



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: May 2019

What's On...

Wednesday 1st May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 2nd May, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Opening Up' with Jane Blackall

Sunday 5th May, 11am-noon
'A Celebration of Friendship'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 5th May, 2-5pm
Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance
with Rachel Sparks (Cha-Cha-Cha)

Wednesday 8th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Friday 10th May, 7.30-9.30pm
Cultural Outing in Hampstead:
'Unruly – Unitarians on Tour'

Sunday 12th May, 11am-noon
'Relating in Community'
Led by Sarah Tinker & Jane Blackall

Sunday 12th May, 12.30-1.30pm
Essex Church AGM

Wednesday 15th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Saturday 18th May, 9.15am meet-up
Country Walk in the Chilterns

Sunday 19th May, 11am-noon
'Sturdy Intimacy'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 19th May, 12.30-1.15pm
'Find Your Voice'
Singing Class with Margaret

Sunday 19th May, 2.00-3.00pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 22nd May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 23rd May, 7.00-8.30pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 26th May, 11am-noon
'Unexpected Connections'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 26th May, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation

Wednesday 29th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Being Love Finders

A Message from our Minister



I mentioned to a friend that this month's front page piece for the newsletter was based on a quotation, half-remembered from years ago: 'I can choose to be a Love Finder or a Fault Finder'. He rightly surmised that putting such a quote into a search engine would find many dating agencies in Kensington! But eventually I did discover that these words come from Gerry Jampolsky's simple yet profoundly helpful book 'Love is Letting Go of Fear'. It's a book I came across in the 1980s and its simple teachings have stayed with me ever since.

'I could see peace instead of this.'

'I am never upset for the reason I think.'

'Teach only love for that is what you are.'

'Blame is always off the track.'

'Other people do not have to change for me to experience peace of mind.'

And that question: *'Do I choose to be a Love Finder or a Fault Finder?'*

It's a clever question, not least because when our judging minds are in action, we generally have not *chosen* to think in that way. Our thinking is being fuelled by unconscious, habitual mechanisms. Neuroscience can now explain to us that our brains are designed to find fault. The brain's 'negativity bias' is an evolutionary tool, helping to keep us safe in dangerous circumstances. We are far more likely to take notice of something we think is wrong. This bias would help us notice a dangerous animal lurking in the bushes; it would alert us to poisonous foodstuffs and keep us on our toes amongst people who might turn out to be enemies. But it's not so helpful in modern life, where our negativity may be focused on people we live with or work alongside, or even meet in church! It can lead us to focus perhaps too much on all that is concerning in our world rather than on the remarkable gifts of our existence. A regular diet of our media news reports could make anyone feel quite low.

Relationship studies have shown that couples are more likely to stay together and be happy if they have a balance of positive interactions to negative interactions at a ratio of five to one. And a similar ratio seems to operate in other areas of life too. We Kensington Unitarians have a monthly ministry theme to guide our activities and in May our theme is 'relating and relationships'. Perhaps you'd like to join us in a month's experiment of choosing to be a Love Finder rather than a Fault Finder. I'm starting on my relationship with our building. Every time I notice something wrong, instead of becoming irritated I am choosing to find love instead. So far I have transformed a blocked toilet into an opportunity to give thanks for modern plumbing and running water. Cleaning sticky marks off a table reminded me to appreciate our cleaner Gitana who keeps everything spotless for us. I look forward to hearing of your Love Finding transformations during the merry month of May.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Essex Church AGM and Annual Report * '20 Years at Essex Church' by Jane Blackall * Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance – Volunteers Needed * Eco News * Church Trip to Southend * Walk in the Chilterns * Cultural Outing – 'Unruly: Unitarians on Tour!' * Poem by Brian Ellis * New Chief Officer for General Assembly – Liz Slade * Embroidered Chalice Patches to Order * 'Great Lives' reflections from Jane, Marc, Annie, Brian, John & Jennifer * and much more ...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell or suffering in some way and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please contact our minister.



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

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sunday Conversation

Sunday 26th May from 12.45 to 2.00pm



Why not bring your lunch and stay behind after the service on 26th May for our regular Sunday Conversation in connection with this month's theme of 'Relating and Relationships'. All are welcome.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

5th May: Liz Tuckwell
12th May: Julia Alden
19th May: Juliet Edwards
26th May: Brian Ellis

Coffee:

5th May: Pat Gregory & John Humphreys
12th May: Marianne Harvey & Maureen C
19th May: Sue Smith
26th May: Veronica Needa

Greeting:

5th May: Geoffrey Olans
12th May: David Carter
19th May: Maureen Cummings
26th May: Billy Jackson

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you want to sign up for one of the forthcoming slots.

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 19th May, 16th June 2019

Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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 £10 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a 3-month period.

'Heart and Soul' Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 2nd May and 6th June, 7-8pm

*Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library
Followed by social time and refreshments*



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This month Jane Blackall will be leading Heart & Soul on the theme of 'Opening Up'. The contemplative hour will be followed by time for refreshments (home-made cake) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you'd like to have a go at co-leading a Heart and Soul session, or doing a reading, please get in touch with Sarah or Jane to find out more.

London Playback Theatre



Friday 17th May, 7.30pm
'Relating and Relationships'

London Playback Theatre is a team of internationally experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators, and therapists. We create spontaneous, improvised theatre through a unique collaboration between performers and audience. We encourage people to share their real life stories - through the magic of theatre - we bring those stories to life. Our work offers opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of each other and to develop authentic ways of communicating. As an audience member you are not in the spotlight unless you choose to put up your hand to share something - you will be engaged in the whole experience as friendly witness - and you can stay for conversation afterwards. Playback Theatre returns on 17th May, 21st June, 20th September, and 15th November. They offer their performances free of charge and welcome donations. For more info see:

Web: www.londonplayback.com/
Email: londonplayback@gmail.com

Essex Church AGM and Annual Report



Kensington Unitarians

112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Notting Hill, London W8 4RT
t: 020 7221 6514 e: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk w: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk



Annual Report 2018



Everyone is welcome to join us for this year's AGM, in which we formally accept the Annual Report and informally make space to talk about what matters most to us.

In the service on that day we will be welcoming new members so please have a think if you still need to fill in a membership form for this year. We'll be in touch with all those we think are new members in advance but if you are inadvertently missed out do jump up on the day and have a handshake of welcome. It is good to have new faces in church and we want to celebrate you.

