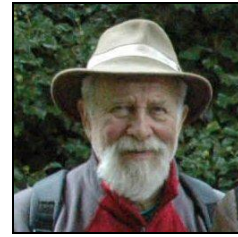
A few years ago, the Church kindly allowed me to organise a New Year Contact Jam here – during the other period when the Church is quiet – and that's inspired two more New Year Jams in other London venues since then. One of the highlights of that event, was that it ran right up to Sunday 3rd January when the Church had planned a congregational service where people talked about what they'd done at new year. This gave me and two other participants a chance to share something of the joyful dancing that had been happening in the church space and I was very touched by the positive responses we received.

That kind of direct feedback isn't possible this year, so I wanted to express my gratitude here. At the last event there were dancers from many countries without a strong liberal religious tradition – and people expressed amazement that it was possible to hold such an event in a Church. A lot of people also spoke spontaneously about what dance and dancing together meant to them spiritually.

So thank you Essex Church! I know that many of the groups who come here deeply appreciate your generous hospitality – we have several who've met here twenty years or more and regard it as their home – but being a beneficiary of that hospitality myself, still helps me to appreciate at a deeper level just what a gift it is, to local and UK-wide groups, that there's a space like this available to support people's spiritual explorations in whatever form they take: yoga; psychoanalysis; Sufism; Judaism, or mediation - and of course dance ☺

Jenny Moy

## 'Keep in Touch' says Will

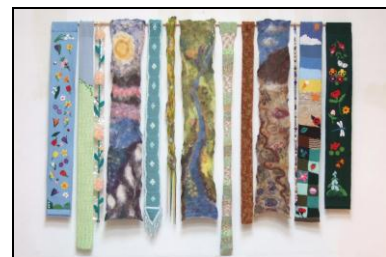


I am now in a nursing home and having three trips a week to hospital for dialysis. It would be good to hear from people so do drop me a line or phone or come and visit if you're in the area. The address is Ealing Manor Nursing Home, 5 Grange Park, W5 3PL and my personal phone number is 020 8567 3129.

In these circumstances, humour is needed so do send me cheery jokes or come and remind me what Spinoza would have said about all this.

Will Lyons

## Wall-Hangings

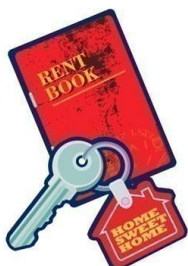


It is about five years since the church creativity group first made the seasonal wall-hangings which are displayed at the front of the church. Over the years a few of them have got damaged or overstretched and worn so have had to be 'retired'. We are now starting to think about creating some more to 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

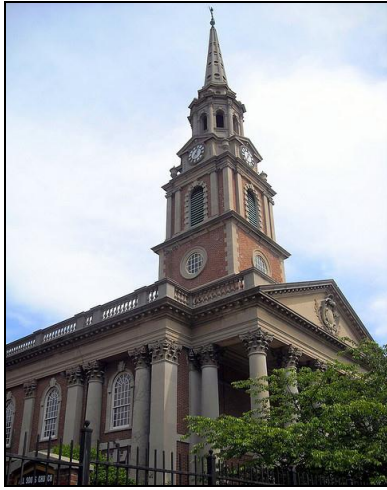
## Accommodation Request



An overseas student is looking for 3 months of friendly, reasonably priced accommodation whilst in London.

If you or someone you know can help, please let Tristan know so he can put you in touch. Thank you.

Email: [tristanjovanovic@gmail.com](mailto:tristanjovanovic@gmail.com)



## UUs and more on the East Side

So... back to America for Easter and for Connor's 6th birthday. Time flies! This is how I remember how long I've been coming to Kensington Unitarians. I found my way here just as I was about to go to America for his birth. The past 6 years have been fairly much necessarily dominated by the needs of small children (Sophie is 3) so I haven't had much opportunity to go exploring. However... the past few visits have had a different flavour and I've been able to escape now and then to visit three local and one not so local but on the same coast, UU churches.

