



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: October 2010

What's On in October:

Saturday 2nd October, 10.00am
Walking Group: Hampstead
Meet at Hampstead Tube Station

Sunday 3rd October, 11am
"The Importance of Letting Go"
Led by Harold Lorenzelli

Sunday 3rd October, 12.30pm
Youngsters' Social
Lunch at a nearby pub or café.

Thursday 7th October, 7-9pm
Adult RE: 'Compassionate Communication' (4/5)

Sunday 10th October, 11am
"A Unitarian Communion"
Led by Rev Sarah Tinker, Tristan Jovanović and Jane Blackall

Sunday 10th October, 2-3.00pm
Nia Technique
Class led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 10th Oct, 3.00-5.00pm
Songs and Silence for the Soul: Chanting and Stillness

Tuesday 12th October, 7-9pm
Committee Meeting

Thursday 14th October, 7-9pm
Adult RE: 'Compassionate Communication' (5/5)

Sunday 17th October, 11am
"One World, Our World"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17th October, 12.30pm
"Finding Our Voice" - Singing

Tuesday 19th October, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group:
'Printmaking (I) - Carving'

Sunday 24th October, 11am
"Celebrate"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 24th October, 12.30pm
Special Wedding Anniversary
Lunch for John and Heidi

Tuesday 26th October, 7-9pm
Reading Group:
'Howard's End is on the Landing' by Susan Hill

Sunday 31st October, 11am
"All Souls"
Led by Jane Blackall

A Message from our Minister:

Looking Foolish...

The fact that it was the hottest day of the year probably didn't help. Back in late June I went on an introductory training course in Nordic pole walking in Hyde Park and it was in the midst of that experience that I started to feel rather foolish. When the rest of London seemed to be sensibly lying about beneath the shade of trees sipping cool beers, our pole walking group was marching intrepidly beneath the scorching sun, across the hot, dry dust bowl that the park had become.

We looked ridiculous. I know that because various groups of drinkers started to laugh at us. Someone shouted 'Lost yer skis?' much to the merriment of his friends. The only good thing was that we were walking at such a pace, helped along by the aforementioned poles that the sound of mockery was soon left far behind. In an hour and a half of steady marching you can walk right round the perimeter of both Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and by the end of that I realised we weren't the only ones looking foolish. Have you seen the roller skiers? They look like people whose skis have cross-bred with a pair of roller skates. They also have poles. The Military Fitness group was out in the park that day, taking a large cannon to pieces, running across the park with the bits and then re-assembling the cannon at the other end. In comparison, us pole walkers started to look quite normal.



...Feeling Great

And best of all, by the end of the session we were all feeling great; sweaty and red faced, but with that rosy glow of well-being that comes from being out in the fresh air and laughing with others, doing something that's good for you. I'd had to overcome a certain amount of inertia to get there at all. Staying in bed or lazing on the balcony had seemed attractive alternatives.

In 21st century London getting up and going to church on a Sunday morning may seem at times as much of a minority activity as pole walking. It takes an effort and will-power to go against the majority and spend time tending to our spiritual well-being. Coming to church also shows our commitment to the group as a whole rather than simply to our own good. There will be people who think we are foolish to spend time singing hymns together, sitting in silence, listening to an address, lighting candles and paying attention to one another's stories of life. But when I look round the room at the end of the service or as we are having a chat over a cup of coffee afterwards, people look animated and engaged. Central London is not always the friendliest of places, all the more reason then for us to offer activities that bring people together into meaningful connection. And anyway, who cares what other people think?!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'A Unitarian Communion' by Jane Blackall * John & Heidi's Anniversary Lunch * A Letter from Iona in South Africa * 'Hucklow Summer School' by David Darling * 'Visiting Other Congregations' by Jean Barker & Ken Rogers * Sacred Texts * 'Dealing with Stress' by Arthur Krebbers & Sarah Tinker * Poems by John Hands * Latest News of our Building Improvements * Writing Project * 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

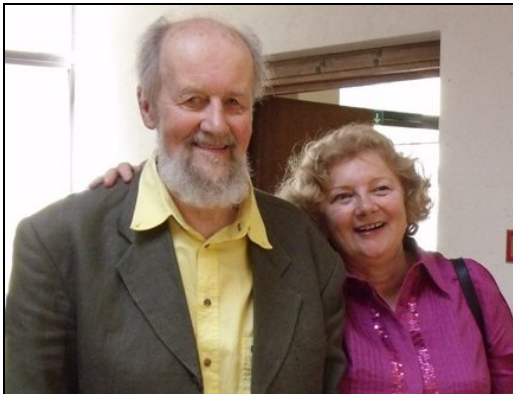
Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

John and Heidi's Anniversary Lunch

Sunday 24th October, 12.30pm



All are welcome to stay behind after the service on Sunday 24th October for a special lunch to celebrate a special wedding anniversary of long-standing church members John Hands and Heidi Ferid (pictured, above, at John's 80th Birthday celebration earlier this year).

Josh Johnston Concert

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE!!