Recital: Cadogan Hall

voices surging from
a staged horizon,
waves on music's ocean
rolling white-capped
harmonies over
a fathomed bass,
throwing spindrift
soprano notes
towards the shore,
gathering us into
the rhythms of
their last cadences.
to break,
sweeping a song's surf
to resolution
in the shingles key.

Brian Ellis

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dances at Essex Church: Latin, Ballroom and Line Dance for All!

Next Dance is on Sunday 5th May, 2-5pm – in aid of Stonewall Housing
Starting with a dance lesson for complete beginners at 2.15pm



We invite you to our next Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance in aid of Stonewall Housing. There will be tea, cake, partner dancing and a few line dances from 2-5pm. All are welcome - complete beginners to life-long dancers alike - and even if you think you have two left feet this will be a relaxed and welcoming space for all to enjoy. The afternoon will begin with a dance lesson (cha-cha-cha!) led by Rachel Sparks.

Book now to come to this fun event in aid of a good cause (£5 of the door price goes to Stonewall Housing, a charity providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people fleeing violence, harassment and abuse). There's no need to bring a partner so just come as you are - do tell your friends though - the more the merrier! We encourage gender neutral partnering which means anyone can lead/follow during the partner dances. We are also family-friendly so children come for free with any paying adult. Tickets are limited and cost £12 in advance (£15 on the door). Book online: www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk/book-online. **Members of the congregation get free admission.** You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to help raise money for our nominated charity and of course donations to this good cause are very welcome. If you have any questions do email Rachel on hello@rachelsparksdance.co.uk



A Message from Rachel Sparks:

We are celebrating two years of Sunday Afternoon Tea Dances at Kensington Unitarian Church! It has been our intention to help build bridges between communities and this has only been made possible by the hospitality and support of the church. My aim as a dance teacher is to create safe social spaces for people to enjoy the benefits of dancing, particularly the LGBTQ+ community and others that can feel isolated; and I feel that the Unitarian ethos really supports an atmosphere of compassion and acceptance. For those enjoying learning to dance, on the other side of London I'm also working with Simple Gifts Unitarian Centre for Social Action in Bethnal Green and delivering regular group classes - details of all my offerings can be found on www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk. I look forward to dancing with you again on 5th May!

Tickets: £12 in advance, £15 on the door (*free entry to members of Essex Church*)

For more information contact: rachel@rachelsparksdance.co.uk / www.facebook.com/rachelsparksdance

Volunteers needed to help with the reception desk / tea stall – email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you can help

Save the Dates: 5th May, 22nd September and 1st December 2019



Thematic Ministry



Thanks to everyone who has given us ideas for future services and activities. Keep those ideas flowing our way! We three meet regularly as a team to plan services and other activities around our monthly themes and it's always more interesting when other people have made suggestions too. So do have a look through the themes for the year ahead and let us know if there's a particular song, poem or other reading you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering. If you took part in our March readers' workshop you'll perhaps have a reading you want to bring to a service soon. Or maybe you'd like to play an instrument or lead a meditation. Let us know. Here is a list of our future monthly themes: Coping and Flourishing (June); Curiosity and Wonder (July);

Hopes and Dreams (August); Moving On & Staying Put (September); Religious Life (October); Time and Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December). Here are some ways to explore May's theme of 'Relating & Relationships':

- Carl Jung wrote that "Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves." Think about some of the people you find difficult in life. Make a list of their irritating aspects and behaviours, then see if you can find a similar aspect in yourself. Or is there some other awareness that emerges when you think about what you find difficult in others?
- Make a picture, diagram or collage showing the relationships in your life - what they bring you and what you bring to them. Any surprises?
- Albert Schweitzer wrote that 'By ethical conduct toward all creatures, we enter into a spiritual relationship with the universe.' How would you describe your relationship with all living creatures? How would you describe your relationship with our universe?
- Tell someone you're close to that they matter to you. Let them know what you appreciate about them. Explain what unique gifts your relationship with them brings to your life.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Progressive Christianity Network Conference: 'Religion and Atheism - Beyond the Divide?'



Saturday 8th June 2019, 11am-4pm
French Protestant Church of London,
Soho Square, London W1D 3QD

This conference offers an opportunity to engage with four speakers in a conversation about religion, atheism, seeking ways to dialogue and to search for meaning. It is hoped that, in our increasingly tribalistic world, this day will offer possibilities to go beyond the divides which separate us and to seek out areas of mutual agreement and understanding.

The speakers at this day conference are Julian Baggini, Fiona Ellis, Harriet Harris and Richard Holloway.

Tickets are £20 (PCN members £15, full-time students £5)
Book via the PCN website - www.pcnbritain.org.uk – or email info@pcnbritain.org.uk / call 01594 516528 for more info.

Cultural Outing - 'Unruly: Unitarians on Tour'



Friday 10th May, 7.30-9.30pm
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel
3 Pilgrims Place, London NW3 1NG

Joey Clarkson, Elizabeth Hornby and Special Guests are playing at the beautiful Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel in Hampstead. The event is free but there will be a collection at the end. All welcome, there might even be cake!

Elizabeth Hornby is a contemporary classical pianist from Bridport. Her music has been featured on BBC and in Dorset tourism videos. Elizabeth is currently studying for the Unitarian Ministry!

Joey Clarkson is Elizabeth's cousin, a Canadian Singer/Songwriter now living permanently in London. Joey plays a mix of Americana/Folk/Country/Pop originals and will be accompanied by her band, comprised of serving members of the Band of the Scots Guards. This evening will feature music as varied as Unitarianism.

Jane is planning to go to this concert. Please contact her on jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you'd like to go together.

Walk in the Chilterns

Saturday 18th May, Meeting Marylebone at 9.15am



We will meet at Marylebone station in time to catch the 09:27 Aylesbury train. We'll take the train to Wendover and stop here for coffee. Then it's a gentle walk of just under 5 miles, uphill to start, then undulating, following the Ridgway path, over Coombe Hill (with great views), through ancient beech forest, passing Chequers and Pulpit Hill Nature Reserve to a pub lunch at The Plough, Lower Cadsden. After lunch, it's about half-a-mile to the bus stop for a bus to Stoke Mandeville and train back to Marylebone. We should be back in London by about 4pm.