Last year I went to All Souls in New York City, this year it was All Souls in Washington DC. These are the 'cathedral' churches boasting congregations of 1500 each. Marvellous! My first time experiencing such a large gathering of Unitarians under one roof (apart from the GA Meetings)

It was such a joy to go to All Souls NYC last year. I went with two Jewish friends with whom I was staying in Matawan, New Jersey. On the Friday night we had a meal together - shabbat - and then on Saturday we went to their Synagogue - shul - together. On Sunday they came with me to All Souls. A spiritual smorgasbord! The only downside was that we went on one of the hottest days of the year and they have no air-conditioning. Eeek! Galen Guengerich, ministering that day is one of six (*sic!*) ministers and there are two services every Sunday. It was truly like living in another world!

I went again this year to the much smaller Leesburg (VA) church with its rather more familiar number of 50+ (every Sunday and expanding). Leesburg is delightful. So cute. A converted Baptist chapel (in both senses!) made of wood.... like a very big garden shed really.... that has an instant feel of safety and containment about it. It's hard not to feel envious of that fact that they will have to move to bigger premises in the near future because the building is stuffed to capacity now every Sunday. The Sunday School is thriving and has three age groups!! I am envious of course because Sarah deserves a far bigger audience. She deserves to have our building packed to the rafters every Sunday too just like those USA churches but we have to see it all in context.

It's fun to go to a buzzing thriving church with such a big congregation but we live in such a culturally different country. Americans are comfortable with religion and spirituality, we Brits are not. Mention 'church' in a sentence and the shutters come down with a bang! In America people are either interested ... or not.... but I don't get the same kind of 'shutters' experience.

At Easter this year we had a Passover meal with the whole story with the same Jewish friends on Friday evening, an Episcopalian service on Easter Sunday and then to All Souls UU in DC. When I got inside I had a bit of a deja-vu experience and looking around I realised the building reminded me of St Martin-in-the-Fields (my favourite Christian church in London). The service was led by a visiting Baptist minister friend of one of the UU ministers there so it wasn't quite normal but was nonetheless very interesting. The building was packed, the hymns so very familiar (the grey hymnbook) and they had a visiting jazz band! Amazing!

A row of ministers greeted people as they left the building wishing them a good day. When our turn came the minister, recognising a British accent asked where I was from. I told him and also said the church reminded me of St Martins "...a famous and prestigious church in London" I said. He laughed and said what a coincidence because that's the very same church that All Souls was modelled on. Wow! Coincidence indeed! No wonder it looked familiar.

In essence the services there are the same but all of them begin with the notices. It makes it feel like I'm at a meeting rather than in sacred space. I prefer the way we do it. When I get to our building on Sunday morning what I want is to sit in silence and drink in the sacredness of our lovely building. I want to listen to our fabulous music and then to have the service while I'm in that relaxed and connected state. Where we have the notices is just right in my opinion. Having them at the beginning of the service means it takes a while to settle.

Those great big 'machines' could learn from us! Shall I tell them? Perhaps not!

**Jo Ridgers**

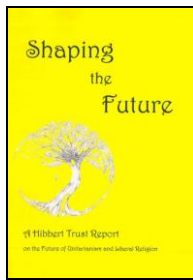


"Being part of a church has many benefits. One is that we are part of a caring and interesting community of people. Another is that we have an opportunity to grow spiritually by grappling with religious and ethical ideas and ideals and by engaging in bringing more justice into the world to help repair the world."

**Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rev. Ann C. Fox**

# 'Shaping the Future'

## A Conversation on the Future of Unitarianism and Liberal Religion



Nine of us met after a Sunday service last month to discuss a report that was published last year by the Hibbert Trust. Called *'Shaping the Future: A Grassroots View of the Prospects for Unitarianism and Liberal Religion'*, this report is the result of a collaborative inquiry that brought a range of people together over four weekends of exploration.