Sunday 10th October, 8pm at Unity Church, Islington

Dublin pianist/singer/composer Josh Johnston (organist at the Dublin Unitarian Church) performs selections from his third solo CD 'The Shape Of Things', a collection of piano solo instrumentals stylistically drawing on folk, jazz, pop and classical music. He will also play songs and instrumentals from his previous CDs. Admission: £8 on the door. This event was previously scheduled to take place at Essex Church but the venue has now switched to Unity Church at Islington. We apologise for any inconvenience.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

3 rd October:	Sue Smith
10 th October:	Howard Hague
17 th October:	Heidi Ferid
24 th October:	Gina Bayley
31 st October:	Christine Joshi

Coffee:

3 rd October:	Margaret Darling
10 th October:	Gill Hague
17 th October:	John Hands
24 th October:	Kate Brown
31 st October:	Caroline Blair

Greeting:

3 rd October:	Arthur Krebbers
10 th October:	Jean Barker
17 th October:	Jo Ridgers
24 th October:	Natasha Drennan
31 st October:	Tristan Jovanović

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

Early Autumn



Early autumn, summer roses are fading
Early autumn, lovers linger longer, fearing old
Respectable winter. Early autumn and the breeze
Is much colder, early autumn and I start to feel
Anxious, fearing the pressure of all that's still
To be done. Early autumn and I sadly scan the skies
For the last lingering swallows; early autumn
In the thickening twilight lovers embrace;
Early autumn, and keepers come too soon
Rattling their keys in the gathering gloom.
Early autumn and once more I start yearning
Foolishly hoping for early Spring; early autumn
And cafes close early: and I remember how long
Long ago, in early autumn, we sat right here.

John Hands

Worship

In worship we pause –
to make, deepen, uphold
and proclaim connections.

Worship is a journey into communion.

Communion of one's self and our Whole Self.

Communion of individuals and communities.

Communion of human beings and all beings.

Communion of the animate and the inanimate.

Communion of ideas and feelings.

Communion of truth and love.

Communion of beauty and drama.

Communion of now and then.

Communion of movement and rest.

Communion of order and chaos.

Communion of the profane and the Divine.

Communion of the known and the unknown.

Communion of the finite and the infinite.

Communion of you, me
and the Almighty Other, in ourselves.

Rev. Simon John Barlow

A Unitarian Communion

Sunday 10th October at Essex Church



On the second Sunday of October we are planning to have a communion service at Essex Church. This is not an everyday occurrence in our congregation – to the best of my knowledge, this will be the first time we have done so in at least nine years – and I am aware that some eyebrows might be raised at the prospect... so I thought I would write a little something for the newsletter to explain how it came about.

In truth, I can't quite remember when the idea first arose, but I know that it's something I personally wanted to try for a long time. I've only experienced a communion ritual once before, and that was in a very informal setting, as part of a workshop at summer school many years ago. However, over the years, communion has come to intrigue me more and more, as I found that it was a hugely significant and precious thing for a handful of my closest Unitarian friends (perhaps most notably Rev. Simon John Barlow). As it was so important to someone who meant so much to me... I felt that I wanted to know what I was missing.

A few months ago, the idea came up again, this time in conversation with my friend (and fellow Kensington member) Tristan Jovanović, and we were both sufficiently excited about the prospect that we took the idea to Sarah.

Tristan and I have slightly different perspectives and so we talked it over in great detail until we had a sense of how the service should be to satisfy us both. We wanted it to be a distinctly Unitarian service – the words we are using are non-traditional and are adapted from a service put together by Joy Croft for the Unitarian worship panel – without denying the Christian roots of the ritual (not “elbowing Jesus out of the picture”, as we put it at the time!). We wanted to do something that was more of a recognisable bread-and-wine communion than some of the variants – each lovely in their own way – that we have tried down the years (water, chocolate, flowers, etc). We wanted to make sure that everyone attending the service would feel welcome and comfortable to take part in the ritual or not as they saw fit. I think we've achieved all of those aims with the service we've planned. Of course you're welcome to talk to (or email) me and Tristan about it beforehand if you're interested to find out more.

Over the last few weeks I have mentioned this service to a number of friends in the congregation and the responses I have had so far seem to fall broadly into two camps:

“Wow – that's wonderful – I've always wanted us to do that!”

“Oh! What on earth would you want to do that for?!”

For me, the ritual of communion is a beautiful expression of our shared humanity, and the connections between us and all-that-is. I very much hope that you will come along in a spirit of openness and curiosity as we join together for this service on 10th October.

Jane Blackall

Sacred Texts



Only three of us braved the smell of paint and the sound of carpentry down in the library to meet in August and talk about sacred texts but it proved to be a fruitful topic and one worth returning to. From traditional words of prayer and Scripture to more modern and eclectic sources, the range of pieces we read to one another was wide and interesting. It turned out that we all collected writings that appealed to us. Perhaps other people in the congregation do that as well? In which case, maybe we can share these inspirational writings in the newsletter from time to time.

Here are some words of John O'Donohue's that we liked:

A Blessing for Equilibrium from 'Benedictus – A Book of Blessings'

Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore,
May the music of laughter break through your soul.

As the wind wants to make everything dance,
May your gravity be lightened by grace.

Like the freedom of the monastery bell,
May clarity of mind make your eyes smile.

As water takes whatever shape it is in,
So free may you be about who you become.

As silence smiles on the other side of what's said,
May a sense of irony give you perspective.

As time remains free of all that it frames,
May fear or worry never put you in chains.

May your prayer of listening deepen enough
To hear in the distance the laughter of God.

Sarah, Mandy and Carolyn

Next Newsletter Deadline



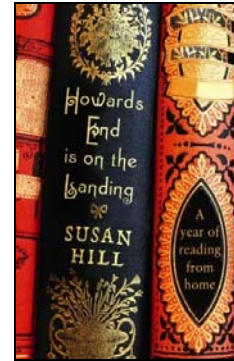
The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 17th October**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before that date.

Thank you!!!

Essex Church Reading Group

'Howard's End is on the Landing'

by Susan Hill



Tuesday 26th October, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's October session will be based on 'Howard's End is on the Landing' by Susan Hill. This was chosen by Juliet Edwards. This was originally intended for September but we had to make a last-minute change to the reading group schedule due to a double-booking.