Those wanting a shorter walk are welcome to join us in walking up to the summit of Coombe Hill and then making their own way back down to Wendover, just under 3 miles round trip. It's a good footpath, uphill one way, downhill the other, and the views are wonderful. For those wanting even less of a walk, Wendover itself is an attractive village with antique shops, tea shops and pretty cottages. There is a Farmers Market here on the third Saturday of each month, which 18th May happens to be. The station is in the village and there are trains back to London every 30 minutes.

If you have a Freedom Pass, all you need is a day-return ticket from Amersham to Stoke Mandeville (£7.90 or £5.20 with railcard), otherwise a day-return from Marylebone to Stoke Mandeville (£19.20 or £12.65 with railcard). If you are not coming on the full walk, then you need a day-return to Wendover (slightly less than above fares). Let us know if you plan to come along – email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sarah Tinker

'May we recognize and abandon the familiar attitudes and practices that do not serve the whole. We are who we are and we have the opportunity to be who we want to be, to create a new inheritance for the future. May our thoughts, words, and actions in our daily lives assist in dismantling paradigms of oppression and suffering. May we give thanks for our individual place in time and space, to our families and our relationships that touch and change us. May we give thanks to the wise teachers who help us remember how to be and the chance to make it so. Underneath and within these stories and histories is our humanity. Being human means we are of this earth, we are these waters, we are fire, and atmosphere, we are the Sun and the moon and the stars. We are all that we see and the wisdom is revealed by looking in between.'

Sweethome Teacup

'From the paradigmatic story of Jesus we will propose that the direction of creation is toward inclusive love for all, especially the oppressed, the outcast, the vulnerable.'

Sallie McFague

New Chief Officer for General Assembly



Handing over to the new Chief Officer – L-R: Liz Slade, Derek McAuley, outgoing GA president Joan Cook

Welcome to Liz Slade our Unitarian General Assembly's new chief officer. There's an interview with Liz in the new issue of *The Inquirer* and copies are available in the church foyer. *The Inquirer* has a new design and is looking very appealing. Do help yourselves to copies – they're provided free of charge for everyone. At our recent Annual Meetings in Birmingham we said farewell to Derek McAuley who has been our chief officer for the last nine years. The committee sent a contribution to Derek's testimonial collection on our congregation's behalf and we look forward to working with Liz in the years ahead.



Saying thank you and farewell to Derek McAuley - L-R: LDPA District Minister Rev. Martin Whitell, Derek McAuley, Sir Peter Soulsby, Martin Gilbraith (Photographs courtesy of Rev. Daniel Costley)

'Reverence comes not with perfection but with profound intimacy: the true knowing of ourselves in relation to another and acceptance of all the joys, tedium, pain, sorrows, tenderness, and vulnerability that being deeply connected brings.'

Lois Kellerman / Nelly Bly

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



stonewall housing



Collection on Sunday 19th May

Stonewall Housing are the nominated charity for a share of the proceeds from our Sunday Tea Dances this year. They have sent representatives to speak at the events, made cakes, and generally been very involved so we decided to nominate them for a Sunday collection too. From their website: 'Our work helps to create safe spaces for LGBT+ people. Stonewall Housing works to ensure lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people live in safer homes, free from fear, and where we can celebrate our identity and support each other to achieve our full potential. Established in 1983, we are proud to have worked with over 30,000 people to secure safe housing. Stonewall Housing provides the only specialist housing advice, advocacy and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+) people of all ages. We are a voice for our communities who are often marginalised and discriminated against. Our vision is simple: lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans people of all ages will live in safer homes without fear of discrimination, violence or abuse.'

Website: www.stonewallhousing.org

Recent Charity Collections:

February's collection for the Unitarian Youth Movement has been swelled to £574.21 by a very generous additional anonymous donation. Thank you so much.

March 24th – **Steiner School Trip** – £198.48

April 21st – **Red Cross Yemen Appeal** – £417.55
(including additional donations from Heidi and John's poetry book launch and Sandra's recent concerts)

20 Years at Essex Church



Jane Blackall pictured back in 2002 with former chair of the congregation Doris Campbell.

This April I am celebrating twenty years at Essex Church! Just like the Queen has two birthdays, I have two anniversaries. The first time I stepped through the door was on the 18th April 1999. However, I don't always remember the precise date, and my first visit was on the day of the London Marathon so I usually think of marathon day as my anniversary and celebrate on that date.

I got involved in running the church when I was in my mid-20s, offering to set up a church website, and taking over editing of the church newsletter within a year or two. Our former minister Rev. Art Lester asked me to join the committee at quite an early stage, which was not something I'd ever imagined I'd do, but I wanted to give something back to the congregation that had already given me a lot. I was pretty shocked to find myself committee chair soon afterward (I later stepped aside to become secretary and Doris Campbell took over as chair). In the years that followed I ran the search committee to find a new minister (twice) and started running engagement groups and adult RE courses. It took me eight years to pluck up the courage to start leading services!

Since late 2008 I have been on the staff team at Essex Church in the role of Outreach Officer – it's not a title that really satisfactorily expresses the wide variety of tasks I take on for the congregation – but we've never been able to come up with anything better! I started off doing one day a week in this role and have steadily built up to three days a week over the past ten-and-a-bit years.

Finding this congregation, and Unitarianism more widely, has without a doubt changed my life radically (for the better!) I have made great friendships here and been supported, encouraged, and gently pushed to do things I never dreamed I would be able to. The more time, energy, and thought I've given to the church (and Unitarianism more widely, especially summer school) the more opportunities for depth, learning, and connection have emerged. There have been plenty of challenging times along the way too but these are eclipsed by the joys and treasured memories.

Now I'm training for the Unitarian ministry and it means I'm away from Essex Church a lot more often – on residential courses, preaching around the district, or on placement with the congregation in Croydon – and that's taking a bit of getting used to. I'm trying to make sure I'm never away from Kensington more than two Sundays a month though. There's no place like home.

Jane Blackall

Church Trip to Southend

After the Service on Sunday 2nd June



Come and join us for an early summer trip to the seaside and an afternoon circle service with Southend Unitarians. There'll be time for a train ride along the pier and an ice cream. Get in touch if you'd like more information or want to join us. The train tickets will cost around £14 but don't let that put you off as we can help with fares if needed. We'll be setting off after our morning service here in Kensington and travelling from Liverpool Street station.

