



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: June 2013

## What's On...

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 11am-noon  
**'All Will Be Well'**

Service led by Rev. Sheena Gabriel  
and Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 7.00-9.00pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00-8.00pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'The Wild One Within'  
– coordinated by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 11am-noon  
**'Flower Communion'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by John Hands

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2.00-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00-9.00pm  
**'Rediscovering the Bible'**  
Bible-reading with David Darling

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June, 11am-noon  
**'Miracles'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June, 12.30-1.15pm  
**'Finding Your Voice'**  
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00-9.00pm  
**'Art Meditations' (session 1/4)**

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 6.00-9.00pm  
**Summer Solstice Stroll**  
Meeting at Tower Hill Station

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 11am-noon  
**'Loneliness'**  
Led by Jo Ridgers

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00-9.00pm  
**Reading Group: 'The Snow Child'**

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00-9.00pm  
**'Art Meditations' (session 2/4)**

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June, 11am-noon  
**'On Being Perfect'**  
Led by Kate McKenna

## A Message from our Minister:

### Acts of Kindness and Love

In Tolkein's book *The Hobbit*, Gandalf the wizard says to his friend Bilbo Baggins that some people think "it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I found it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love."



I wonder if you have been giving and receiving acts of kindness and love recently? Have a think about it. Here are a few of the kind things that have happened within our community:

- Someone making an effort to ring people to check how they are getting on.
- Someone taking over a volunteering task because the person on the rota was feeling under the weather.
- People staying behind to help clear up in the kitchen after coffee time.
- Someone helping a younger person out financially.
- People sending cards to those who are unwell.
- Someone offering to help with the house plants.
- Someone coming in at the crack of dawn to clean the church for Sunday morning.
- Someone donating books to our book group and library.
- People paying quiet compliments to others in words and in writing.
- Cakes, biscuits and fruit have been donated for us to enjoy.

The list goes on and won't include the many quiet kindnesses shown to others that go unnoticed by the rest of us. It's as though we exist within a web of reciprocity, or on a gently moving wave of giving and receiving. Many of these actions happened because a person spotted a need they could meet. But in order for people to know what our needs are we generally need to talk about them with others. So let's make this the month where we reach out to one another. Let's be daring and ask when we need help. Let's be brave and be prepared to say 'no' clearly and quickly if we can't be of assistance. And let's be courageous enough to start those conversations with others, conversations that feel safe enough for us to be truthful about what's happening in our lives. A church needs to be more than a mutual self-help society that only looks inwards at its own members' needs. But in supporting one another we build a firm foundation from which we can better reach out to others. And do let me know of kindnesses you have received recently. I'll add them to my list!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this month's newsletter...

- \* 'How I Came To Essex Church' by Roy Clark
- \* Welcoming New Members
- \* 'Inner and Outer Peace' - Peace Fellowship Retreat
- \* Art Meditations Summer Course
- \* Conservation Volunteering in Madagascar' by Alice Lambert
- \* Poem by John Hands
- \* 'Midges' – poem by Carolyn Appleby
- \* 'Dignity in Dying' – from GA Annual Meetings
- \* 'Letting Go, Moving On' – a sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- \* 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.



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

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

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

# Congregational Lunch

12.30pm, Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2013



A date for your diary – we will be having a congregational lunch after the service on 28<sup>th</sup> July – as usual it will be a bring-and-share meal so please plan to bring some food or drink and let us know via the sign-up sheet what you intend to contribute so that we can be sure we've got a good balance of offerings. Why not plan to bring along a friend? All are welcome.

# Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



## Stewarding:

2 <sup>nd</sup> June:	Annie Fowler
9 <sup>th</sup> June:	Niall Doherty
16 <sup>th</sup> June:	Natasha Drennan
23 <sup>rd</sup> June:	Michaela von Britzke
30 <sup>th</sup> June:	Sarah Tinker

## Coffee:

2 <sup>nd</sup> June:	Liz Tuckwell
9 <sup>th</sup> June:	Caroline Blair
16 <sup>th</sup> June:	Annie Fowler
23 <sup>rd</sup> June:	Sue Smith
30 <sup>th</sup> June:	Carol Sheppard

## Greeting:

2 <sup>nd</sup> June:	Jo Ridgers
9 <sup>th</sup> June:	David Darling
16 <sup>th</sup> June:	Gina Bayley
23 <sup>rd</sup> June:	Nubia Ortega
30 <sup>th</sup> June:	Annie Fowler

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

**[rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)**

# Summer Solstice Stroll

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013

Meeting 6pm at Tower Hill Station



Continuing our series of quarterly walks, have a think about joining a group of us on Friday 21st June, for a gentle walk to celebrate the summer solstice. We're planning to walk along the river from Tower Bridge to Island Gardens (and possibly up One Tree Hill in Greenwich Park if we've got any energy left).

This is a route of about 5 ½ miles but there are a number of opportunities to break off and catch a bus or the DLR if you don't want to complete the whole distance. Why not bring a friend?