Information from Amazon UK:

"Early one autumn afternoon in pursuit of an elusive book on her shelves, Susan Hill encountered dozens of others that she had never read, or forgotten she owned, or wanted to read for a second time. The discovery inspired her to embark on a year-long voyage through her books, forsaking new purchases in order to get to know her own collection again. A book which is left on a shelf for a decade is a dead thing, but it is also a chrysalis, packed with the potential to burst into new life. Wandering through her house that day, Hill's eyes were opened to how much of that life was stored in her home, neglected for years. Considering everything from 'Macbeth' and 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy' through Virginia Woolf, Dickens and Roald Dahl, Howard's End is on the Landing charts the journey of one of the nation's most accomplished authors as she revisits the conversations, libraries and bookshelves of the past that have informed a lifetime of reading and writing."

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

Reflections on Hucklow Summer School

This was my second visit to the Nightingale Centre at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire for the annual Religious Education Summer School. Last year I was very hesitant about going but thoroughly enjoyed it. Could it be as good again this year, I asked myself? Well, the answer is a resounding YES!

The theme was "Speaking of God" and, as one of the five theme speakers, I had thought quite a bit about the subject. Fortunately my presentation was on the first day so I was able to really relax and enjoy the contributions of the other speakers. All presentations approached the subject from a different angle but all challenged us to think again about what we meant by God. We were reminded that "God" is simply a word that is used in different ways to convey a multiplicity of concepts. We were challenged that we needed to reclaim the word God and the Bible from the potentially harmful use of the fundamentalists. All the addresses plus the skilful weaving together of the talks by Dr Mel Prideaux from the Wakefield congregation are available as podcasts on the Summer School website: <http://www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk/themetalks2010.html>

After the theme talks each morning there were different engagement groups that we had all signed up for. I was part of the "Build Your Own Theology" which, far from being a session to think what you like, was a time to listen to the thoughts and reflections of others and in the context of community come up with a statement of belief that was authentic to the individual.

There were also optional afternoon and evening workshops ranging from knitting and crocheting to Poetry Appreciation to Unitarian Writers. The knitting and crocheting session was held at the beginning of the week and thereafter there was the constant movement of needles, including those of yours truly, that eventually produced a beautiful garden. (My contribution was a strip of grass!!) We were fortunate in being able to have Sunday worship in the beautiful little Unitarian chapel in the village and to meet there for reflective epilogues at the end of each day. All the organised events were excellent but, like all these weeks, what really made it was the quality of the community life that was created within the groups, over meals, and sitting chatting on the terrace or in the sitting room.

For those of you who may have been hesitating about attending I can thoroughly recommend it and would encourage you to give it a go! There is also the added attraction that the centre is set within the beautiful Derbyshire countryside.

David Francis Darling



Letter from Iona in South Africa



Dear Friends at Kensington Church,

I hope all is well with you. I have been to lovely Swaziland on holiday with Ma and Pa Blair. The sun is shining and we have had a rich immersion in Swazi wildlife and culture, and we've made lots of good friends here. I've found out about many very good community projects - crafts using recycled materials, fair trade basket weaving to empower rural women and bee-keeping to earn a livelihood from selling honey. I'm going to visit a couple who are establishing a permaculture centre where they would like to revive and recover old Swazi farming traditions for ecological management. The government seems to have got round to ensuring the first two years of education for those children who can't afford the school fees, so most of the children I worked with two years ago have (I hope) been to government schools now.

I have another 6 months of so to go with my university course in Environmental Management. It is going well, and I have finished two modules in Urban Food Security and Traditional Knowledge, Science and the Environment. I think I have received some funding to do research on diamond mining on the coast that borders Namibia. I am staying at a very nice Eco-village in Cape Town, where there is a large community garden with an abundance of organic vegetables and happy children.

Love to you all,
hambani kahle/ salani kahle...Iona xxx
(go well/ stay well)

Saubona = Hello (I see you)
Yebo - Yes, hello (back)
Unjani = How are you?
Niyapila = I am fine.

Visiting Other Congregations



Ken and I recently took a trip to California where I used to live. We attended two services at the Palomar Unitarian Fellowship in Vista, a town north of San Diego. It was all so interesting to compare our Kensington services with the American ones. Each Sunday they hold two services as well as an open forum for discussions and children's sessions for four different age groups!

The services commence with a hand bell ringing three times, one for those gone before, one for those present, and the last for those who will carry on the liberal religious tradition. The chalice is also lit but Joys and Concerns are expressed with participants lining up to drop a pebble into a bowl. Some people speak, some are silent and others sign a book so that the minister may address their concerns later.

The children listen to a story and then leave for their classes. Hymns and messages are similar to ours except that the words are projected onto a screen. Their sound system is excellent – hope we can emulate that before too long. They have a Musical Director and sometimes a little orchestra enhances the service. The congregation clap loudly and jump up for standing ovations frequently! It is a vibrant community. Do ask us if you would like to know more about our visit and we have given Sarah their orders of service, which make for interesting reading.

Jean Barker and Ken Rogers

Christmas at Essex Church

This year we will be having a Carol Service and Congregational Christmas Lunch on Sunday 19th December. Please put the date in your diary now and plan to come along – maybe invite a friend!

As has become the tradition at Essex Church, we will be having a special candlelit service at 5pm on Christmas Eve, followed by tea and mince pies. We expect that a group will go out for dinner at a local restaurant afterwards – more details in the next newsletter.

There will be no service on the last Sunday in December as it falls on Boxing Day this year and public transport is limited on that day.

"We do not often see the place we are standing as holy ground. But the fault does not lie with the ground; it lies with us. We do not always see the saints among us, either, but that is because we do not see what it is we are looking at. We do not always see that we should be moving about our days and lives and places with awe and reverence and wonder, with the same soft steps with which we enter the room of a sleeping child or the mysterious silence of a cathedral. There is no ground that is not holy ground. All the places of our lives are sanctuaries; some of them just happen to have steeples. And all of the people in our lives are saints; it is just that some of them have day jobs and most will never have feast days named for them."

Robert Benson

Congregational Writing Project



The challenge is on. We need at least twenty members or friends of Essex Church to write a short statement to be included in a pamphlet we hope to publish next year.