Brian, Carolyn & Sarah

OneLight Gathering

Friday 10th May 6.45 for 7pm-8.30pm
Monthly Here at Essex Church



Led by Interfaith Ministers Rev Alison Trower and Rev Amy Firth this service will include music, prayer, reflection, silence, community connection and the beautiful Threshold Choir. Suggested donation: £5. You are welcome to arrive from 6:45pm and the gathering will be completed by 8:30pm with tea and treats. For more information see the OneLight website which helpfully includes all the resources they use in their gatherings:

www.onelightgathering.co.uk

LONDON Heart Meditation

*Using ancient rhythms,
played on a frame drum, the
classes will help you focus on your
heart beat, enabling you to start on a
journey of self-discovery, to uncover your true potential.*

Beginners Course in Heart Meditation

Classes Held on Various Tuesdays
Next: 30th April, 14th, 28th May from 6.30-7.30pm
Downstairs in the Library Here at Essex Church

If you're interested in tapping into a lasting source of inner-peace, and beginning a journey of self-discovery then come and join this Heart Meditation course for beginners. Using ancient rhythms played on a frame drum, the teacher will guide you on a step-by-step process for quietening your mind and truly 'listening to your heart'. Held on various Tuesday evenings, from 6.30pm-7.30pm, first class is free and donations are welcome thereafter.

Beverley Eve

To confirm course dates and book a place email:
infoheartmeditation@gmail.com

For more information visit: www.heartmeditation.eu

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 19th May and 16th June 2019
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church



Margaret has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. 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.

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 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 sessions are designed for all, whatever your experience or ability.

Essex Church Committee News



Roy



Maureen



Brian



Heidi



Harold

We've approved pay increases for all our musicians and expressed our gratitude for their contributions to our Sunday services.

We agreed to spend money on LED light bulbs and on some blinds to reduce glare in the hall when groups want to project videos.

We approved the church accounts for 2018 and the annual report will soon be printed, in good time for our AGM after the service on 12th May. Let us know in advance if there is anything you would like to raise at the AGM. Would you like to see our draft budget for 2019, which shows that it costs around £3,000 a week to run our church? Yes that figure shocks us too – but most of it goes to very worthwhile staff wages and pensions. Oh, and the Fairtrade chocolate biscuits! And our busy building earns at least that much for us, in many different ways, thanks to Jenny our warden who writes the invoices and makes the bookings.

Worship that Works:

Equipping Unitarians to lead High-Quality Services through Reflective Practice



Saturday 21st September – 10.30am until 3pm
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead, NW3 1NG

Save the Date: This autumn's LDPA quarterly will feature a whole-day training session introducing participants to best practice in Unitarian worship. This will be particularly beneficial for anybody who would like to be involved in leading worship in their own congregation or in churches around their district. It would also be useful for people who already lead worship and who would like to develop their skills and share hints and tips with other Unitarians. However, all who enjoy Unitarian worship and would like to think about it more in a structured way are also welcome to attend. The workshop will have a particular focus on reflective practice and the meaning and purpose of the worship we do together. The workshop will also act as an introductory session for anyone wishing to undertake the Worship Studies Course (Foundation Step), a nationally recognised GA course, which we are intending to run once again in the LDPA at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, between autumn 2019 and spring 2020. The remainder of the course will be run over three further Saturdays, by a variety of expert tutors, and we would be glad to hear early expressions of interest from any who might wish to sign up.

Embroidered Chalice Patches in Essex Church Colours



I've recently had some embroidered patches made with the Unitarian chalice symbol in our Kensington 'house colours' orange and green. An independent maker selling patches on Etsy agreed to create some to this custom design.

The patches are 8cm in diameter. I've already stitched one onto my rucksack so you can see a sample for yourself next time at church. The maker is charging £5.50 each and I'm happy to be a go-between for your orders if anyone in the congregation would like one. I can imagine it being a potential conversation-starter! We're also working on making rainbow chalice patches to proclaim our LGBTQ+ welcome (these will be slightly more expensive due to all the extra colours involved).

Do let me know if you'd like to order one:
jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Jane Blackall



'Knowing how to respect another person's pain and his moment means being able to discern when it is time to calm him, comfort him, counsel him, or proffer solidarity. This is what a Yiddish saying calls "*knowing what's happening in the other guy's belly.*"

Rabbi Nilton Bonder

'Great Lives'

Reflections by Congregation Members
From the service on Sunday 7th April

Rabbi Lionel Blue – Nominated by Jane Blackall

Today's service kicks off our month looking at 'Great Lives'. And we're doing something slightly unusual for us, something we only do a few times a year, a congregational service where there's an opportunity to hear reflections from a number of different voices up here at the front, sharing their wisdom. I invited a few members of the congregation to nominate someone – a 'moral or spiritual exemplar' – whose life had inspired them personally. And then to write a short reflection telling us about this 'Great Life', what the person means to them, and what we can all learn from their example. There's only time for about six of us to speak in today's service but I'd love to hear about all the other Great Lives that come to mind for everyone here today... so I've put a little slip in your order of service where you can nominate someone.

The person I'd like to speak about is Rabbi Lionel Blue. He's best known as one of the regular contributors to Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' slot – three minutes of spiritual reflection, connected to current affairs, in the middle of the otherwise rather combative *Today* programme – something he did for over 25 years, from the seventies to the early noughties. He made a point of trying to use the time he was given on air to make people feel slightly better about getting out of bed to face the day – an extremely worthwhile aim, I reckon – and was well known for telling jokey stories to lighten the mood. I've long thought that this light touch may have fooled people into mistakenly thinking of him as a cuddly, domesticated and sentimental figure rather than a religious heavyweight.

Lionel Blue is my spiritual hero, and his autobiography 'Hitchhiking to Heaven' (my favourite book), tells of a rich and complex life. It is exceedingly honest about his own flaws and foibles, as well as his gifts and achievements, and describes a meandering journey full of unexpected twists and turns, yet with a golden thread of God-seeking throughout (a follow-up – written after he lived longer than expected, and reflecting more on the process of acclimatising to ill-health and old age – was entitled 'The Godseeker's Guide').

I think of him as a kind of everyday mystic; he's always tuning into God in all things, and all people, whilst being disarmingly earthy and blunt about life's struggles and murky bits. A real truth-teller. He was born in the East End in 1930, into a poor family, descended from Russian Jews. He did not originally have any intention to be a rabbi – he temporarily rejected Judaism for Marxism – but re-found his faith at University via a spell with the Quakers. He was part of the first intake of the Leo Baeck rabbinical college, an institution formed to try and rebuild liberal Jewish education after the war, and became European Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in the 60s while he was still quite young. It's a role which sounds more prestigious than it was; it was a job nobody wanted and it came with little money, but meant he could roam around the continent with a certain amount of freedom, and he did a lot of trailblazing work on Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations).