In some ways it could be said that the report doesn't tell us anything new, but I found it very useful in its clarifying of the place of liberal religion in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain and its potential development. They describe our potential to 'offer resources, support and challenge to enable people to think critically about their beliefs' and I would add to that the vital task of helping one another to articulate our values and live meaningfully by them. The *'Shaping the Future'* report holds a number of other useful recommendations that we shall be looking at in more depth in committee meetings.

You can download a copy of the report from or read its shorter 'Executive Summary' (via [www.thehibberttrust.org.uk](http://www.thehibberttrust.org.uk)) and have a word with any committee members if you have ideas on how to make the world more aware that we exist, and ways for us to shape the future of Unitarianism.

Thanks to everyone who came to this meeting and contributed their thoughts. It was especially good to have Gordon Deaville with us, all the way from Caterham, and Jo James from the Brixton congregation, who is soon to start his ministry training.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

"Empathy allows us to see the connections between us, making strangers less strange, foreigners less foreign. When we adopt other people's perspectives, we do more than step into their shoes — we use their eyes, we borrow their skin, we feel their hearts beating within us, we lose ourselves and enter into their world, as if we were them. I emphasize those words once again because they are so critically important and so often misunderstood. With empathy, we do not step into others' experience to see it with our eyes — empathy demands that we see it with their eyes. Through that experience we are fundamentally changed, for we see with a sudden, startling clarity that we are the other. All the good and the bad that we see in them we can also recognize in ourselves."

**Arthur P. Ciaramicoli and Katherine Ketcham**

# The Poppy



Not much given to dusting and polishing, but arranging the flowers - that's another thing altogether. So the other day, I was looking at a bowl of poppies that had been picked the previous day. The trick is to walk round the garden, scissors in hand, with a mug of boiling water into which the poppies are dropped as soon as cut - in order to seal the stem. So there I am, looking down at these poppies. Two are fully open. The green covering of one of the buds has begun to split and, even as I look, something moves. The green outer coverings fall off and all creased and folded the silky petals open out and lie flat. What more could a girl ask for. Mmm well, yes, a spot of sunshine? No harm in asking.

**Stephanie Saville**

*A publication you might be interested in:*

## 'The Unitarians: A Short History'

Blackstone Editions, the small US/Canadian publishing company specializing in liberal religious history has now released a Kindle Edition of Len Smith's book, *The Unitarians: A Short History*. It can be purchased from the Kindle Store at any Amazon website, where there is also an opportunity to take a "look inside".

The eBook format makes the work more readily available in Great Britain as well as internationally, for only £4.91. It can be read on a Kindle reader, an iPad, or by using a free Kindle program downloaded to a personal computer. The illustrations, which appear smaller on Kindle than in the Paperback edition, may be enlarged using the cursor and zoom facility.

A more expensive Paperback edition is also still available on the Blackstone Editions' website.

**Information from Rev Dr Leonard Smith**

# Forgiveness: The Great Undoing

Special Findhorn Event  
28<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2013

*“That which un-does us,  
embraced with love  
is our greatest ally.”*

You can find out more about this event on the website of the Findhorn Community where it will be taking place next year. Sarah our minister found the first Forgiveness Conference at Findhorn such a life-changing week that she would like to support someone else in fund-raising to attend this conference. Get in touch if this calls to you.

For more information see: [www.findhorn.org](http://www.findhorn.org)

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings ‘Strength’ and ‘Forgiveness’



**Fridays 10<sup>th</sup> August  
and 14<sup>th</sup> September 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’*

## ‘Finding Our Voice’

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 19<sup>th</sup> August, 16<sup>th</sup> September  
12.30 to 1.15pm, at Essex Church



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



“UU minister Gary James says that people who believe in personal spirituality but not organized religion “would not say, ‘I believe in medicine but I do not believe in medical schools, hospitals and clinics.’” One of the hallmarks of our Unitarian Universalist faith, in fact, is that we are congregationalists – we believe that the way we can best nurture our own souls is in community.”