We want to create a collection of statements of people's beliefs, which could be based on writings from the 'Building Your Own Theology' course or from the 'This I Believe' project. Feel free to tackle this in any way that you want. You may want to sum up your faith, or describe how your beliefs have evolved. You might want to write about what is most important to you in life or about lessons that life has taught you. The important things are that your words come from your heart and are true for you, that they are interesting for others to read or hear, and that you stick to a word count of under 500 words - around 350 would be ideal.

Don't worry about the quality of your writing as there are people who are willing to help with the writing task and to do some editing. Why not have a go at a first draft and let someone read it and give you feedback. Or ask someone to interview you and write your piece for you. Why should footballers be the only ones to have ghost writers?! So don't be left out - get writing and make sure you are part of this project.

The deadline for entries is March 1st as we hope to have the booklet published in time for Easter and for the denomination's Annual Meetings where we will be able to sell copies. Any profits made from this exciting publishing venture will go to our Swaziland Education Project. Contact our minister for more information.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Building Improvements



If you've not had chance to go downstairs and see our new library shelving then this photo gives you an idea of how special it all is. With new carpet and newly decorated walls as well as the custom made cupboards and shelving, the library is feeling much brighter and more loved. We still need to sort out the curtains and buy the new electronic keyboard, as well as get all the books back on the shelves and think about softer lighting.

Upstairs the foyer is waiting for its new leaflet racks and notice boards and we are trying to decide about having blinds or curtains in the hall. A gas fitter is trying to work out how to fit new gas heaters in the church to replace the ones that have ceased to work or that make that peculiarly loud clicking noise in silent moments of worship.

Some loyal newsletter readers will remember that this is all part of a five year plan to improve and renovate our church building. We have made such good progress and, inevitably, there is always more to be done. Not least of which, is trying to find the remedy for our leaking roof. If you have any good ideas about any of these projects or would like to get more actively involved then leave a message with a committee member and be part of making Essex Church a professional and welcoming venue for all its users.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

An Event from the Art and Spirituality Network:

'Windows into Our Life Journeys'

Finding insights and inspiration through being with art.

led by Tomo Williams and John Harley

**Saturday 2nd October, 11:45 – 4pm
at The Courtauld Gallery, London**

This is the second creative workshop at the Courtauld Gallery led by Tomo Williams and John Harley - £4 entrance fee. Bookings to johnnigelharley@yahoo.co.uk.

Essex Church Walking Group: Hampstead Heath

Saturday 2nd October, meeting at 10am



The Essex Church Walking Group has made provisional plans for its activities over the next few months so please put the dates in your diary and plan to come along. We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length.

2nd October – Hampstead with Caroline Blair
6th November – Hampton Court with Caroline Blair
4th December – Isle of Dogs with Jane Blackall

If you are intending to come on any of these walks please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email us on walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.



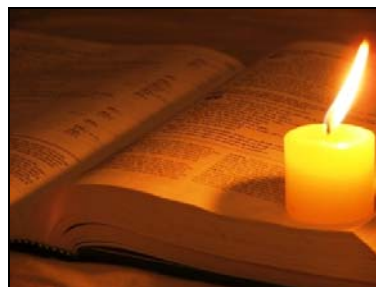
Addendum: Regarding 'Blake's London' Walk in July

Readers are probably wondering about the photograph of a font in the last issue. Blake was baptised at St. James' Church, Piccadilly and, although the church has been extensively remodelled since Blake's time, the font in which he was baptised remains. It was ornately carved in marble by the eminent sculptor, Grinling Gibbons. The supporting figures (pictured) represent Adam and Eve but Gibbons made one mistake, if we follow the Biblical story - he gave Adam a navel!

Will Lyons

Next Adult RE Course: Dates for Your Diaries

Reclaiming the Bible: Tackling Some Tricky Bits



Thursdays 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th November
7-9pm, downstairs in the library
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Taking the Bible as literal truth seems to be more common in some religious groups these days. All the more important, then, for religious liberals to be adept in utilising other strategies for Bible study. These four sessions will look at the work of feminist theologians, literary studies, post-colonialism, contextual theology and the like, to reclaim the Bible from fundamentalism.

Please book your place by emailing info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk, telling our minister, or leaving a message on the church office phone: 020 7221 6514.

Feminism in London



9:30am-5pm, Saturday 23 October
Friends Meeting House
173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Whether you're new to feminism or a seasoned campaigner, come along to Feminism in London 2010, a one day conference organised by the London Feminist Network. The day is open to all women and pro-feminist men and will feature many of the feminist activist groups that are campaigning in and around London. There will be talks, workshops and the chance to network.

Entrance: £3-£20 depending on your income.

For more information: www.feminisminlondon.org.uk

Several members and friends of our congregation have been involved in fundraising for this forthcoming event.

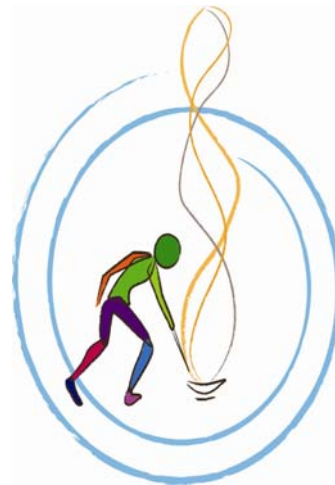
'Light the Fire!'

Discovery Weekend

"A time to dream, scheme, and build our future"

28th – 30th January 2011 in Aylesford, Kent

The LDPA (the association of Unitarian congregations in the South East) is bringing together lively and committed members of the London District to create our future together. The weekend will be an opportunity to explore new ways of experiencing Unitarianism, through worship, discussion, music, laughter, networking and imagining. The exciting and innovative programme is being planned by Louise Baumberg, Kate Buchanan, Miriam Lahage, Andy Pakula and David Usher. The weekend is open to everyone who wants to dream about our future together and to join in the work of making those dreams a reality.



