



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: May 2012

What's On...

Sunday 6th May, 11am-noon
**'Rivers, a Meander,
and a Meditation'**
Service led by Jef Jones

Thursday 10th May, 7-8.45pm
**'Foundations of our Liberal Faith
- The Great Ejection' (1/3)**
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th May, 11am-noon
'The Venerable Bede'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th May, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th May, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique
Holistic movement with Sonya

Thursday 17th May, 7-8.45pm
**'Foundations of our Liberal Faith
- Religious Radicals' (2/3)**
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th May, 11am-noon
**'Membership Service:
Unconditional Love'**
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th May, 12.30pm
Essex Church AGM

Tuesday 22nd May, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:
'Old Possum's Book of
Practical Cats' by T.S. Eliot

Thursday 24th May, 7-8.45pm
**'Foundations of our Liberal Faith
- Social/Political Reformers' (3/3)**
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th May, 11am-noon
'Between UnMelting and Freezing'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and the Rev Dr Jeanne Foster

Sunday 27th May, 12.45-2.30pm
'Life's Ultimate Questions'
Workshop with Jane and Sarah

Monday 28th May, 7.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

A Message from our Minister: Always in Crisis?

A Sufi story I heard years ago tells of the king whose mouth was dry and throat was irritated. When he told his court physicians of his troubles they hummed and haahed and decided that what the king needed was lubricating oil to ease such symptoms. Yet after the oil was administered the king felt slightly worse. Now there was a strange sticky feeling to his throat and a most unpleasant taste. A new physician at once prescribed pickles in vinegar but these made the king's eyes water terribly and gave him a truly terrible tummy ache. One of the servants remembered how his mother had taken sweet rose water each day and suggested that the king should try this remedy but the result was slight nausea as the perfume reached the royal digestive system. Nothing seemed to ease the king's problems and months and months went by as he sought ever more unusual remedies. At one time a holy man came down from his retreat on the hills and was asked to help. When he had examined the king and listened to his complaints and the long list of remedies that had been tried, he said quite simply that what the king needed was a glass of water. The king and his many courtiers were appalled by this ridiculously simple advice and the holy man was laughed out of town.



Why has this story stayed with me all these years? No doubt its message of looking for simple solutions is one I still need to hear. But what struck me at the time was that the teacher who told the story drew a quite different conclusion. For him the story's purpose was to tell us about the human condition – that most of us are destined, like the troubled king, always to be in crisis. It is our nature to be 'in a state' about one thing or another. This is our curse but also our blessing for it means that we are always in movement, seeking, discovering, helping or hindering one another as we go.

As we prepare for our congregation's Annual General Meeting this month, let's think how our community can best respond to the dilemma of being human and what we can offer to our world – not least of which perhaps might be a glass of water or a simple cup of tea.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Essex Church AGM – Sunday 20th May 2012

We encourage all members and friends of the congregation to put this date in their diary and be sure to come along to the membership service and church AGM. Your attendance and participation in the life of our community is much appreciated!

In this month's newsletter...

* 'One Year at Essex Church' by Carol Sheppard * 'Zen Birding' by Anders Robinson * 'Unitarian Social Action Work Expanding in the East End' by Gordon Deaville * 'Cape Town Unitarians' by Caroline Blair * 'Playback Theatre' by Veronica Needa * 'Foundations of Our Liberal Faith' RE Course * Committee News from David Darling * 'Take One Egg' – Easter Sunday sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

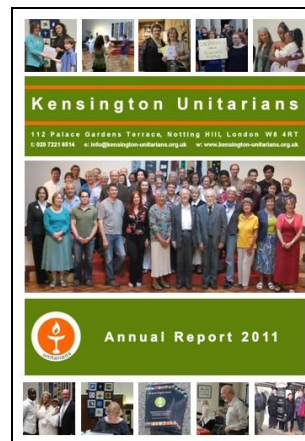
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Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

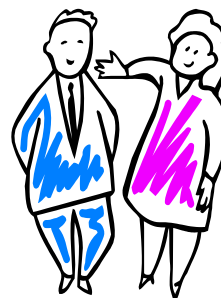
Annual Report

The Annual Report for 2011 is hot off the press and all members and friends of the congregation should receive a copy in the very near future.

If you have not picked up a copy at church or received one through the post please do get in touch with Jane or Sarah and we will make sure you get a copy in good time for the Essex Church AGM on Sunday 27th May.



Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

6 th May:	Jim Blair
13 th May:	David Darling
20 th May:	Natasha Drennan
27 th May:	Gina Bayley

Coffee:

6 th May:	Margaret Darling
13 th May:	Caroline Blair
20 th May:	John Hands
27 th May:	Veronica Needa

Greeting:

6 th May:	Carol Sheppard
13 th May:	Gina Bayley
20 th May:	Jo Ridgers
27 th May:	Sue Smith

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

Outing to Maidstone

Sunday 24th June 2012



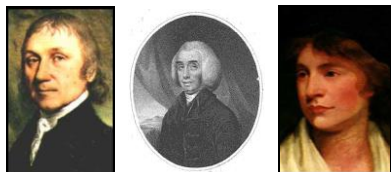
Our minister, Rev Sarah Tinker, will be taking the service at Maidstone Unitarian Church at 6pm on Sunday 24th June. We thought that it might be nice to organise a group outing from our congregation – an afternoon out in Kent, a tour of the gorgeous and historic Maidstone Chapel, a picnic tea – and perhaps an opportunity to take part in the service.

If you are interested, please put the date in your diary, and look out for further announcements nearer the time.

A new adult RE course at Essex Church this May:

Foundations of Our Liberal Faith

Thursdays from 10th May, 7-8.45pm



This May, we will offer a three-part study group exploring the origins of our liberal Unitarian and Free Christian faith, from the early Bible translators to Victorian social reformers.

Thursday 10th May - 17th Century

The Great Ejection and other Nonconformist Roots

Thursday 17th May - 18th Century

Religious Radicals

Thursday 24th May - 19th Century

Social & Political Reformers

This course is free but we ask you to book a place on it in good time to ensure a viable sized group. Contact info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or leave a message on 020 7221 6514 or speak to our minister Sarah Tinker to book your place or to seek more information.

Marriage Equality

Love is
gender-blind.
Support marriage
equality for all.



At the annual meetings of the Unitarian General Assembly, delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution calling on the government to 'ensure that legislation is passed so that all couples, same-sex or mixed-sex, have equal access to civil marriages, religious marriages & civil partnerships.'