**Unitarian Universalist, Scottie McIntyre Johnson**



# Making and Sharing a Good Life

My dear friend Nadia Lotti has a dream of treading lightly on the earth, and making opportunities for people of all ages and cultures to come together to learn how to do this with creativity and joy. She and her husband Luca Verri sold their home and bought a piece of land in the mountains above Sondrio between the villages of Gatti and Triangia (north Italy beyond Milan) to develop into an Eco-farm. It's called Lunalpina. It was only three and a half years ago. I go every year and lend my pair of hands for whatever work is necessary. The first year it was pulling weeds. (She practices and now teaches permaculture, so no weedkillers are used... just human effort). The second year, more weed pulling but also brushing of Fulu, her newly acquired black mare. Then more brushing of pregnant Fulu and weed-pulling in the next year. And this July I was able to brush Fulu AND Stella her three month old filly. No weed pulling, not because it wasn't necessary but because my hands were needed elsewhere. She managed to acquire the premises of an abandoned nearby Primary School with permission and some funding to transform that into an Eco-School, for local, national and international training purposes. New windows and a new floor have been put in. And it opens on 21 July 2012.... Nadia has managed to get many hands to help manifest her dream by offering eco-educational workshops which include working on the land, and community-building creative activities. She is a Psychodramatist and Playback Theatre practitioner by training. That's my first connection with her. And now I participate in her passion for developing eco-consciousness and good practice alongside the creation of healthy community life.

Her son Julio is now helping fulltime too. A gifted cartoonist/designer, he is also a young man who knows his body needs to work the land and climb mountains. There are also long-stay volunteers. This year Anastasia has come for three months. She used to have a well-paid job in marketing and advertising in St Petersburg. This she gave up to create a new more meaningful life. She is 31 years old. Anastasia painted the doors, and I worked with tiles!

Nadia is recycling everything. She helps others to recycle too. Amongst other things, she acquired slates of marble and tiles of many colours and kinds from local merchants... their leftover samples due for the bin. And led workshops making beautiful panels with them... these she will make into table tops for her school kitchen, and also fix to the wall as decoration. I was deeply engrossed with these panels, tidying them up, sticking loose tiles down with cement, and then filling the spaces with grout. It was a meditation for me.

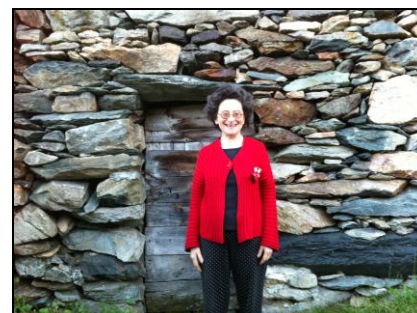
To stock the school, Nadia put messages out to the local villages nearby that her van would come round on Monday for any Stuff that people didn't need and could put outside their front door for Nadia's helpers to pick up. Sheets, pillows, blankets, kitchen utensils, plates, glasses ... many boxes were collected. Like Christmas early! On the opening day soon, the villagers will be looking out for their items – the glasses for the wine, the serving dish for the polenta, the table-cloth, the hand-towel...

Later that day, while Nadia, Julio and Anastasia were waiting for the local plumber to come after work to offer his skills to the project, I went up to the higher mountains with Luca to check on the donkeys. Their two lady donkeys, both pregnant this year, go up to eat the good grass of the high mountains during the summer with some other donkey friends. One has delivered of a girl donkey, and the other is still big tummyed. So Luca visits a little more often to check on her. I could see the Alps from there. Italy this side, Switzerland the other. And look at the hand-built stone-walled homes of the folks who would bring their sheep and cows up in times past for the grass, and which are now weekend homes for people to bask in fresh fresh air and clear clear light.