He was the first British rabbi to come out as gay, back in the late 1970s, and he writes frankly about the mental health struggles he had in relation to his sexuality in those closeted times. He has a tenuous connection with this church, too: I understand he had a role in the formation of the LGBT-welcoming synagogue, Beit Klal Yisrael, which met here every week for ~30 years. In his later years he took his one-man show on the road, hosting 'An evening with Lionel Blue' at theatres up and down the land, telling stories and speaking spiritual wisdom to his 'radio congregation' – people who weren't necessarily religious but who had warmed to him through the airwaves. He made a point of coming into the foyer after his shows and staying until he'd seen everyone who wanted to talk to him. In his latter years he withdrew from public life and he died in December 2016 at the age of 86.

For me he's a great example of how you can be a channel for goodness and spiritual wisdom in the world even if you don't look the part, you don't play the game, or fit in with the norm... and you'll probably connect with people of all sorts more deeply and authentically if you are your whole, real, self (messy and complicated as that may be).

I had intended to read a longer excerpt from his autobiography but as we've got so much good stuff for you I'll just read a very short excerpt which is especially fitting for today's service (and perhaps it'll encourage you to read the book!). He wrote:

'I had my own personal agenda wandering through Europe. I [wanted to] discover teachers who didn't just teach about religion but [embodied] religion itself because of what they were. I needed gurus, enlightened gurus, saints, half-saints, very human beings – providing they were outside of the rat-race and the success struggle – and who were in the service of Heaven whether they realised it or not – they usually didn't. In this search I had a companion... we told each other about the teachers we found and occasionally we learned from them together, though our needs were very different. I personally wasn't very interested in clever people, [as he was]. I wanted wise people who could point the way to heaven...'

One phrase stood out to me: 'We told each other about the teachers we found and occasionally we learned from them together.' Isn't that exactly what we're doing here today?

'You have to put into your relationship with Heaven the things that you would put into an ordinary friendship - time and attention. If you wanted to learn holiday Spanish, you would accept that you'd have to attend the lessons, but people feel they can learn to speak to God without any investment of themselves. You need to commit yourself to sit for 15 minutes at a time - not every day, but for a couple of months - to see what answers form in your mind. In the end, you are the only evidence of your experience.'

Rabbi Lionel Blue

'Great Lives' (continued)

Krista Tippett – Nominated by Marc Viera

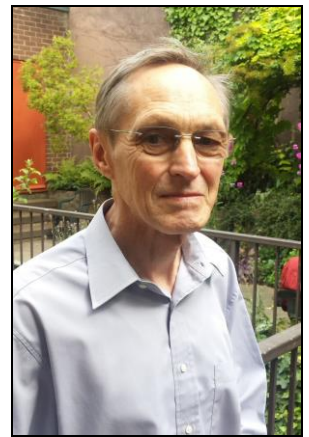


Krista Tippett has had a major influence in my life, and if you have connections with Essex Church in Kensington, she might be influencing your life as well. Krista Tippett, an American journalist grew up in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and read history at Brown University in the 1980s. After graduating, she became a foreign correspondent, and then worked as a diplomat in the United States embassy in Cold War Berlin. In an interview, Krista comments on this period in her life: *'I was with people who had very large outer lives. Like very large public lives, public persona, you know, people who could give brilliant speeches on nuclear weapons. But I was up very close to that and I also saw that these same individuals could have these tiny, impoverished inner lives'*. Krista eventually left the high-stakes world of Cold War nuclear policy and completed her masters at Yale Divinity School in 1994. Soon after, she started a radio show in Minnesota that explored religion as [to quote John O'Donohue] *'the locus of the wisdom and the lived spiritual experience of a people'*. In 2013, Krista cofounded a non-profit production company which has the aim of *'pursuing deep thinking and social courage, moral imagination and joy, to renew inner life, outer life, and life together'*. She has won several awards in the United States including the 2013 National Humanities Award, the 2008 George Foster Peabody Award, and three Webby Awards.

My first encounter with Krista Tippett was in 2008 when my best mate forwarded me a link to Krista interviewing John O'Donohue. There is nothing like a Krista Tippett interview. I was immediately hooked. Pico Iyer, another of her interviewees says of her interviews: *'Krista and her guests have really become some of my closest companions, because they discuss the most essential issues with such honesty and vulnerability. But I think even more than that, what she's really done is create a whole community of questioners and searchers. I have a friend who's a friar of a Benedictine monastery, and he has all his monks listen every day at lunchtime to Krista's program as a form of what they call LECTIO DIVINA, a scriptural reading'*.

Before Krista, I hid my passion for religion from the larger world. Krista's example gave me the courage to be more open and honest with the world, to be more myself. If you attend Essex Church or listen to the podcast, you too might be influenced by Krista Tippett, albeit indirectly. Sarah Tinker revealed at a recent poetry event that she finds inspiration for her sermons from Krista's website, which contains transcripts of her inspiring interviews. For a minister, these transcripts are like nectar to the honey bee: full of nourishment that can be carried back to the hive, one sweet drop at a time.

Montaigne – Nominated by Brian Ellis



I first met Montaigne over fifty years ago when I was browsing the shelves in a library. At school I had two subjects I really didn't get on with; French and writing essays, so I don't know why I took Michel de Montaigne's Collected Essays from the shelf. But that was when we met, and we've been meeting on and off ever since.

Montaigne was a French nobleman, an older contemporary of Shakespeare, who wrote 107 essays during the last twenty years of his life, to produce this book, which was acclaimed on publication and has been in print ever since. In the book are essays covering a range of subjects: On moderation, On how our mind tangles itself up, On the uncertainty of our judgement, are just three typical titles. He is credited as the first writer to write about himself as an ordinary man. By examining the value of his own life, his nature, his habits and his own opinions, and those of others, in a hunt for truth and a knowledge of humanity, he created a mirror in which other people can recognise their own humanity, through this exploration of his own reactions. Now we examine ourselves, and write about ourselves unselfconsciously, but this was a cultural development which only started in the Renaissance and is mainly credited to Montaigne.