The government is currently carrying out an online consultation on equal *civil* marriage (sadly, equal *religious* marriage is not on offer) and I would like to encourage Unitarians to make their views known before it ends on 14th June: www.homeoffice.gov.uk. Even better, send a message to your MP, calling for full marriage equality and mentioning that, along with several other liberal religious groups, Unitarians wish to carry out same-sex religious marriages. One easy way to contact your elected representatives is via the website www.writetothem.com.

Jane Blackall

News from the Church Management Committee:



The committee met on Tuesday 17th April for its 6-weekly meeting. As usual we spent some time talking about the fabric of the building. We should all be grateful, especially to Sarah and Jenny, for the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to look after the building so that we can have a beautiful space not only for our own congregational use but also so that we can share it with others. It looks like we are moving closer to solving the problem of our leaky roof!

This structured and regular review of the building also means, however, that we no longer are involved in crisis management and there has been a real shift in our committee meetings that enables us to look at ways of nurturing all who enter its doors and at our vision for the congregation. We looked at the plans that are in place for the "Forgiveness Exhibition" (an exhibition of photographs and writings of people who have been challenged to forgive in their own lives). Look out for leaflets about the event. Many of the groups that use the building will also be involved in the exhibition. We also looked at the plans that Jane has for various approaches for religious education and spiritual growth over the coming year.

While looking at our finances we had a good discussion about how while needing to be good stewards of our resources we also need to look at how we can be generous in supporting other charities. For a trial period we are suggesting that the Sunday cash collection on the fourth Sunday of the month should be given away to a charity and we are keen for you to suggest possible good causes. Though be warned, you may be expected to write something about the charity of your choice for the newsletter, and even say a few words about it during the service!

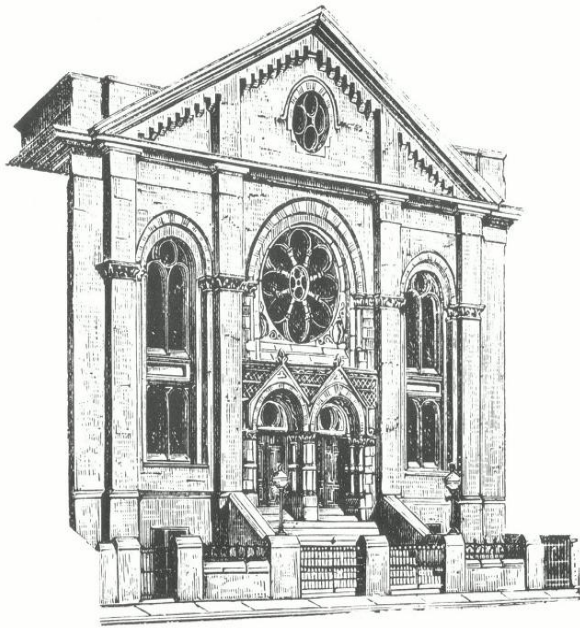
If you have any questions for the committee or suggestions for improving our life together please speak to one of us on a Sunday morning. And don't forget our AGM on Sunday 20th May.

David Francis Darling
Chair of the Congregation

Management Committee Elections

At the Essex Church AGM (held after the service on 20th May) we will elect the management committee for the year ahead.

If you would like to know more about what committee membership entails, and you might be interested in standing for election, please speak to Sarah or one of the current committee members.



Unitarian Social Action

Expanding in the East End

What can you do to help?

I was for many years a member, several of them as chair of the congregation, at Mansfield Street Church and Mission, now Mansford Street Chapel, Bethnal Green. It is part of the Chalice Foundation and circumstances arose which led the trustees to cut back on the church side (I came to Kensington) and develop the Mission or Social side. A relationship with Quaker Social Action has been renewed, with them a meal programme offering free or highly subsidised meals is being set up, based at Mansford Street which is in an area where there is significant poverty and many people do not have access to good nutrition. A Food Bank is planned to be housed and operated in conjunction with the meal programme. Where I live now there is a Food Bank for the vulnerable people of Croydon. It is a stall which is set up in different locations each day. When it is in Caterham I contribute food to it and the vulnerable collect food from it.

The newly reignited Unitarian initiative at Mansford Street, called a Unitarian Centre for Social Action, apart from the partnership with Quaker Social Action for the first year, has:

- A dedicated team focused on Social Action.
- An underused chapel as its base in the area.
- Support from the District Association (LDPA) and the Chalice Foundation.

Planned is:

- A fortnightly meal programme in partnership with Quaker Social Action
- A food bank and possible cafe
- Other community programmes according to need
- Social Action training programmes for Unitarians

It is hoped the programme will start by the summer.

As the Social Action project takes shape, volunteers are needed to make it a reality. Volunteers to help cook and serve meals and clean up afterwards; volunteers to collect food for the Food Bank; volunteers to help administer the whole programme. If you can help in any way, please contact Rev. Rob Gregson, programme director (07411280667).

Needed in addition are:

- Food Bank donations
- Funding donations from individuals (you?) and congregations.
- Help, as I hope this is, spreading the word about the Unitarian Centre for Social Action, East London.

It is hoped the programme will start by the summer and I understand more than £2000 has already been raised for this project. The trustees of the Chalice Foundation have given space rent free to the project. More details of how you can give of your purse or your person are online at www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk

At present the Unitarian Centre for Social Action is led by Rev. Rob Gregson, Programme Director, assisted by Ann Howell (Chalice Foundation – Programme Co-ordinator), with a strong steering group of Miriam Lahage (District Council), Julian Meek (Stratford Unitarians), Rev. Patrick O'Neill (Hampstead Unitarians) and David Usher (District Minister).

Gordon Deaville

The use of some information received at the GA Annual Meetings in Keele is acknowledged.

“This spiritual journey is often characterized by an intense passion for justice and liberation, especially in the face of exploitation and deprivation. The desire for justice is motivated not merely by the plight of appalling suffering, but by a deeper sense that love and well-being must prevail in the end.”

Diarmuid O'Murchu



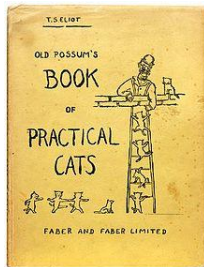


“Real fearlessness is the product of tenderness. It comes from letting the world tickle your heart, your raw and beautiful heart. You are willing to open up, without resistance or shyness, and face the world. You are willing to share your heart with others.”

Chögyam Trungpa

Essex Church Reading Group

‘Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats’ by T.S. Eliot



Tuesday 22nd May 2012, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group’s May session will be based on ‘Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats’ by T.S. Eliot. This title was suggested by Juliet Edwards and will be the 92nd title discussed by the reading group.