I feel very blessed to have this deep connection to Italy, and to witness the manifestation of this most excellent dream into reality.

**Veronica Needa**

*YouTube Film that Julio made of a Youth Working party at Lunalpina:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Omj4mzMR7Yc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Omj4mzMR7Yc)*



# 'Enough'

Sermon by Howard Hague – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012

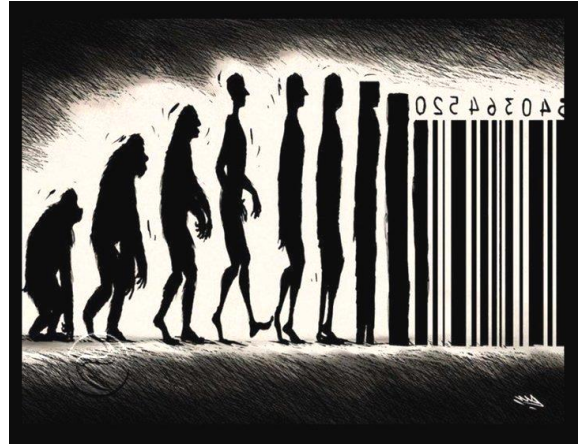
An audio podcast of this sermon is available on our website.

It seems to be a fact of life that some people in the world have too much – far more than they really need to live comfortably - and some people have not enough to survive, let alone thrive. In between there are many more people who have enough, but would like just a little bit (or maybe quite a lot) more. It seems that we are never satisfied. In his book *Enough* John Naish – who is a journalist and a member of our congregation in Brighton – makes the case that there is now too much of many things – information, food, possessions and stuff, even work, happiness and economic growth.

The author, writing in 2007, says that there had been more new information created in the last thirty years than in the previous five thousand, and in the same period the number of television channels had risen from four to one hundred and twenty three. In 2004 companies worldwide spent more than £200 billion pounds on advertising. There is now a new science of neuromarketing, which advises manufacturers which stimuli lead people to decide how they will spend their money. Our lives are log-jammed with data, not only unwanted spam but emails, phone calls, texts and many other media. Clearly we have a love-hate relationship with the mobile phone. On the one hand many people have them but at the same time surveys of modern life consistently point to them as our most hated modern tool. One university study of hundreds of 18 to 25 year-olds claims that 40 per cent of these young people may be addicts, though how you would measure that I'm not quite sure. It is true that our children have never known anything other than a life enveloped in these media. It will be some time before we know the long-term effects of all this, but it doesn't sound very healthy that around sixty per cent of us apparently now check our work emails while we are away.

While our parents and grandparent's generations played outside with skipping ropes and spinning tops, today's youngsters are often in their rooms with computers and video games. One of the more intriguing ideas explored in this section about information-overload is that of Geoffrey Miller, an evolutionary psychologist at the University of New Mexico. He claims that the bulk of human ingenuity is now being poured into creating virtual-life experiences, rather than into industries that make real things such as hydro-electric dams. In his succinct words: "We are already disappearing up our own brainstems". While perhaps not many of us were ever engaged in building hydro-electric dams, one can see the point he is making. There's a danger that we spend time watching a DVD of *Friends*, rather than going out and meeting our actual friends. As so often in life, it's a question of balance.

One of the features of the book is that the author examines aspects of modern behaviour in relation to our evolutionary past, and often finds a direct link. He suggests that our brains evolved in the Pleistocene era, between 200,000 and 130,000 years ago. Knowing when to start, but not when to stop, is one of humankind's defining characteristics.