Generous subsidies are being offered to those under the age of 35, or who have become Unitarians within the past three years. To register, visit www.ldpa.org.uk or email louise.baumberg@googlemail.com

Cost: £160 full adult, £100 concessions for under 35s and new Unitarians (including full board). Discounts also for children.

Note: Our congregation will also be offering subsidies to anyone who wants to attend this event – speak to Sarah for more information about this – you will need to book soon!

Venue: The Friars, Aylesford, Kent. The Friars is the home of a community of Carmelite friars, first established in 1242 and offering beautiful accommodation just three miles north of Maidstone.

Our Congregation: Kensington Unitarians

Photographed after our 'Gathering the Waters' Service on 12th September 2010





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

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm
10th October, 14th November, 12th December**

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 £7 (£5 to members)

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

Late Roses in Autumn

Like thrice-used teabags hung out to dry
Their younger peers still pink with the promise
Of a summer which seldom materialised.
The chill breeze practises its winter blast
Eyes grow moist, noses pinker than the flowers
Peer round at prospects – litter of jaundiced leaves,
A twittering aspen, a sighing conifer.

Go to bed late, sleep through a thin Christmas
A dismal prospect: dole queues
Unemployed offices, dwindling benefits,
The best prospect still is Nature.
Sign on here,
Come back in the Spring.

**John Hands
Regents Park, October 16th 2008**



Warden's Column

The column this month is all about me I'm afraid ☺ I turn 40 this October and I'm planning lots of things to celebrate, two of which are here at the Church and which I warmly invite you to.

The first is a special session of Songs and Silence for the Soul on Sunday 10th October: co-led by Sarah Tinker and my friend Zina Zelter. It will be slightly longer than usual, 3-5pm, but the same format: an improvisational warm-up; followed by songs & chants separated by periods of meditation. Rather than plan in advance what to sing, we wait for ideas to arise in the moment – but if you have any special favourites, please let Sarah know in advance so we can make sure we've got the words. We don't usually sing hymns, or use music, it's more simple chants & rounds – for example "Wade in the Water", "Shalom Havarim" or "Let my Little Light Shine".

Before this session, there will be a bring and share birthday lunch – also in the main Church so that people can just have coffee instead if they want to. I'm really looking forward to this opportunity to connect friends and family to my life here at the Church – some may even join us for the service.

The second part of the celebrations will take part on Monday 11th, my actual birthday. Jane Blackall has been helping me with a project to make a "Lifequilt" with squares for all my friends and family. She will be running a workshop all day Monday in the library where people can come and make their own square or help complete ones for people who can't be there – hopefully by the end of the day we'll be able to do a rough layout of the finished quilt together. Even if you don't feel you know me that well yet personally, please feel free to come along and contribute to this project. The square is about you not me and as working here has been a very important part of my life for the last 4 years it feels right to have the congregation well represented.

Even as a child, I was always fascinated by the saying "Life begins at 40": what could it mean? Hadn't life already begun? Wasn't getting older just about loss and slowing down? Now I'm finally about to cross this threshold, I do feel that it could be a door to new kinds of peace and freedom. 40 years is long enough to have some kind of idea who I am and who I am not and to let go of other people's habits and ambitions.

I do also feel very aware of how ageing closes doors too: in career terms, or starting my own family – but there's even a kind of freedom in that, a permission to live life in the present rather than for the future and for oneself rather than others. So I'm determined to experience passing this milestone as a time of possibilities, of new beginnings & also of pride and gratitude for all that life has brought so far and the wonderful people I've got to meet along the way. Hence feasting & singing, hence the quilt: hope you'll join me. ☺

Autumn blessings

Jenny Moy

A Message from Gordon

Congratulations to Sarah on 5 years at Essex Church. Thanks to you all for your prayers and candles of concern for my present illness. People may come and see me [in Caterham], I am sorry I am so far south,

May you all be blessed and, once again thanks to you all.

Gordon Deaville

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 17th October, 21st November 2010,
from 12.30 to 1.15pm



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

This session is 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.

Comments overheard after Margaret's singing sessions:

'That was great. We could record that.'

'I had no idea opening your mouth would make such a difference.'

'So that's where the diaphragm is.'

'I can't believe I've just done that. I've never sung in front of other people before.'

Songs and Silence for the Soul – Special



Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church
Sunday 10th October from 3.00 to 5.00pm
PLEASE NOTE CHANGED TIME

This will be our last Songs and Silence for a while and we are inviting everyone who has enjoyed chanting and sitting together in meditative silence over the last few years to come and join us for this special last session.

Do let us know if you have ideas for chanting and singing here at Essex Church in the future and in the meantime do join us for Margaret Marshall's monthly singing lessons on a Sunday after the service.

Essex Church Creativity Group 'Printmaking'

Tuesday 19th October, 7.00-9.00pm



Due to popular demand, we will be repeating our block printing activity in October and November, with a view to making our own greetings cards this way. Some of the prints (made by Juliet Edwards, Jane Blackall, and John Carter) we created earlier in the year are shown above.

If you would like to take part and do not have your own tools or block for carving please tell Jane well in advance as she will try to obtain the necessary materials for you. There will be a small charge for these items. In this first of two linked sessions we will be carving our blocks so please think about your design in advance of the session.

As usual you are welcome to come along to the group even if you are not particularly interested in the activities on offer – bring along your own craftwork – or simply come along to relax and enjoy the good company.



A tiny colouring picture for Simchat Torah on 1st October.

Universal Spiritual Gathering

Friday 8th October, 6.30-8.15pm
Held at Essex Church



The Universal Spiritual Gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.