From the description on Wikipedia:

“Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats is a collection of whimsical poems by T. S. Eliot about feline psychology and sociology, published by Faber and Faber. It is the basis for the record-setting musical Cats. The poems were written during the 1930s and included by Eliot, under his assumed name ‘Old Possum,’ in letters to his godchildren. They were collected and published in 1939 with cover illustrations by the author, and quickly re-published in 1940, illustrated in full by Nicolas Bentley.”

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

‘Life’s Ultimate Questions’

Sunday 27th May, 12.45-2.30pm
Workshop at Essex Church



At the first of our ‘Life’s Ultimate Questions’ sessions, held after the service on 4th March, the group spent some time generating some questions of a theological, philosophical, or ethical nature which we care about. Here is a selection of the 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 an 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 will pick up on some of these questions in future sessions. In the second half we took time to explore one question: ‘Is ethical capitalism possible?’ This was a most enjoyable afternoon and we will be holding the next one after the service on 27th May, from 12.45-2.30pm. Please put the date in your diary now!

June Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the next issue is **Sunday 13th May**. Please send your contributions (articles, poems, news, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member by then.

Email: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Unitarian GA Annual Meetings in Keele



This year's General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches Annual Meetings were held at Keele University in Staffordshire. This is a delightfully green campus, built around the Victorian Keele Hall in its Victorian landscaped grounds.

The ministers' conference was held before the main event and as usual it was a treat to meet up with old friends, some of whom I don't set eyes on from one year to the next. I led a session on ways to use the Charter for Compassion in small groups and it was interesting to hear of other congregations' experiences. Participants from our group will be pleased to hear that we weren't the only ones who struggled with the loving your enemies exercise.

That's probably the key value of the Annual Meetings for me – to make connections and hear of others' experiences. I came back to London with renewed gratitude for what we have here at Essex Church and a renewed commitment to share what we have with others.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

"Before we can be an inviting church that attracts and keeps visitors, we have to know who we are, what we stand for, what we have to offer. It arises from the deepest place of our sense of what is sacred, of what it means to live religiously.

Evangelism is the natural result of a deep belief that we have something important and precious to offer. It is founded on the beliefs that people have a need for religious community, for deep relationships, for spiritual exploration, for social involvement. None of this, in a liberal church, has anything to do with conversion. In a non-creedal faith like ours, evangelism cannot be founded on convincing someone that we have the truth and the way.

A religious community is a place that can save us from the crushing banality of consumerism, instrumental relationships, superficiality, alienation and isolation. Our communities are a place where we can connect with our true selves, with each other, with our communities, with our sense of the sacred. Evangelism is, then, a religious orientation based on an eagerness to share something precious, to share our good news. When each of us can answer why we are Unitarians and why being a member of our church and what we love about our congregation, then we are on the way to being evangelists. We can't help it.

Good news wants and needs to be shared. And we can't share our good news until we know what it is."

UU Ministers Peter Morales and Don Southworth

Spring Conference of the Guild of Pastoral Psychology:

'Digging in Dark Matter'

**Saturday 19th May, 2-4.30pm
Here at Essex Church**

Rev. Josephine Evetts-Secker: Jungian analyst and Anglican priest will explore assent and resistance:
"Their hands push open the closed doors that God holds open."

Rabbi David Freeman: Jungian analyst and rabbi will present a personal perspective.
"My G-d the soul You have given me is pure..."

Exploring Psyche and Soul in the dark matter of the Gnostics, in the psychology of C.G. Jung and in selected Jewish texts. Is there learning and consciousness in such comparisons?

Tickets: £30 to guild members, £35 to non-members, £12 to students (discounts for advanced bookings – see guildofpastoralpsychology.org.uk). The guild offers a meeting place for those wishing to explore a religious or spiritual quest enhanced by the insights of depth psychology, especially the work of Jung.

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

**Sundays 17th June and 15th July
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.

Midsummer Walk

Thursday 21st June, meeting 6pm



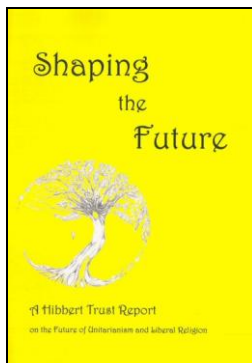
To mark the longest day we are going to have an evening walk. The provisional plan is that we will take a gentle stroll around Hampstead Heath and possibly up Parliament Hill. Please speak to Jane (or email secretary@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you would like to come along. We will confirm details of our meeting place in the next newsletter.

A workshop this summer at Essex Church:

‘Shaping the Future’

Prospects for Unitarianism
and Liberal Religion

Sunday 1st July, 12.45-2.30pm



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

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

To download a copy of the report please visit:
www.thehibberttrust.org.uk/about.htm

One Year at Essex Church



I have decided to write a little something for the newsletter because I am coming up to the first anniversary of my attending Kensington Unitarians. At the end of May last year I decided to visit Essex Church and have been extremely grateful ever since that I took that first step. It has turned out to be a place of real comfort for me as I took the tentative steps towards making a new life for myself here in London.

Really I have to go back a little further than that as attendance at any church is a very new thing for me. Before moving up to London I began to visit John Pounds Unitarian Church in Portsmouth. I had attended church as a young girl and teenager but then had a dramatic ‘falling away’ from all things religious. However, as so often in life, it was a feeling of something being missing in my life that took me back to a church - albeit one that was very different to the one I had grown up in. I remember that first service vividly as the minister spoke eloquently and movingly on the subject of child abuse in its many and all too sickeningly varied forms - an issue that is part of my life story. As I sat next to my good friend that day listening to Brian speak with tears rolling down my cheeks, I knew that I had come home.

So, when I found myself pursuing a new path here in London, I very soon realised that it was important for me to find a similar place of quietness and stillness somewhere amidst this big, bustling and vibrant city. I remember the first service at Essex Church equally vividly. Jo took the service that day and I felt such a connection with all the things that she talked about. As soon as I walked into the building and looked around at the space, I knew that I would be very happy there. I loved the clean, cool feel of the space - the plain walls, the bright and vivid splashes of colour.

So far so good. The space is a good one and feels right. And then there are the people. I feel like I have made some good friends at Essex Church. I have been to the theatre with Jo, have visited John and Heidi in their lovely home in Hampstead, have explored Notting Hill with Daffyd, have managed to see the David Hockney exhibition (through the kindness of Sue), have taken part in singing workshops, discussion groups and creativity sessions and all those things have kept me rooted during a time of immense change. More than anything else, the very act of making a commitment to come to the service every week (or nearly every week!) has given me a focus and a purpose when it would have been extremely easy to drift and lose my way. I say this because it has not always been easy to be in a new place especially a place like London which, although exciting, can also be very lonely and anonymous.