We want, we desire, we covet, and that is what has driven us along over the millennia. In relation to food intake, which is becoming a real problem today, he notes that our hunter-gatherer ancestors had to take their food when they could get it, because they didn't know where the next meal was coming from, or indeed whether unfriendly neighbours would try and take it for themselves. Later in the book he looks at perhaps the less expected topic of 'enough happiness', and suggests that humans are not designed to have happiness as a natural default state. Rather we are built to worry, and again in evolutionary terms this was a matter of survival – our Neolithic ancestors needed to stay perpetually alert for dangers. You never knew what was behind the next tree.

You will not be surprised to know that one of the chapters in the book is entitled 'Enough Stuff'. Oscar Wilde said that 'There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it'. Most of us today in the West have every material thing that we need to support an enjoyable and rewarding life, so why the continual yearning for more stuff? Shopping, as many have pointed out in recent years, is the modern religion, and the vast shopping arcades are our modern cathedrals. Part of the attraction, it seems, is not so much in having the goods, but the thrill of acquisition. The process of choosing (dare one say hunting) the items for purchase seems to produce a surge of the pleasure hormone dopamine in the brain. Apparently shoe shops now expect that a certain proportion of the goods bought on Saturday will be returned on Monday, once the pleasure of the selection and purchase has worn off. Some of this behaviour is blamed on our celebrity culture today. We see well-known women and men advertising merchandise – so well-known that they almost seem like our friends – and we'd like what they've got.

It's time for a little personal input here. Generally speaking I would go a long way to avoid a shopping trip, unless it's for essential food supplies. However, those who know me well will not be too surprised to know that over the last forty years I have amassed a large collection of books. After all, books are different, aren't they? They represent the human knowledge and wisdom gathered over the generations. Be that as it may, the day of reckoning has arrived, as we prepare to move house later in the year. For the last few months I have been going through my collection, boxing up the titles that I want to take with me, and disposing of many others. A couple of weeks ago we took some twenty bags of books to an Oxfam shop, with

## ‘Enough’ by Howard Hague *(continued)*

more to go. In a funny sort of way I have quite enjoyed the process of sifting and sorting, and felt very virtuous every time another bag for disposal was filled. But there is a serious point here. Recently there have been a number of programmes on TV about people who have acquired vast amounts of stuff over the years, so much so that their homes have become a health and fire hazard. Acquiring stuff can be an addiction, whatever the reasons for it. I'm doing quite well with my books, but I've scarcely started on the files and papers yet!

Perhaps the part of *Enough* that I was most interested in was what he would say about economic growth. Even by the 1970s some had recognised that the earth's resources were limited, and that if we carried on using those resources at the same rate then humanity's future was likely to be bleak. These included E.F. Schumacher in his classic *Small is Beautiful* and even the prestigious Club of Rome's report *Limits to Growth*. In the 1980s I remember being impressed by James Robertson's book *The Sane Alternative*, in which he said it was not a question of no growth, but a balance between people and the environment.

In preparing his own book, John Naish tried to find economists who could talk to him about models of a sustainable economy, rather than continual economic growth, but he had great difficulty in finding any. The one person he did speak to – the professor of sustainable development at Surrey University – advised that the government has a split personality on this. On the one hand it keeps telling people to get out of their cars and consume less, but currently our economy relies strictly on increases in consumption. The professor said it was extremely hard to find political space to have this discussion, which is something we can still see today.

The manuscript for *Enough* was written by 2007, before the worst of the financial and banking crisis had hit us, but for the paperback version which came out in 2009 the author has added an Afterword entitled 'Enough comes to the crunch'. In this he describes how he was invited to address a seminar at the Cabinet Office. He thought he was being asked to give advice about how economic policy could go in a more sustainable direction. In fact he found that the senior civil servants merely wanted some personal lifestyle advice on coping with the extra stresses brought on by the financial crisis. As he comments "it is perturbing that even the big-picture guys don't seem to want to look at the big picture". All hopes are still pinned on a quick return to the constant-growth economic model as the way of getting out of our current problems. Over the last couple of years I can't recall any mainstream politician raising serious questions about whether our fragile earth can cope with the ever-increasing demands we are putting on it. Instead it is left to ecologists such as Sir David Attenborough to do this on our behalf. I do think there is a weakness in our political process in that serious but perhaps unpopular issues cannot be raised for debate without others trying to make political capital out of it.