Journey of Return: Our hearts' deep yearning is to return to the loving embrace of the Source of All, the healing presence at the heart of all sincere spiritual traditions. Feel your heart's return through blessing, meditation, music and eternal wisdom from all faiths and none, including devotional songs in the Hindustani tradition offered by Raziz Aziz. Remembrance of God exists in every nation, culture, language and tradition. Razia seeks to vocalise her sense of connection to the Divine through remembrance. Her voice reaches through the music for the soul.

For further information contact service hosts:
Reverend Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'

Multifaith Calendar

☆ 1st October – Simchat Torah – Jewish

Simchat Torah marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading from the Torah. When the reading of the last Torah portion concludes, the reading proceeds immediately to the first chapter of Genesis without a break, as the Torah is a circle, and never ends. Children dance and sing as all the Torah scrolls are paraded around the synagogue, giving as many people as possible the honour of carrying a Torah scroll.

☸ 8th – 16th October –

Navaratri / Durga Puja / Dusserah – Hindu

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

🌐 10th – 17th October –

Inter Faith Week of Prayer for World Peace

The week is supported by members from many different religious communities. A collection of prayers drawn from the literature of several world religions is published for use during the week.

☸ 20th October –

Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab – Baha'i

Baha'is celebrate the birth of the Bab (the title means 'the gate' in Arabic) in Shiraz, Persia in 1819. The Bab was the prophet-herald, whose mission was to proclaim the imminent arrival of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest,' - Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith. Baha'is observe this holy day by abstaining from work. Gatherings on the day usually involve prayers, devotional readings, music and fellowship.

☸ 22nd October – Pavarana – Buddhist

The day marks the end of the Rains Retreat and is also known as Sangha Day. Monks who have completed the three month retreat invite their associates to reprove them for any failings (Pavarana means 'to invite').

🌐 31st October – Samhain – Pagan / Wiccan

Samhain (pronounced 'sow'inn') is a very important date in the Pagan calendar for it marks the Feast of the Dead. It is also celebrated by non-Pagans who call this festival Halloween. Samhain has been celebrated in Britain for centuries and has its origin in Pagan Celtic traditions. It was the time of year when the veils between this world and the Otherworld were believed to be at their thinnest: when the spirits of the dead could most readily mingle with the living once again. Later, when the festival was adopted by Christians, they celebrated it as All Hallows' Eve, followed by All Saints Day, though it still retained elements of remembering and honouring the dead. To most modern Pagans, while death is still the central theme of the festival this does not mean it is a morbid event. For Pagans, death is not a thing to be feared. Old age is valued for its wisdom and dying is accepted as a part of life as necessary and welcome as birth.

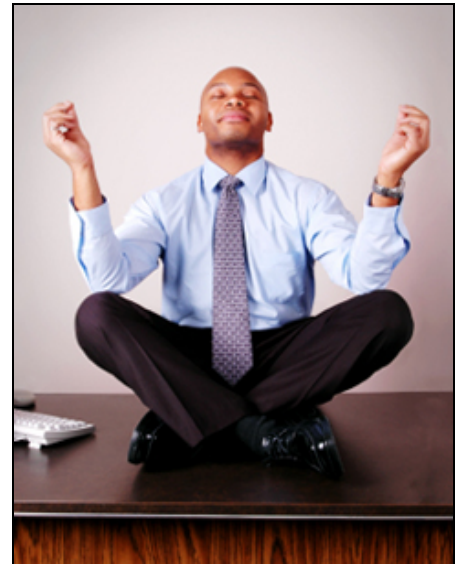
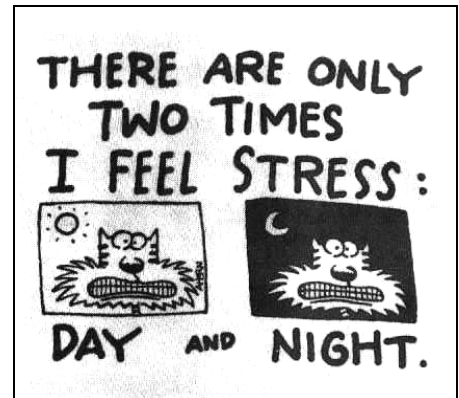
Dealing with Stress

In August a group of us met after the service to talk about stress in our lives. We approached this subject first by thinking about our own lives and then by exploring what the world's religions might have to teach us about dealing with stress. The sources of stress in our lives included – health, information overload, too much or too little choice, high standards, money, noise, uncertainty, loneliness, the world situation, time management, relationships.

Our practical tips for dealing with stress included:

- Speak to others / pray / write about your problems
- Re-framing / changing perspective
- Gain another perspective
 - By thinking of others in a similar situation
 - Observe others and how they are dealing with similar issues
 - Consider yourself and the problem as a speck in ocean
 - Philosopher Spinoza said we should consider our difficulties as if from the aspect of eternity
- Down time / take breaks / exercise / fresh air / leisure
- Breathe / do something physical
- Ask 'What have I to be thankful for?'
- Think 'What will still be here in a 100 years time?'
- Have a plan
- Consider the worst case scenario
- Lighten up
- Loosen attachment both to the problem and to a preferred outcome
- Acceptance – this too shall pass

Arthur Krebbers and Sarah Tinker



“Our faith advances not by paying attention to all that we doubt, but by paying attention to what makes us sigh, what makes us groan, what makes us tear up, what makes us shudder, what makes us gasp, what startles us and surprises us. What makes us ache. Where once we cherished our doubts, now we need to name our longings.”

UU Minister, Rev. Thomas Schade



Unitarian Gifts

We've received some lovely Unitarian gifts recently.

The T-shirt came from Nicole Bowmer who visited us in August. Nicole is a staff member at First Unitarian Church in Portland, Oregon in the States. She works with religious education programs for children and youth, and she is also a curriculum writer with the Unitarian Universalist Association.