So the weeks have gone by. I have got a job and a place to live and I am slowly but surely building a life for myself here. Essex Church has been a huge part of that and I am very grateful to it and to the people within it. Other things flash through my mind - the wonderful singing of the choir and the gorgeous music that we are privileged to hear each week, the lively chat over coffee, the mini Breakfast Club with the David and Daffyd at Cafe Diana. All these things make me happy and I am very grateful to be part of Kensington Unitarians. Long may my connection to the church continue.

Carol Sheppard

Let There Be Light!

If you're very sensitive to illumination, you may notice a subtle difference as you enter the lobby nowadays. This is because the overhead lights have been replaced with LED bulbs. We chose to take this step for pragmatic reasons – several of the bulbs nearest the church stopped working recently and we were told that this was because the fittings had overheated: led bulbs operate at a much lower temperature, so replacing the halogen bulbs with LEDs should prevent this problem with the other lights.

I mentioned this to a very Green friend - who's normally quite disapproving of replacing something before it's become totally unusable – and she was surprisingly enthusiastic. Apparently LEDs are so much more energy efficient than other bulbs that the benefits of swapping to them far outweigh the embodied energy of the bulb. Having had a quick look on the web for actual statistics on this, I can see what she means.

Our twelve 50w halogen bulbs have been replaced by LEDs that only use about 5w each, so our electricity use will only be 10% of what it was before. Plus, the LED bulbs are projected to last for 50,000 hours whereas halogens only last about 5,000 hours – that's 10 times as long before you have to change them. This is a huge plus point in its own right for me, quite apart from the cost saving, as wobbling around on a ladder changing bulbs in our high ceilings is one of my least favourite wardening jobs.

Against all the above advantages, you have to set the price of the bulbs – £11.25 each in this case – however, as each bulb was on for 6-12 hours a day, the annual electricity cost for the halogens was about £15 (compared to only £1.50 for LEDs). So they should pay for themselves in the first year and give huge savings after that. The bulbs last for at least 5 years and we have 12 in the foyer: so that's a saving of at least £150 pa – plus the bonus of feeling smug that we're doing our bit against climate change!

If these things are so great – why isn't everyone changing to them? Maybe partly they just seem too good to be true: even though I just did the research, I still find it hard to believe a new product can use 10 times less power than what it's replacing AND last 10 times as long. They have other advantages too: the bulbs are much harder to break; you can't burn yourself on them and they don't emit ultraviolet radiation – most people even prefer the quality of the light.

I guess the thing is that although they look very similar to ordinary bulbs and provide the same service, LEDs are actually a radically new technology. Low energy red LEDs were first mass-produced in 1968 but green and yellow ones didn't come along until the 80s and it wasn't until 1993 that anyone managed to commercially produce a blue one. White led bulbs bright enough for home use have only reached the market this century and until a few years ago were prohibitively expensive.

Prices will probably continue to keep falling sharply – so it may seem to make sense to wait a few years, until that £11.25 bulb comes down to £5 or less – but on the other hand, if it saves more than £11.25 a year in electricity, why not change over now? We have quite a lot of other halogen bulbs in the Church, so that's a decision we'll be contemplating over the coming months. So if you can see the difference in the foyer – please let us know what you think.

Jenny Moy



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms led by Sonya Leite

**Second Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 13th May, 10th June**

An hour of whole-body conditioning, done barefoot to diverse music. Delivering a cardiovascular workout for any level of fitness. Specific routines allow you to experience - the power of the martial arts, the stillness of the healing arts and the joy of movement through dance.

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

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

Small Group Communion



**Sunday 13th May 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:

13th May – Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

10th June – Led by John Hands

8th July – Led by Jane Blackall

12th August – Led by Tristan Jovanović

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

Cape Town Unitarian Church

a home from home and a little beacon of light



There are a billion people living in Africa, and it would be fair to say that not many of them have been touched by Unitarianism. There are scattered Unitarian groups in Uganda, in Burundi, in Republic of the Congo, in Kenya; but I think it is true that the Unitarian church in central Cape Town is the only Unitarian Church **building** in the entire continent. It is a handsome Victorian building, and attending services there is pleasingly home-like to someone from our church.

There was the same relaxed, friendly congregation; the same hymn book (the grey one); the chalice was lit; people were invited to light candles of joy and concern; there was the warm invitation to coffee afterwards. We listened to an address on the importance of 'reclaiming' the word Liberal, which, as in America, has obviously been used as a term of abuse by many people. I reflected with some relief that in the UK we don't normally feel the need to defend ourselves from the accusation that we are liberal in our beliefs. Afterwards we spoke to committee member and newsletter editor Gur Muanga, a refugee from the Republic of the Congo, who explained how important the liberal and open views of the church were. We were told about the Compassion Project, in which members of the church donate food and clothes regularly to the poorest people in the townships.

So often when Africa hits the headlines it is in stories where liberalism and tolerance are the very last words that come to mind. I felt that Cape Town Unitarians were firmly on the side of the light and that the beautiful but in some ways troubled city can only benefit from their presence. I hope they won't mind if I quote a paragraph from their own newsletter, for no better reason than that I find it rather inspiring in a country where the whole concept of gay rights is rather new:

Pride Interfaith Gathering *(Submitted by Susan Groves)*

The Unitarians can be proud of themselves for providing the venue for a very beautiful interfaith pride gathering on the 6th of March. It was beautiful to walk into the space just before 7 p.m. to see the circle of chairs round the edge of the room and a mat with hundreds of coloured cushions taking up much of the floor space, and people just all over the place! And a more delightfully diverse group of Africans you couldn't wish for! (I'm still not quite sure how this all happened, as organisation was very low key.)

Instead of the usual more liturgical service, the working group put together a simple structure including Latheen singing a song, Clint reciting Rumi, Zindzee 'holding the space' - in Xhosa and English, Ecclesia facilitating a small group discussion on 'what do people want from these events', Nigel leading a loving kindness meditation and then facilitating a short discussion asking those of us there 'how do you integrate your spirituality and your sexuality?' Gabriel closed off the evening - and we all demanded that Latheen sing again.

People expressed great appreciation for the evening and clearly felt so enriched by the interfaith experience, though several people asked that the representation be widened - to include Hindu, Jewish, and traditional African spirituality, for example.