Please let us know if you plan to join us, just in case we change plans: email [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

A Short Course this Summer with Kensington Unitarians

## 'Art Meditations'

Thursdays 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> July  
6.45pm for 7.00-9.00pm, here at Essex Church



Following the great success of our first 'Art Meditations' course this January we will be offering a further four sessions at the church (upstairs in the worship space itself) during June and July. Each of these sessions will be stand-alone but of course it would be lovely if you could make it to the whole series.

In each session we will reflect on spiritual themes using visual art, sometimes by responding to images, and sometimes by playing with various media (paint, collage, etc) ourselves. No particular artistic skills are required – the emphasis is on exploration and expression rather than technical merit!

A good portion of each evening will be spent working in meditative silence and we will come together in the second half of each session to share our responses and insights.

It would be helpful to know if you are coming so we know how many tables to set out. Please get in touch if you are planning to come along: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)



## Welcome New Members



It was a pleasure to welcome new members at our service in May before the congregation's AGM: Gisela Boehnisch, Niall Doherty, Helena Foss, Annie Fowler, Carol Sheppard, Liz Tuckwell. Each year in this service we say in unison these words of commitment:

*It is with pleasure and love  
that we commit ourselves to this shared ministry.*

*With caring and open hearts we pledge  
to join in making our community an inclusive  
and welcoming place for all people of goodwill.*

*We shall continue to uphold our liberal religious tradition  
and to encourage the many spiritual seekers  
who meet in our church building.*

*We trust the power of honest communication,  
creativity, and kindness, to heal and hold us always.*

Thank you to everyone who makes this community of Kensington Unitarians the caring and committed group that it is. At our AGM held after the membership service we reminded people that the church belongs to all of us and that everyone is welcome to make suggestions throughout the year about anything. How would you like to see us using the resources we have in the year ahead? We are committed to shared leadership so if there is something you would like to have happen here we will do all we can to support you. From individualised rites of passage ceremonies, to outings and small group courses and activities - almost anything is possible if we join together and put our energies behind it. Let us know what your vision for Kensington Unitarians is in the year ahead.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## London Pride Parade

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2013 from 1.00pm

We've not heard anything yet about a Unitarian presence at this year's London Pride March. But if you're interested in marching with fellow Unitarians get in touch and we'll find out who's marching with our banner this year.





# Spirituality for a World in Crisis

Working Towards a Spiritual Alliance



## A Gathering to Seek a Co-Creative Approach to a New Era

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2013, 10am-4.30pm

Here at Essex Church, London W8 4RT

*"The fundamental problem, I believe, is that at every level we are giving too much attention to the external, material aspects of life while neglecting moral ethics and inner values." HH Dalai Lama*

**What are the key issues at stake?**

**How might we co-operate?**

**Can we bring our various spiritual visions together to inspire a change in the way we live?**

Existing institutions are not rising to the challenges we face in today's world. So an emerging alliance of spiritual and religious groupings is coming together to explore what each might contribute to a coherent vision and set of actions for the future. The gathering will include opportunities for all to share their own perspectives on the theme and to contribute to future initiatives.

### Keynote talks during the day gathering:

'Towards a Culture of Love and Wisdom' - David Lorimer  
'Spirituality for a World in Crisis' - Dr Greg Barker  
Opening/Closing Meditation - Sr Maureen, Brahma Kumaris

### Cost: £25 (concessions available)

Register online via [www.wrekintrust.org](http://www.wrekintrust.org)  
Or email [book@wrekintrust.org](mailto:book@wrekintrust.org)

## Accommodation Request

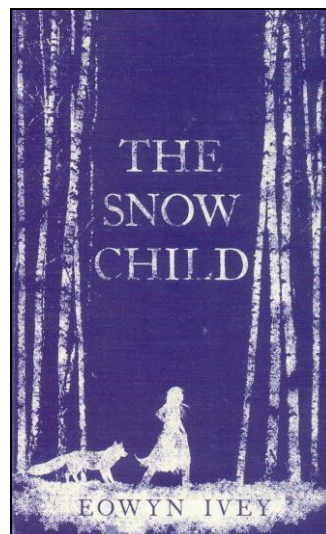
US Unitarian Universalist minister and family are seeking a home to rent or share in London from mid-June to mid-July. Desired: space for a couple and six-year-old, use of a kitchen, safe neighbourhood, close to Tube. Please email: [amyzm999@sbcglobal.net](mailto:amyzm999@sbcglobal.net)

Also, and separately (no swap necessary): We are offering our lovely 3-bedroom, 2-bath home in San Francisco for rent mid-June to mid-July. Use of car included. Details at [www.sermonsinstones.com](http://www.sermonsinstones.com).

## Essex Church Reading Group

### 'The Snow Child'

by Eowyn Ivey



Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's May session will be based on 'The Snow Child' by Eowyn Ivey which was suggested by Gina Bayley. This will be the 103<sup>rd</sup> title discussed by the reading group since it started up ten years ago.