The T-shirt was designed by a member of their teens group and features a quote from Jimi Hendrix: “When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace”. Thank you Nicole for visiting us and for telling us about the inspiring projects with which you are involved.

Thanks also to Antonia Osgood who designed and decorated this special Unitarian plate for our biscuits after the service. It will encourage us to eat even more biscuits!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Castles and Other Structures

A Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 19th September 2010

It's not considered good form in ministerial circles to give too many personal details in an address like this but I know that some of you, like me, are interested in dreams and what they reveal about us. I still don't remember many of my dreams but a while back I had a series of dreams about buildings, often with a sense of moving from room to room within a building. I asked a friend who is training to be a Jungian analyst about the symbolism of rooms in dreams and she laughed and said that it's like everything else in dreams – they are all aspects of our selves and that such dreams are often interpreted as an exploration of the self – a seeking of answers to those perennial questions of life – who am I? what am I doing here? What is my true purpose?

And when we consider the symbolism of castles, they are often seen in dream analysis as representative of the soul or the heart, the very core of our being. No wonder perhaps that castles feature so frequently in myths and fairy stories, both ancient and modern.

This is the description of Hogwarts, the school for magicians that Harry Potter attends from JK Rowling's best selling series:

"Yeh'll get yer firs' sight o' Hogwarts in a sec," Hagrid called over his shoulder, "jus' round this bend here."

There was a loud "Ooooooh!"

The narrow path had opened suddenly on the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers. [...]

And the fleet of little boats moved off all at once, gliding across the lake, which was as smooth as glass. Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. It towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood.

(Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone)

And once the young magicians are taken through the ivy growing down the cliff face into a secret passage and on into the castle itself, they discover a building that can constantly re-shape itself in order to fool the unwary. Staircases appear and disappear, doors may choose to open or not, depending on how you speak to them, or tickle them. Yet Harry and his friends are soon at ease in the castle; particularly for Harry, it is his only true home, and he learns to navigate its hidden turrets and basements to his advantage.

There is something of the Arthurian legends in JK Rowling's writing – and the description of a castle appearing as if from nowhere is reminiscent of the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* where a castle appears through the mist and seems to beckon to Sir Gawain to come in over the drawbridge and explore further. Within, a warm fire and a great feast await him and much, much more.

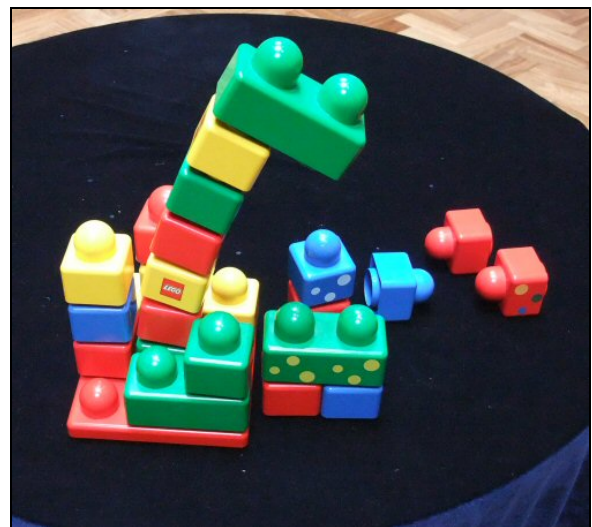
That idea of castles holding great potential for us yet requiring some kind of personal effort is echoed again and again in fairy stories. Think of the story of Sleeping Beauty where the princess and all the castle's inhabitants are asleep for a hundred years. The castle itself becomes surrounded by a thicket of protective thorns and only when the young prince has gained wisdom from the old man he meets is he able to penetrate the thorns and find the princess and awaken her, and indeed the whole castle, – with that kiss.

The Hebrew Scriptures with their re-telling of the history of the Israelite tribes also contain stories of battles and fortifications – such as the battle of Jericho that we sang of with such gusto earlier on, with its mystical element of walls tumbling down in response to music. I was intrigued to read that in ancient times castles were often built with maze like configurations in order to protect them from invaders. Nowadays it is popular to re-create the patterns of ancient labyrinths and some of their names remind us of their past – *Castle of Troy, City of Ninevah, Walls of Jericho and Ruins of Babylon* for example – all names of labyrinth patterns.

More recently the spiritual writer Caroline Myss, who said recently of the new age – that it had become 'middle aged and in need of a makeover' – in her own writing she has turned to mysticism where she believes that 3 key questions are to be asked

- (1) For what reason was I born?
- (2) What is the greater purpose and meaning of my life?
- (3) How am I meant to be of service?

(continued on opposite page)



As part of our service on 'Castles and Other Structures' we played a not entirely successful game of musical bricks and created this dynamic design out of Lego.

Castles and Other Structures

In her book entitled *Entering the Castle* Myss uses the writings of Teresa of Avila to explore the realm of the mystic who seeks an ever closer union with the divine. Here, says Myss, is a calling "to represent an invisible power in the world through a personal spiritual practice, through the power of prayer, through living consciously and practicing compassion, and through becoming a channel for grace." Couldn't this be a description of the path many of us here at Essex Church are choosing to explore?

I don't know how much you all know about Teresa of Avila. Until I started to read more about her this week I knew little more than her name and the famous and fabulously erotic sculpture of her by Bernini in a chapel in Rome – called The Ecstasy of St Teresa – an image from her own writings, and indeed her own life experience, in which she was pierced by an angel's spear in a state of religious rapture.

This passionate image of her is well confirmed in this description of her, written by Tessa Bielecki in her introduction to Mirabai Starr's translation of Teresa of Avila's *The Book of My Life*.