So hey, we are all grateful to the Great Spirit...and to the Unitarians who gave their venue without any fuss and which we all agreed provided the perfect intimate space for our event.

Caroline Blair



"We *need* worthwhile commitments in order to grow ourselves. And there are some places where we are genuinely *needed*. A congruence between what we need and where we are needed benefits all and positions us for more of our own growth and deepening... We need those worthwhile commitments for the purpose of our own wholeness, our own creative unfolding.

One such commitment that many of us have made is a commitment to this congregation, to help it grow – not just in numbers or activities or programs – but in its ability to receive people where they are, and to touch and nurture and transform them. To help us grow. To help us flourish. To help us explore and mature spiritually. Religious community is one of the few places in our culture where we should be able to come and feel safe, to come and feel open to new possibilities, to come and risk vulnerability in order to be known by others, in order to feel less isolated and alone. This is high, holy work even though it is done through a thousand common gestures: greeting, welcoming, assisting, joining, listening, sharing, considering, re-considering, making amends, forgiving, accepting, learning and beginning again."

UU Minister Rev. Diana Jordan Allende

A Local Unitarian Event you might like to support...

Barn Dance

Saturday 26th May, 6-9.30pm

**Golders Green Unitarians, 31 1/2 Hoop Lane,
Golders Green, London NW11 8BS**



Tickets: £10. Bring food and drink to share.
All proceeds towards the church heating fund.

One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'Justice'



**Friday 11th May 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'

AGM of the IARF British Chapter:



international association for

religious freedom
belief with integrity

Saturday 19th May 2012, 10.30am-4.00pm
Croydon Unitarian Church, 1 Croydon Flyover, CRO 1ER

Featuring Morse Flores, IARF representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, who served as Chairperson of the Religious Freedom Youth Network between 2004 -2010 and was the first young adult elected to the International Council of IARF. Morse is from the Philippines with an extensive experience in the field of human rights.

10.30am – Registration

11am – 'Challenges to Civil & Religious Liberty Today' (350th Anniversary of the Great Ejection of 1662). Panel chaired by Roderick Ramage with Rev. Andrew Hill, Rev. Jane Barraclough, Sheikh Muhammad Amin-Evans, Mr Peter Sampson and Morse Flores followed by discussion.

1pm – Bring and Share Lunch

1.45pm – 'Freedom and Responsibility Today' – Charanjit Singh Robert Papini, IARF & Morse Flores. Circle Groups followed by AGM, elections, vote on changes in IARF Chapter Constitution and "People to People Programme." Recommendation: "British IARF to set up a hospitality programme. Hosting visits from IARF groups such as Transylvania, Japan, India. British could be hosted in return.

Registration cost: £5 - planning to attend?
Please email Rev. Richard Boeke: r.boeke@virgin.net

"Our task now is to do what we can to advance reverence for life and deepen the promise of love. Let us dedicate ourselves to the thinking, researching, practice, and learning that will bring more love into the world. Let us be witness for the new science that tells us how connected all life is and let us work for social policies that embody our responsibility for one another and for the earth. Let us give reverent attention in our worship life and our educational work to serving the beauty and goodness of life. Let us be a shelter for truths that the dominant culture would rule out. Let us make love the first – not last – resort."



UU Minister, Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker

Zen Birding

by David M. White and Susan M. Guyette

O-Books, Winchester UK and Washington U.S.A,
2010, ISBN 978 1 84694 389 8, 194 pp., £9.99

This delightful paperback by David M. White, Ph.D., and his spouse Susan M. Guyette, Ph.D., is a collection of vignettes, stories, anecdotes of Buddhist teachings, observations of birds from field notes and journal entries. It was compiled by White during two years of treatment for cancer, from notes going back several decades. He died in 2007, and the book was completed by Guyette.

White's and Guyette's PhDs were both in Anthropology from Southern Methodist University. This, combined with a lifelong passion for birding, led them to observe not only the birds but the culture of the birders themselves in the United States. He was based mainly in New Mexico, but travelled throughout the states, from Hawaii to Massachusetts, and everywhere in between. His often humorous accounts describe the extraordinary lengths the birders would undergo to add rare species to their "lifelists." Furthermore, White was a practitioner of zazen. The bibliographical notes say Guyette is a student of Vipassana Buddhism.

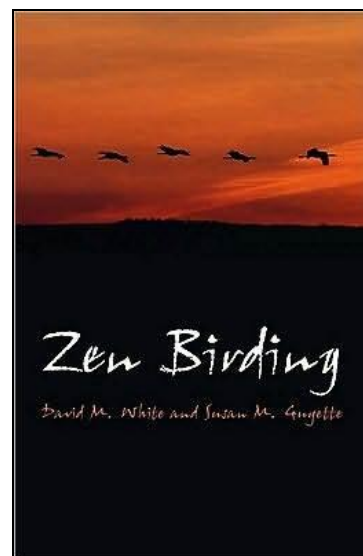
For the authors, Zen birding is a term they have coined to describe a spiritual practice. It's not about seeing birds as objects to be counted, but rather as a means to awakening. Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* is quoted in the text. Suzuki's dharma heir Richard Baker explains: "The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities." In White's words, "The beginner is full of questions. Why is this a crane, and that a heron? What is an egret, is it a heron? Why is this a vireo and that a warbler? At first, the beginner's questions may seem frivolous to the more experienced birder. But gradually, a beginner's questions probe deeper and deeper, and become more and more difficult for experienced birders to answer. The master birder is the one who knows that he does not know the answers..."

Thich Naht Hahn's term, *interbeing*, is mentioned in the book to describe the interconnectedness of all life on this planet. This is a central Buddhist idea that all things are subject to change and rely on causes and conditions for them to come to be and cease to be. White is very keen that environmental work, i.e. habitat conservation and wildlife management, should be undertaken with this as a guiding principle.

The tone is light hearted, neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It is humorous, while recognising the magnitude of the effect that human activity has on the chances of individual bird species survival, including global warming and deforestation. These are problems brought about by the afflicting passions, of greed, hatred and delusion of a separate "I". We as a species *homo sapiens* are "flawed" he argues. It's this must have this, can't have that, picking and choosing, that has brought us to the present situation: "The question is are we going to preserve an ecosystem that has value for humans, or are we going to say that people need all the water and so we'll put it in a pipeline and let the river go dead? That's really the big picture we need to see. By all our little daily choices we are creating a larger future, and we're making a choice between an engineered planet and a living, breathing planet."