The essays have no great meaning, they make no particular points, they put forward no arguments, they are not written to influence you. But when you read them you sense that here is someone writing down just how you are and how your mind works. I met him after ten years of learning in the sciences, maths, and engineering when I thought that the various experiences of life could be put into neat tidy boxes suitably coloured just black or white, and that emotional experiences could somehow be expressed in the equivalent of equations. To my consternation this was not how life was turning out. But after a couple of chats with Montaigne I began to accept the opposite; reading him is very like having a talk with a friend in a café or on the sofa at home, talking, listening, contradicting, changing minds.

He led me to realise that the experiences of life scatter themselves about in untidy piles, and they are coloured in all shades of grey between black and white. He gave me the second part of a mantra, expressed in a mathematical way – TLC squared. That's tender loving care, given and taken, multiplied by a TLC I learnt from Montaigne; T-talk, L - listen and C - compromise. I've bumbled along pretty well with this mantra so far – so thank you Michel.

It's appropriate to end with some words of his; *'our duty is to compose our character, to achieve order and tranquillity in our conduct. Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live properly, all other things are at best, but little aids and additions'*.

'Great Lives' (continued)

Maya Angelou –

Nominated by Annie Fowler



Dr. Maya Angelou was an activist, poet, dancer, writer and according to her many friends - including Oprah Winfrey - a fabulous cook. Maya's involvement with the NAACP and Malcolm X is well-documented. If you are seeking morality Maya Angelou's life was so colourful that you could never describe it as exemplary. Spiritually I would say she had an iron-clad survival instinct as a young rape-survivor, as a mother and as an optimist. She nurtured both her Christian faith and her innate sense of social justice. Maya was a perfectly flawed human like all of us.

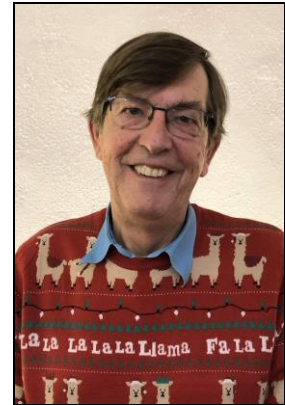
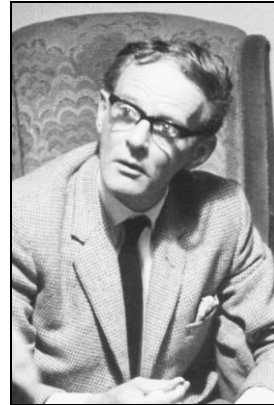
I discovered Maya Angelou in the 1980's and eagerly read all her autobiographical novels. I also enjoyed reading her poetry. I think it was her style of writing that gripped me; the brutal honesty couched in the warmth of her narrative. Then I actually got to hear the treacly melody of Maya's voice – it soothes my soul still.

We learn about social history from Maya Angelou; we learn about the struggles of black Americans and we learn about forgiveness and love. We learn about the gift of measured words, of the slowing down of thought, of the discipline of a writer, the power of womanhood, of grace in old age and the sharing of wisdom. In latter years Bill Clinton asked Maya to write a poem for his inauguration and I quote from it here because I think the political and human message can resonate with us all.

Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.
The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out upon me,
The rock, the river, the tree, your country.
No less to Midas than the mendicant.
No less to you now than the mastodon then.
Here on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister's eyes,
Into your brother's face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning. ...

John Sassall –

Nominated by John Humphreys



In 1967 a book called *A Fortunate Man* – the story of a country doctor – was published. It describes in detail the life of a single handed GP working in the Forest of Dean, at that time an impoverished rural area of Gloucestershire. John Sassall had worked there as a GP since the start of the NHS in 1948. During World War 2 he had served as naval surgeon in the Mediterranean. Initially Dr Sassall worked with a senior partner, but when he retired, he made a decision to work alone.

Around the same time, in 1968, I started my medical career as a young and immature student who had no clear idea of why I was training to become a doctor other than to please my father who had paid for my expensive education. I qualified and worked for ten years in East Africa and in Aboriginal health programmes in northern Australia. During that time I learnt that doctors were valuable in times of sickness but good health was more dependent on factors such as clean water, sanitation, housing and a connection to community.

It was during this time that I first read about John Sassall's life and came to understand how a family doctor could do more than prescribe medication, refer for specialist care, and undertake simple practical medical procedures. A relationship of trust and intimacy could develop which might allow for an exploration and healing of deeper traumas, often over an extended period. He was a constant presence in his community, attending births, witnessing multiple episodes of minor and major illness and often being present during the final hours of life.

The life and vocation described was also of the doctor as witness and recorder of events. Historically in communities this role was shared with the priest, but by the time I finally entered general practice in a working class area of east Oxford in the 1980's, traditional support systems were already fragmenting. The NHS was, and still remains, one of the few institutions freely available to all without selection or discrimination.

Another doctor described John Sassall's approach to his work as follows: 'He came to realize that the patient should be treated as a total personality, that illness carries multiple emotional layers as well as physical pathology. His satisfaction comes from accompanying each patient through a frequently lonely journey. We give doctors access to our bodies, and they can give a name and meaning to conditions which often feel ill-defined and threatening.'

(continued on opposite page)

'Great Lives' (continued)

And so over the years, I would often return to this book and its description of a type of practice which is now increasingly uncommon. It had opened my eyes to the potential depth of the relationship between practitioner and patient. But John Sassall's approach to his practice was all consuming and in this he had made a Faustian pact. He was rewarded with endless possibilities for experiencing the possibilities inherent in human lives, but at the cost of being subject to immense, and at times unbearable pressures. In his case, episodes of depression, worsened by the unexpected death of his wife, led him to leave his practice. He travelled for some years in the Far East studying the work of "barefoot" doctors, before his death in 1982.

I wish I could conclude by saying that by reading the book I avoided the pressures I have just described, now often labelled as "Burnout". But alas I did not. I too became unwell and had to leave full time general practice. I started a personal journey of physical, mental, and spiritual recovery. Twenty years later it has led me here to share this recollection of a man who has shaped such an important part of my life.

Ruth Bader Ginsberg – Nominated by Jennifer Young



As a woman in a profession that was traditionally the realm of men (and in many ways is still structured to favour them), I feel supremely blessed to have been born into a world shaped by the life's work of Ruth Bader Ginsberg. I speak about her today as just one example of untold stories of women around the world who have fought to achieve equality for all marginalized groups.

Born to a family of Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn, Ginsberg was one of only 9 women in her class at Harvard Law School in 1956. She recounts having to beg a male student to get a book she needed from the library because women were prohibited from entering. She was the first fully tenured female professor at Columbia Law School, the First director of the Woman's Rights project at the ACLU, and in 1993 became 107th Justice of the US Supreme court (only the 2nd woman to hold this position). Throughout her career she continues to fight to protect marginalized groups and especially working to ensure gender equality for all – always understanding that rights for one ensures rights for everyone.