"Teresa of Avila had that mysterious quality the Spanish call duende, which is characteristic of gypsies, flamenco guitarists, and dancers. Duende is raw, primitive, tempestuous energy, a vulnerability to inspiration burning in the blood. Fiery, wild, and utterly original, duende cannot tolerate neat, tidy categories, cramped forms; or human limitations of any kind. Duende makes us ready to be devoured in the heroic struggle for individuation and genuine freedom."

Teresa of Avila lived in 16th century Spain and was a mystic, a poet, an administrator, a religious reformer, the founder of 17 convents, the author of four books, and a deeply devotional Christian. She was only recently recognized as the first woman Doctor of the Catholic Church, an honour bestowed for the depth of her scholarship.

Teresa apparently wrote her books, when advised to do so by her spiritual advisors, partly as a way of protecting her from the interest of the Inquisition which was so suspicious of all those who experienced religious rapture and spiritual visions. In her books she tells the story of her own life and her process of spiritual transformation.

Teresa's book *Interior Castle* can be seen as a handbook on mysticism, and it describes seven stages of the contemplative's inward journey to ultimate union with God. Teresa's vision, on which her book is based, was of a castle made of crystal with 7 rooms leading to the centre where the spiritual explorer could at last find the longed for oneness with the divine. Caroline Myss utilises this structure to guide people in developing their spiritual life and some of this imagery can also be found on Myss' website where there are guided meditations that you can follow online.

So much imagery – crystal castles, disappearing staircases, walls that need building up or can come tumbling down in response to the joyous playing of the horns, secret rooms, protective thickets of thorns. If there is one message that I can discern from all this, I think it would be that we are indeed fortunate to have the power in life to choose our own imagery – and to explore for ourselves both individually and in community with others, our answers to those mystical questions – who are we? – and what is our true purpose? That is the human quest that may take us to the very centre of the crystal castle, take us to the core of what it is to be alive and to be human – and what a fascinating and demanding quest that can be.

Teresa of Avila wrote: "I am amazed by how much can be accomplished on this path by being bold and striving for great things. Even if a soul is not quite strong enough yet, we can still lift off and take flight. We can soar to great heights. But like a fledgling bird, we may tire and need to perch for a while." May we in the week ahead enjoy moments in which we soar high above and also recognise our need perhaps to perch for a while and rest. Go well now, blessed be and amen.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Two forthcoming events organised by Interfaith Minister and regular member of our congregation Kathryn Reynolds:

Meditation Intensive

Instructor - Kathryn J. Reynolds

Saturday 30th October, 10am-5pm at Essex Church

Do you feel stuck or frustrated with your home meditation practice? This meditation intensive will help you develop and deepen your personal meditation practice and broaden your perspectives. This program is designed for the beginner who wants to develop a firm foundation in their personal meditation routine. It is also ideal for the experienced meditator who wants to strengthen that foundation and take their personal practice to new depths.

Workshop investment: £150 (includes lunch).
Each student will receive a goodie bag (value £30).
Contact: Kathryn Reynolds 07976 739 286

Unfolding Your Personal Lotus

7 Week Journey for Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Transformation

20th October – 1st Dec, 12-2pm at Essex Church

In the process of discovering our true self, we realize that life has a pattern, like the sacred organization of a Lotus. We will explore and establish a toolbox of self-expression and transformation, clearing the path for the lotus to come forth.

Early investment: £150 before Oct. 10th (£240 afterwards)
or £20 a session (concessions are available).
Contact: Kathryn Reynolds 07976 739 286

District Quarterly LDPA Meeting

Saturday 23rd October 2010



Put 23rd October in your diary for the next District Quarterly, to be held at Brixton Unitarian Church which is within easy walking distance of the Underground.

The programme will be jointly led by Kate Buchanan and Jen Hazel. Both are new members of the District Council. The service and programme will follow the theme 'Find Your Voice' – an exploration of the way singing can enhance our participation in worship.

Unitarian Renewal Group

Day Gathering at Golders Green

'Bringing the Harvest Home'

Saturday 2nd October, 12.30pm



Golders Green Unitarians are pleased to host the Unitarian Renewal Group Day Gathering entitled 'Bringing the Harvest Home – Making Sense of Harvest Festivals'.

This is a participatory conference and will include discussions and small group workshops. The event starts at (12.30pm for 1pm-5pm and costs £6 waged, £4 concessions. Please bring a packed lunch.

Keynote Speakers include:

- Rev. Wyn Thomas (minister-farmer)
- Catherine Robinson (campaigner)
- Rev. Bob Pounder (former trade union officer)
- Rev. Dr. Ann Peart (GA Vice President)

Sunday Services at Essex Church



3rd October – "The Importance of Letting Go" Service led by Harold Lorenzelli

Our very own Harold will be leading this service and he says: "This morning we will be looking at the importance of laughter and tears in our lives. How to be fully human we are shaped equally by joy and sorrow. Don't worry, I hope to inspire and not depress!"

10th October – "A Unitarian Communion" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker, Tristan Jovanović and Jane Blackall

We will be having a special Unitarian Communion service this week. To find out more about how this came about, and what to expect, please read the article on page three of this month's newsletter. All are welcome to participate in the communion ritual, or not to do so, as you see fit. We very much hope that you will come along in a spirit of openness and curiosity as we join together for this service.

17th October – "One World, Our World" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

At the start of One World Week, this service will explore the background to this annual event and its message of the global connections that we can all experience in different ways.

24th October – "Celebrate" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This service will be followed by a congregational meal provided by John Hands and Heidi Ferid to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary. We invite people to bring something that they would like to celebrate – a photo perhaps, a poem, book or piece of music? We will place these on a celebratory table and there will be chance if you wish for you to talk about things you are celebrating in life, be they small or large.

31st October – "All Souls" Service led by Jane Blackall

On this Sunday closest to All Souls' Day and the Day of the Dead, we will be remembering loved ones who have died, and reflecting on the ways in which we may continue to feel their presence in our lives.