The protagonists in this book are the birds themselves. Their appearance, their behaviour, and their calls are related with much affection, respect and detail. Ravens, apparently, are among the most caring of their young in the animal kingdom (including us humans). Starlings, like many other species, engage in play for its own sake and are very sociable. Some birds do yoga postures. White is clear that there lies a danger of anthropomorphising bird's behaviours. Yet birdsong contains much information, almost a kind of language beyond our ken. It's about courtship, territoriality, and warning signals and doesn't rely on words or grammar to convey its message. Birds live in the eternal now, unlike us human beings. Part of Zen birding, is to come back to the present moment when the thought streams have carried us away again, cutting through all that mental clutter.

As William Blake put it:
*He who binds to himself a joy,
Does the winged life destroy.
But he who kisses the joy as it flies,
Lives in eternity's sunrise.*



John Anders Robinson

Essex Church Library:

This book, along with many other interesting titles, is available to borrow from the church library (in the basement). In the months to come we hope to run a selection of book reviews to encourage you to check out our ever-improving collection. If you would be willing to write a recommendation please do get in touch with Jane: secretary@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

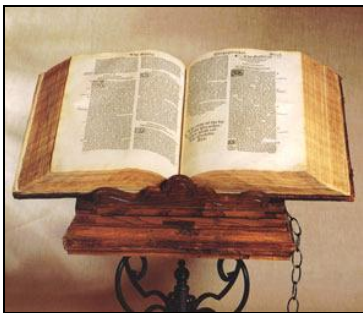
Aspiration and Descent

To rise up further than others, to see in wide
Perspective, cities, cathedrals, towers,
To ferret out, to burrow where others seldom venture
In sea-caverns, vaults, even beneath mines and tunnels
Are surely challenges which might have been ignored.
But who is to reassure us? Who is to convince us our
Reckless enterprise should never be attempted?
When the sullen tide is in, should we desert, or linger near
The threatening shore? There is no certainty,
No surety in nature: travel too near the edge and surely
Your opportunities for falling off are
Boundlessly increased? O unsorted, unfulfilled, unhappy
Questioning one! A nature attuned, replete, is by nature
Seldom a happy one.

John Hands

New study class in London District for 2012:

'Fresh Approaches to the Bible'



**Continuing Monday 21st May, 7.30pm
Golders Green Unitarians,
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London, NW11 8BS**

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

The plan is to start with Luke's Gospel, reading it chapter by chapter, with space for reflective discussion. No specific Biblical knowledge is required, just a willingness to engage with the texts. All are welcome. Classes are to be held on the third Monday of each month.

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

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

May Multifaith Calendar

★ 10th May – Lag B'Omer – Jewish

The Omer lasting from Pesach to Shavuot, is a period of 49 days of sadness in the Jewish calendar. On the 33rd day, Lag B'Omer, there is a break in the days of mourning with a festival in memory of the end of a plague in Roman times. This is also the one day in the Omer when weddings are allowed to take place.

✚ 13th - 19th May – Christian Aid Week – Christian

Many churches devote this week to fund raising for Christian Aid, often through house to house collections. Christian Aid works in nearly 60 countries helping people, regardless of religion or race, to improve their own lives and tackle the causes of poverty and injustice.

✚ 17th May – Ascension Day – Christian

Ascension Day, the 40th day after Easter, commemorates the last earthly appearance of the risen Christ. According to the Bible, Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. It is one of the four most important dates in the Christian calendar, coming after Christmas and Easter but before Pentecost.

✚ 23rd May – Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb – Bahá'í

The Báb was the co-founder of the Bahá'í faith. Having first declared his mission in Persia in 1844, he heralded the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh and inaugurated the Bahá'í calendar which is numbered from the year of this declaration.

✚ 25th May – Zartusht-no-diso – Zoroastrian

A commemoration of the death of the prophet Zarathustra when special prayers are recited and the fire temple visited. Services focus on Zarathustra and the Fravashis - spirits of the dead.

✚ 27th May – Pentecost / Whit Sunday – Christian

Pentecost, also known as Whitsuntide, is often thought of as the 'birthday' of the Church. Christians remember the first disciples of Jesus receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and first proclaiming the Gospel, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Called Pentecost after the Jewish festival day when the event took place, the name Whitsuntide comes from the custom of people presenting themselves for baptism on this day, dressed in white.

★ 27th - 28th May – Shavuot / Festival of Weeks / Pentecost – Jewish

Shavuot, also known as Pentecost or the Festival of Weeks, comes seven weeks after Pesach. The festival celebrates the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai and the early harvest season in Israel. Synagogues are decorated with flowers, and dairy foods are traditionally eaten.

✚ 29th May – Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh – Bahá'í

This day commemorates the death of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892, at Bahji, near Acre, in northern Israel. Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine there is the holiest place on earth for Bahá'ís, and the place which they turn towards in prayer each day.

Playback Theatre



Since my first encounter with Playback Theatre in 1991, I have been following its trail around the world and have made many, many friends across the globe. They are like family to me. It's a kind of theatre that is a renewal of what theatre has always meant to be, and which we truly need for our current and next phase of human social development.

Theatre that brings people together – you come in as strangers and you leave feeling like friends.

Playback Theatre is a new-fangled way of bringing people together to listen to each others' stories. Real stories. It can be a sharing of wisdom, a forum of dialogue and exchange, a place for testimony and witness, and also a simple time for people to come together and be in community. Simple.

Not so simple is the way the actors of the Playback team will listen to a story and then immediately re-enact it with as much artistry as we can muster, and with as much respect as our depth of listening and empathy can offer. And not so simple is the way the Conductor of the performance will host and guide this process. We practice practice practice. For many years. Companies stay together doing this kind of theatre for many years. And it attracts all sorts of different people to do this. Not just professional actors. In fact many professional actors don't have enough humility to do Playback Theatre really well. So our Playback Theatre world has many teachers, social workers, therapists as well as trained actors and every other occupation under the sun. Some of us do it as community service and don't get paid at all. Some of us do it professionally and receive greater or lesser fees for our work. All of us do it for love.

During this coming May, I have nine teams of Playback Theatre practitioners performing in a sweet little theatre space in Central London. New Diorama Theatre embedded in an office block in the midst of Regents Place, a stones throw from Regents Park, and a short walk from Great Portland St or Warren St tube stations.