But we remember individuals like Justice Ginsberg as 'great lives' not simply for their achievements, but for how they live their lives. And so I admire Justice Ginsberg for other reasons too (here's a short list):

1. She is very short (only about 5ft) – but she claims her space. She is especially known for speaking with long deliberate pauses (pause) giving her time to create a well-devised answer and to keep her listeners literally hanging on her next word. I want that kind of poise and confidence in articulating my beliefs.
2. She is a terrible cook – and that is ok because she is great at other things. Reminding me that making a difference does not require being good at everything.
3. She is collegial with people she strongly disagrees with. She had a decades-long friendship with fellow supreme court Justice Anton Scalia. Scalia was a conservative Republican whose positions regularly placed him and Ginsberg at odds. Nevertheless, they enjoyed holidaying together and there is even opera written about their friendship. Her ability to treat even those she strongly disagrees with as fellow human beings first and foremost is a valuable lesson in this time of tribalism.
4. She values the power of words. 'choosing the right word' she argues, 'could make an enormous difference in conveying an idea'. As Supreme Court Justice her ability to write dynamic minority opinions against rulings of an increasingly conservative Court have laid the ground work for policy and earned her the title 'The Great Dissenter'. She reminds me that language is power even when your side is not winning (yet).

Finally, she reminds me there is no point where you have to stop doing things you are passionate about. This is the Justice Ginsberg that led me to choose her to speak about today. A few years ago I saw a clip of this diminutive woman in her 80s planking – an exercise like holding yourself in the push up position but even worse because you are resting on your elbows – who was this woman?

Events in my life left me with a very cynical view of getting older. Justice Ginsberg dispels the notion that women of a certain age need to silently drift into the background. She didn't even get on the Supreme court until her 60s and what she has accomplished since then has opened my eyes to similar great lives a bit closer to home. Since I began attending services at Essex Church, every week I meet amazing women from the generations ahead of me who, like Justice Ginsberg, take on life with determination, creativity, spirituality and a sense of adventure. Like Justice Ginsberg you continually inspire me to keep dreaming and planning. You are also a reminder that not all great lives are recorded in big books. While I will probably never get the chance to thank Justice Ginsberg in person, I can say thank you to the all the women here for myself, and for women in the generations behind me: Your lives are recorded in our optimism about the future and our determination to remain persistent, honest, fearless and creative – to go out and create our own 'great lives'.

The following quote was on the front of our order of service:

'We need spiritual heroes to give us working images of different types of sanctified lives that we can hold before our eyes for inspiration... The desires that draw us to our friends, to teachers, to those we admire, are a major source of the ideals that lead us to aspire to be our best self. Love can make us strive to be worthy.'

Sam Keen

'Great Lives': As nominated by Congregation Members

Everyone who was present at the service received a slip of paper with the following invitation: 'Let's tell each other about the "Great Lives" which have been spiritual or moral inspirations to us. We'll stick these up in the hall during coffee-time to spark conversation and then collect them to put in the newsletter.' Here are the responses that were handed in:

Pat Gregory nominated Frank Ostaseski

Who they are/were:

Co-founder of the Zen Hospice in San Francisco.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

To be fully present and give all of yourself to any experience when being with people with terminal illness.

What we can all learn from their example:

To take his teachings into our everyday life. Don't wait to tell people we care and love them.

Varinder nominated Mother Nature

Who they are/were:

Ever-present carer of the world, ever influencing our growth, the earth, animals, plants, people – everything wise/passion.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

All weather – the wind, fog, rain, sun, 'the world' and beyond.

What we can all learn from their example:

She inspires us to care for this world we live in. She is with us all the time. It's up to us to be awake and alive to this and take responsibility.

Someone Anonymous nominated Handel

Who they are/were:

Musician who gave us so much wonderful music including the miracle of the Messiah.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

Tremendous influence and appreciation of classical music through my son who is a Handel specialist. In my younger years only interested in pop music!

What we can all learn from their example:

Amazing charitable work as well as musicianship.

Ella O'Neill nominated Irena Stanislava Sendler

Who they are/were:

She saved thousands of children during the second world war.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

I read about her and she got my interest.

What we can all learn from their example:

Put other people and help them before you.

Billy Jackson nominated John Lennon

Who they are/were:

Musician, songwriter, peace advocate.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

Kept me sane during my childhood. Inspired me musically and also to see that we can make a difference.

What we can all learn from their example:

Give peace a chance. We all have a voice.

Sara Taylor nominated Martin Israel

Who they are/were:

Priest, physician, healer and author. Born into Jewish professional medical family in South Africa. His father was a distinguished surgeon, very difficult relationship with his not-dexterous son, picked up basic Christian tenets from Black servants who cared for him. Came to England to read medicine, he was shy, it was a difficult adjustment. He was eventually ordained as an Anglican priest, the small church was unexpectedly packed at his ordination. Had a profound spiritual and healing ministry.

What we can all learn from their example:

Numerous books, including 'Precarious Living', give much autobiographical information interwoven with spiritual wisdom.

John Newton nominated Alice Miller

Who they are/were:

She was a psychotherapist who left the official psychoanalytic institute to work on the effect of childhood abuse on adult life.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

Reading her work saved my life as it was through her books that I uncovered my own childhood trauma.

What we can all learn from their example:

That it's vitally important that everybody acknowledges their childhood issues, if they have them, in order to lead a sane life.

Maeli Jayne nominated Stephen Jay Gould

Who they are/were:

Conchologist, evolutionary biologist and essayist.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

Professional inspiration, led me away from the confrontational style of Dawkins towards a more spiritual, thoughtful route. To engage with those you disagree with.

What we can all learn from their example:

To find wonder in the world, in all areas. To keep the childlike joy in exploring everything. To question, to debate, to engage and broaden your mind.

Veronica Needa nominated David Attenborough

Who they are/were:

Naturalist extraordinaire, broadcaster, educator.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

Awakening me/us to our collective responsibility for, deep love and appreciation of this beautiful blue-green planet that is our worldly home. Deeply human, kind, approachable, compassionate, passionate, wise – supporting commitment and action in all of us.

Annie Fowler nominated Sarah Tinker

Who they are/were:

A Unitarian minister.