In an address of this length I cannot do justice to the many ideas and suggestions contained in the book. As you will have heard from the reading earlier, the author takes a broad approach to his subject, including areas where he believes a spiritual approach can help, such as the practice of meditation. When the paperback edition of the book came out it was reviewed in *The Inquirer*, and the issue of 25 July 2009 included a substantial interview with the author which I can recommend. He revealed that the book had been translated into eleven languages, including Korean. It is interesting to speculate what the Koreans – presumably the South Koreans – made of it all!

*Enough* by John Naish.  
Hodder & Stoughton, paperback edition 2009

## Open House London – 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012



Open House London celebrates all that is best about the capital's buildings, places and neighbourhoods. This is your unique opportunity to get out and under the skin of London's amazing architecture, with over 750 buildings of all kinds opening their doors to everyone.

You will need to find out which buildings are opening / walks and talks planned in order to plan your visits. Get hold of a copy of the printed programme or check out the website search facility which will go live in early August. Pre-booking also opens at this time. Along with a brief description and the name of the architect, each building's entry in the Guide or in the website search facility will contain its address, opening days and hours, access to visitors, pre-booking details where relevant, amenities and transport. Admission is FREE to all buildings. There are over 750 from which to choose. There are talks, often given by architects, architectural historians and engineers and also walks over the weekend.

**For more information see the Open House London website:** [www.londonopenhouse.org](http://www.londonopenhouse.org)

# Sunday Services at Essex Church

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – “Come What May”**

**Service led by Members of the Congregation**

Who knows how it will feel to be in Central London at the midpoint of the 2012 Olympic Games...? Many Londoners have mixed feelings, feeling concern about the impact of the event, yet hoping that our hometown comes out of it well when the eyes of the rest of the world are upon us. In this service, we will be reflecting on our ability to give of our best, regardless of the situation we find ourselves in.

**12<sup>th</sup> August, 11am –  
“Stonehenge - Meaning and Mystery”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

As artist Jeremy Deller's inflatable replica of Stonehenge tours the country, we'll find out a bit more about the time in which the original was constructed, as well as marvelling at all that we have yet to understand about it.

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

**19<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – “Growth Through  
Reflection: Keeping a Spiritual Journal”**

**Service led by David Francis Darling**

In this service we will be looking at how writings and writers can help us understand ourselves and the world around us.

**26<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – “Open or Closed?”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

This service will explore the symbolism of doors and windows in religious life.



**2<sup>nd</sup> September, 11am –  
“The 99 Labels for God”**

**Service led by Tristan Jovanović**

When looking through symbols from the world of fashion, branding and art, can we catch a glimpse of how we construct our spirituality and theology?



**9<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
“A Line Dividing Good and Evil?”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
and special guest Marian Partington**

Why do we have a concept of evil and what other paths might we take in coming to terms with life's most difficult issues?

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
“Reconciliation: A Path to Peace”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

This service will recognise the work of St Ethelburga's Centre and other projects from around the world that seek to repair and re-build relatedness. How might this be relevant in our own lives?

**23<sup>rd</sup> September, 11am –  
“A Harvest & Equinox Celebration”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Separated as we city dwellers may sometimes feel from the land, it's perhaps all the more important to recognise our connection with the changing seasons and to make time to give thanks for all that we have. Come and celebrate in poetry and song and bring something to decorate our harvest table if you would like. This service will also feature our annual 'Gathering of the Waters' ceremony (see page 2).

**30<sup>th</sup> September, 11am –  
“Spirit in Practice”**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

In October we'll be starting a new small group with this title. In this service we will ask the question 'what makes an actively spiritual orientation in life so valuable for us humans?'