Five teams have come in response to my invitation and at their own expense from across Europe. Audun from Norway is a specialist in Education; Meta Playback Theatre from Italy do a lot of work with businesses; Theatre du Bouche a Oreille perform for their neighbourhood communities in Paris; Psy Theatre from Hungary, and Psisplayback from Greece come from psychotherapeutic backgrounds. And then my UK Playback family have come up trumps with London's own London Playback Theatre who do conference work; Tarte Noire from Devon specializing in women's only performances; Queer Playback Theatre serving the LGBT community; and all hosted by my very own True Heart Theatre which has a deep connection to London's Chinese community.

Please do come to at least one of these performances... any one of them will be a surprise and a treat!

Veronica Needa

Information from our very own Veronica Needa:

'World Playback Week'

**Improvitational Theatre Ensembles
Performing in Many Languages**



**15th – 20th May at the New Diorama Theatre
15-16 Triton Street, Regent's Place, NW1 3BF**

Playback Theatre is an original form of improvisational theatre that invites true stories from the audience, and re-enacts these with artistry and respect as spontaneous improvisation. The performance is co-created with the audience. Since the first Playback Theatre company in 1975 this remarkable form has mushroomed worldwide.

For more information see: www.newdiorama.com

The Gnostic Way

**following the call of Jesus to 'know yourself'
an experiential day with Martin Nathanael**

**Saturday 30th June 2012, 10am–5pm
Held here at Essex Church**

The Gnostic Christians followed the teachings of Jesus, performed the same rites of initiation, and used many of the same sacred writings as those who are now seen as orthodox. Once Christianity became the state religion of Rome, diversity was discouraged, and this eventually led to severe persecution, along with the destruction of "non-canonical" writings. Eventually, the profound Gnostic stream of Christianity disappeared – or did it?

Martin will show how the experiential approach of the ancient Gnostic Christians was kept alive over the centuries, how the same ideas and practices kept re-emerging and would not go away . . . because they answered a deep spiritual need that was not otherwise being addressed. This is a Christianity which is not afraid of diversity, acknowledges both masculine and feminine expressions of the transcendent Godhead, is equally open to men and women, encourages enquiry and points to the way of realising the divine nature or Christ-Self within. The day will provide an opportunity to meet teachings and practices which nurture the soul's journey into Oneness.

**Cost: £40 - for more information, contact Martin:
01904 691201 - martin.nathanael@btinternet.com**

'Take One Egg'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – Easter Sunday

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

At the start of the service I mentioned that we're having a congregational bring and share lunch after today's service to which you are all invited. Don't worry if you didn't know and haven't brought food – there's always enough to go round. Cooking is not my number one pastime so I won't demonstrate the particular culinary skill from which my title comes - I saw it first on television a long time ago – show of hands – how many people remember Fanny Craddock? She was a lot of fun – a larger than life character – one of the first personality chefs that we British seem to adore.

And she made a big impression on me when she would deftly break an egg on the side of a bowl with one hand and utter those immortal words 'take one egg'.

Do you find that – that certain images stay with you, though you may not always be sure why? Words and sayings are like that too – an old friend would often say when life got tough – "you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs" and I can almost hear her saying it now. It tells us in a graphic way that life is hard at times, pain is inevitable, the very act of living in this world has consequences that are generally unavoidable. Things get broken, people are wounded, life hurts. My friend was delighted one year on a holiday in France to hear a French cook make the same comment - "on ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des œufs". It clearly is a universal message, a universal theme.

It's one of the key themes of the Easter narrative that we're exploring today – that life is tough, we humans suffer, yet out of suffering and despair new life can emerge. And what a rich collection of themes there are to explore in the Gospel accounts – all speaking of the human condition. Here are just a few for us to consider – do they speak to you and your experiences I wonder?

What about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem a week before his death – how many of us have experienced success in some way only for it to turn to failure, how often do we think all is going well only to realise subsequently that we missed warning signs that a situation was about to turn against us?

Or what about the role of Judas? Caught up in a drama where he was given the role of baddie – essential to the plot but destined to be cursed for all time as the one who betrayed his master and his friend? Not many people get to play that part but in a smaller way haven't most of us experienced times when we cannot seem to do right, or when life is pushing us into a unpleasant task that cannot be avoided?

Which of us can say that we have never felt despair in our life? Jesus' lonely moments in the dark, in the garden of Gethsemane, when his friends cannot stay awake and he weeps alone for what he knows is to come – this despair is part of life – it tells us perhaps that in our darkest moments when we truly are alone – we are experiencing an emotion felt by others. Sometimes that simple sense of being on a path that others have walked upon may help ease our pain.



What is your reaction to Pontius Pilate and the cleft stick that he finds himself in? Charged with keeping the peace in a lonely outpost of the Roman empire – allegedly in charge of the whole show yet forced by the crowd and the canny religious leaders to take an action he would rather not take – ordering that Jesus be crucified and the criminal freed. Haven't many of us at times been forced by circumstances to do something that we think is wrong, unable to find the courage to speak against the beliefs of the majority? And that symbolic action of washing his hands – could he have had any understanding that the events of that Passover festival would resound through the centuries – that he could never escape responsibility for what was to come.

The Easter narrative speaks much of human hopes and fears, strengths and weaknesses. Do you remember Jesus' prediction that before the cock crowed twice he would be betrayed not once, not twice but three times by his closest follower Peter? Peter exclaims that such a thing could never be and yet in the fear of the moment he does just that – denies that he is a friend of Jesus and slinks away from the court yard. It's a rare person that has not let a friend down at times, a rare person who has always managed to stand up for what they know to be right – whatever the likely consequences. We're fortunate if we live lives where our loyalty is not tested unto death in this way.

And Jesus the man, wearing his crown of thorns, not wanting to die, feeling forsaken on the cross, wounded and in great pain, mocked and spat upon, –uttering those words - "my lord why hast thou forsaken me?" There are times for many of us in life where its utter bleakness has to be faced.

As Jesus died on the cross it seems that the only followers who stayed near were women – his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene. They were powerless to save him, yet they stood and bore witness to his death. Later they were to report his disappearance from the tomb. Are there times in your life where you have been left powerless to do anything other than bear witness to the suffering of another? Such a painful role, yet such an honourable thing to do for another – to be there, simply there.

'Take One Egg'

by Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

These are just a few of the great themes that Easter brings to our world – themes expressed in art and literature and music, some of the foundation stones of our culture, from the most important festival of the Christian year. We won't be able to shop in large supermarkets this afternoon because most of them will be shut in recognition of Easter's importance. I know this because I was in Marks and Spencer's recently when a shop assistant was asked why they would be shut by a bemused shopper. The assistant gave a brief explanation of Britain's complex laws on shop opening and the shopper replied that it was a bit weird and that she didn't think they'd shut last year. But they *were* shut last year and in many European countries that are just as secular as ours, all retail opportunities are removed, all shops are firmly shut.