What influence/Impact they've had on you:

She has kept me returning here!

What we can all learn from their example:

Never lose your sense of humour or sense of self.

**Unitarian Women's Group Conference
Weekend of 18th to 20th October 2019
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

'Women and Ageing'



Women of all ages are welcome to this weekend of friendship. We will be looking at the joys and concerns of ageing through workshops, discussion, story-telling and women's experience. The conference will be facilitated by Cathie Masztalerz and Sara Wilcox. Alongside exploration of the issues raised, there will be fun and laughter!

Single or shared standard room	£132
Single occupancy of standard room	£142
Shared or single en-suite	£142
Single occupancy of twin en-suite room	£152

Conference fee (payable on arrival): £10

Booking: Stella Burney: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk or 01298 871218 (accommodation) and register with Margaret Robinson: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

Eco News



**"ADULTS KEEP SAYING, 'WE OWE IT TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO 'GIVE THEM HOPE'. BUT I DON'T WANT YOUR HOPE. I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE HOPEFUL. I WANT YOU TO PANIC. I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE FEAR I FEEL EVERYDAY. AND THEN I WANT YOU TO ACT... I WANT YOU TO ACT AS IF YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE. BECAUSE IT IS."
- GRETA THUNBERG**

With thanks to people who've been in touch with supportive comments about how to increase our congregation's awareness of sustainable living and all the useful information we've received. You might want to consider joining Brian and Sarah, who receive boxes of organic fruit and veg, delivered by Riverford Organics on a Monday here at the church. Or would you like to join one of the church wholefood orders from SUMA and buy some items in bulk?

On their website recently Riverford staff described their surprise when a well-disguised frog leaped out of a pallet full of swiss chard from their French farm. 'We decided that although our Devon farm is a haven for wildlife, the European tree frog would be happiest back where it came from, so we boxed it up (with lots of foliage and water) and sent it back in the lorry on the next trip to France, where it was released back on to the farm.' That was a 1,600km journey for the frog!

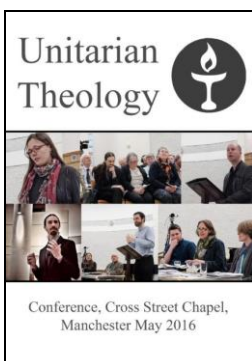
We recommend a simple, pragmatic 17 minute video on You Tube, on what the problem is, why, and what you can actually do about it. Here's the link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CM_KkDuzGQ or search for Henrik Kniberg and his Friendly Guide to Climate Change. We will be showing this video after church for anyone who's interested over the next few weeks.

As a church we're splashing out on more LED light bulbs – initially quite expensive, but they help reduce our carbon footprint and will lead to lower electricity bills. We hope to have a new page on our website with ideas for sustainable living and we're working on a statement of affirmation to bring to the church AGM on 12th May.

Do get in touch if you'd like to be part of these developments here at Essex Church. It was good to hear people speaking so positively of the work of the Extinction Rebellion protestors in bringing climate change to people's attention. It sounds like quite a few of us enjoyed walking around a traffic free Marble Arch for once or appreciated the impromptu garden bridge that appeared at Waterloo.

David Carter & Sarah Tinker

**Unitarian Theology
Conferences I & II
Special Editions of 'Faith and Freedom'
Now Available for Free Download**



In 2016 and 2018 the journal 'Faith and Freedom' published two well-received supplements based on the Unitarian Theology Conferences organised by the Revs Jim Corrigan, Jo James and Stephen Lingwood and held at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester in May 2016 and at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds in October, 2017. Both are now available for free download from Rev David Steers' blog: velvethummingbee.com/2019/04/05/unitarian-theology

Services at Essex Church in May



Sunday 5th May, 11am **'A Celebration of Friendship'** Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Albert Camus wrote of friendship: *'Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend'*. Join us for an exploration of friendship's many forms. And why not bring a friend and stay for the afternoon inclusive Tea Dance.

Sunday 12th May, 11am **'Relating in Community'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall

Community connections help us to meet people different from ourselves and to learn more about one another. Followed by our congregation's AGM – all are welcome.

Sunday 19th May, 11am **'Sturdy Intimacy'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Nobody said relationships would be easy – but they're usually worth the effort.

Sunday 26th May, 11am **'Unexpected Connections'**

Service led by Jeannene Powell

When it comes to all types of relationships, many stereotypes abound. What we'll see in this service is that some of the best connections come in unlikely forms.

Warden's Column: Garden Thoughts



I am writing this on Easter Sunday - what a glorious Easter weekend!

The garden's looking particularly beautiful at the moment. Our gardener, Jackie has pruned the Wisteria and it's set substantial amounts of buds. Bluebells are in full flower round the tree. Heidi just donated some daffodil bulbs to add to that area - so it should be even more glorious next year.

I remember having the garden terraced, soon after I started work here. They planted Agapanthus - which has thrived, spreading new clumps on different levels. The Photinia bush, planted at the same time looked like it wouldn't make it through the first summer. In desperation, I dug it out and made a much bigger hole, filling it with moisture-retaining compost. That did the trick and it's huge now - I feel a glow of satisfaction every time I pass it!

The back garden is also looking gorgeous. The little lemon tree fruited & flowered spectacularly last year. The local farmer's market sells mixed Foxgloves and I've put some into the wooden planters - always fun to see what colours we end up with. We're blessed with many passing birds here, due to our closeness to the park maybe - robins, wrens and tits are frequent visitors, but oddly I've never seen a parakeet.

Do you have a favourite part of the church garden? Or a favourite plant? Or time of year? It's nice to see how popular the garden is on Sunday mornings - from as early as March through to October or even November. Hirers frequently admire it too and say how lucky we are to have our green oasis in the heart of London.

Jenny Moy

Essex Church Membership and Contact Forms

It's that time again! Each year we ask members to re-affirm their membership and confirm their contact details by filling in a form (this year it will be golden yellow – please look out for it at church on Sundays – it's easy to fill in and hand back during coffee hour). Membership does not depend on you making a financial contribution to the work of the church, though of course we are very grateful for your regular donations, which make possible the ongoing work of the congregation. Membership is instead about affirming your personal commitment to this community and to the Unitarian ethos. Each member is a vital and valued part of this church and its work in the world. If you are new to the congregation, we ask you to attend for three months before applying to join, so that you can get a feel for what the church is about. If you have any questions about membership do have a chat with Sarah, Jane, or a member of the church committee to find out more.