I hope that our culture does not lose its religious foundation stones because whatever our religious and spiritual beliefs I think we need narratives that connect us to one another and to those themes of pain and despair, cruelty and betrayal, sacrifice and submission, love and re-birth. We cannot know what happened thousands of years ago in a dusty and turbulent outpost of the Roman Empire, but we can look at the history of the last two thousand years and wonder at the powerful influence this event has had on us and on the history of our world.

As Unitarians we are free to create Easter's meaning and significance for ourselves. Many of us find strength in more earth centred explorations of its message of death and re-birth; we find comfort perhaps in understanding that the early Christian church incorporated earlier pagan practices into its own celebrations – not least of which are the eggs we have here on the table, that remind us of life's infinite potential, of the life force that cannot be kept down. Take one egg and you have all the potential of creativity and growth and new life. Take one egg and you know just how fragile and precious life is. That is both our gift and our responsibility.

When we hear bird song all around us, when we see leaves appearing on the trees and flowers blooming in gardens, when we feel the increasing strength of the sun and notice the longer days, there is something universal in that word of praise – alleluia – thank goodness, thank god, thank you, thank you, thank you. I hope that in the midst of life's demands I remember how good it is to give thanks – even if it is just because you have managed at long last to crack an egg with one hand or managed to cook an omelette.

Happy Easter. Amen.

Good Cause Collection of the Month for May:

Brighton Unitarians Building Appeal



As David mentioned in his committee report (on page 3) we are about to start a new initiative at Essex Church, where we select a good cause to focus on each month, and give over our 4th Sunday collection to it. In May we will be raising funds for Brighton Unitarians' building appeal. Our committee has already made a donation to this appeal on behalf of the congregation but we invite individuals to add their support by contributing to the collection during the service on Sunday 27th May.

Jef Jones, lay leader with Brighton Unitarians, sent us this message: "Brighton Unitarians are raising money for repairs to our Church roof. A survey last year indicated that it needs work that will cost somewhere between £20,000 and £40,000. Our space is very important to us; it has a peaceful and sacred atmosphere that is very meaningful to the congregation, and makes it a lovely refuge from the noise of our creative but crowded city. It's also a popular and intimate venue for local musicians and performers who value its unique ambience. In addition the church is an affordable space in the city centre for community groups and charities. We've been busy raising money for this, with a very popular Spring Fair and a series of very successful concerts. We have been very touched by the generosity of Unitarian congregations around the country and are grateful to the Kensington congregation for their support."

Unitarian London and South East District Event

LDPA Summer Quarterly

Saturday 16th June, 1.30pm, Westgate Chapel Lewes

The LDPA District has accepted the kind invitation of Westgate Chapel in Lewes to hold the Summer Quarterly in their beautiful meeting house on the High Street. The Chapel has historic associations with Thomas Paine, who lived next door for a while and attended the chapel and who was one of the leading authors of American independence. Lewes itself is a delightful town with many points of interest, including the nearby castle, Glyndebourne on the outskirts and lots of fascinating independent shops, and the Chapel features a fine organ which is now computerised to play the hymns in Sing Your Faith.

The full programme for the day is still in the planning stages, but will include a service led by Rev. Andie Camper, the minister associated with Westgate Chapel, time to explore the chapel and the town, and time also to network with each other and enjoy the congregation's hospitality. Put the date in your diary and plan to be part of the day!

Sunday Services at Essex Church



6th May, 11am – “Rivers, a Meander, and a Meditation” Service led by Jef Jones

We are very pleased to welcome Jef Jones, lay leader with Brighton Unitarians, to lead this service for us. Jef says that this service will explore in particular the idea of The Way in the Chinese teaching known as the Tao.

13th May, 11am – “The Venerable Bede”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In a monastic community in the 8th century AD a monk made a translation of the Bible into Latin, still highly regarded today, and wrote what is often considered to be the first history of the English people. What does the life of the Venerable Bede tell us of monastic life in the so called 'Dark Ages' and of the development of Christianity in these lands?

12.30pm - **Small-Group Communion**,
led by Rev. Sarah Tinker (lasting ~20 minutes)

20th May, 11am – “Membership Service: Unconditional Love”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

“Love is the pain of being alive” writes Joseph Campbell. In this service we will consider the challenge and possibility of loving unconditionally and of allowing ourselves to be so loved in a 21st century spiritual community. The service will be followed by our congregation's AGM.

27th May, 11am – “Between UnMelting and Freezing”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker with the Rev Dr Jeanne Foster

This title comes from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: “Between melting and freezing / The soul's sap quivers.” In this service, we will explore the “in-between times” in human experience. Jeanne has served as a UUA minister and now works as a professor of literature and creative writing. Whilst visiting London she is working on her own poetry.

“Unitarians tend to see their faith in this-worldly terms. This means that we see the spiritual sphere as inextricably linked with the ordering of human affairs. Our religion is in constant dialogue with the world as it is, and thus with the political and social issues of the day.

In this we make no claim to be different from many people in other denominations and faith traditions. Indeed, Unitarians find many points of contact with other people of faith on matters relating to social, economic, and environmental justice.

Inasmuch as these matters are political in the broadest sense, then Unitarians do mix religion with politics. This means, for some, active involvement in campaigns, marches and demonstrations. It may mean lobbying politicians and making legislators aware of Unitarian concerns in particular areas of policy. It means using one's democratic rights responsibly and purposefully for the common good... As a movement, Unitarians are religious, not political, but our religion has political implications, and our politics have a spiritual foundation.”

Rev. Cliff Reed, in ‘Unitarian? What’s That?’

Emergency Resolution at Unitarian Annual Meetings

UK Unitarians Urged to Oppose Government Snooping Proposals



Unitarians at the national meetings passed with near unanimity an Emergency Motion deploring the government's proposed legislation allowing it access to all private emails, texts, phone and internet use without having to show reasonable cause to magistrates, and urged all UK Unitarians vigorously to oppose such intrusions into individual privacy and civil liberties.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web (and, incidentally, a Unitarian Universalist) has since spoken out on this issue, asserting that this extension of the state's surveillance powers would be a "destruction of human rights" and that "the most important thing to do is to stop the bill as it is at the moment".

We would encourage readers of this newsletter to take action to resist these proposals. Please spread the word so that more people are aware of what is on the cards. You can write to your MP very easily via the 38 Degrees website which helps to bring people together to take action on issues of concern: www.38degrees.org.uk