More information from Amazon UK:

*"A bewitching tale of heartbreak and hope set in 1920s Alaska, The Snow Child was a bestseller on hardback publication, and went on to establish itself as one of the key literary debuts of 2012, and was a Richard and Judy Bookclub pick.*

*Alaska, the 1920s. Jack and Mabel have staked everything on a fresh start in a remote homestead, but the wilderness is a stark place, and Mabel is haunted by the baby she lost many years before. When a little girl appears mysteriously on their land, each is filled with wonder, but also foreboding: is she what she seems, and can they find room in their hearts for her?*

*Written with the clarity and vividness of the Russian fairy tale from which it takes its inspiration, The Snow Child is an instant classic."*

The group takes special care to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to. Members come together to share our diverse views and appreciate our differences in a spirit of curiosity and respect. The group has a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere and newcomers are always most welcome to come along to any session. The group has been meeting monthly since 2003. We take turns in choosing a book for everybody to read so we tackle a wide variety of material. For more information see:

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



## A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
9<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

**NOTE: NO TUESDAY CLASSES IN JUNE**  
due to music exams in the church

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 (£5 to members of church congregation).

**Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.**

## Small Group Communion



**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> August  
at 12.30pm Down 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. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we can experience a variety of different approaches. The line-up for the next couple of months is as follows:

**9<sup>th</sup> June** – Led by John Hands

**14<sup>th</sup> July** – Led by Jane Blackall

**11<sup>th</sup> August** – Led by Susan Smith

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

## How I Came to Essex Church



This year has been a somewhat tumultuous one for me in many ways. Old certainties turned out to be far from certain and difficult unresolved issues in my life re-emerged with a new urgency. In

short I went through some dark and difficult days which proved to be somewhat detrimental to my health and wellbeing. I recognised during this time that I needed both some more meaningful interaction with others and to rediscover a spiritual perspective to my life.

I have read a great deal of eastern thought and philosophy and for that matter European thinkers and contemporary writers on religion and ethics, but these inform my head rather than feed my heart. I realised recently that I needed the connection of fellow seekers. I have attended occasional services and events at Buddhist groups over the years. These were often interesting, enjoyable and allowed me to develop insight through meditation, although in general I didn't find the sense of community that belonging to an inclusive outward looking congregation brings.

I knew a little about Unitarianism through my reading and decided it was time to find out more. So, as we do these days, I consulted the Oracle... a.k.a Google, and discovered that there was a Unitarian church virtually on my doorstep. After checking the events calendar on the website, I decided to attend the "Heart and Soul" midweek spiritual gathering. I pitched up on a rather windswept Thursday evening and was met with quiet friendliness and a warm welcome. It should be mentioned that there was also some very nice cake.

For me a major appeal of Unitarianism is that it is religion for grownups. That is not to say that I am very grown up myself, but what I mean by that statement is that as far as I can see Unitarianism gives one the space to think for oneself. Life is after all a journey full of twists and turns and who says we are not allowed to develop and refine our beliefs or even change our minds without being bound by dogma or doctrine? Another value of I share with many Unitarians is the interconnectedness of all beings and nature.

One of the wonderful things I have experienced since I have been coming along is the open and natural disposition of the people I have met here. So often these days any social activity is driven by some sort of commercial agenda, often sadly at the cost of genuineness and authenticity. A more genuine and authentic group of people than the members of Essex Church I couldn't hope to find. Indeed, since I have been attending, I have met and am getting to know some very kind and lovely folk. In fact, when all said and done, I think it is the friendliness and fellowship that brings me back time and again, something I really value and greatly appreciate. That plus the cake of course! It's early days for me yet, but in the midst of my period of change and hopefully renewal, I feel very much at home at Essex Church.

**Roy Clark**

## Midges - A Perspective



Tiny in the air  
midges change places with one another,  
pedalling on unicycles  
they drop and climb  
right now together a spherical world.  
Frowned upon by humans  
they love and josh with one another  
just like people do.

Carolyn Appleby

## Unitarians Persecuted

A recent letter in the Guardian newspaper paints a dreadful picture of persecution of Unitarians in the 18th century. Various historians responded saying that the passage had probably been taken out of context and that it was unlikely that the children of Non-conformists were often taken from them. But look out for our service in July, which will mark the 200th Anniversary of the passing of the Unitarian Toleration Act, also known as the Unitarian Relief Act or the Trinity Act. Yes, it really was illegal to be a Unitarian before 1813, although few were actually prosecuted.

*On 11 May 1792, there was a motion in the Commons for ending the penal statutes against the Unitarians (dating from 1698), which had denied that community the protection of the courts, debarred them from public life and threatened to take their children away from them.*

*Edmund Burke opposed the motion, characterising the outlawed community thus: "These insect reptiles only fill us with disgust; if they get above their natural size, and increase the quantity, whilst they keep the quality, of their venom, they become the objects of the greatest terror ... A spider in his natural size is only a spider, ugly and loathsome, and his flimsy net is only fit for catching flies. But, good God! Suppose a spider as large as an ox, and that he spread his cables about us, all the wilds of Africa would not produce anything so dreadful."*

Christopher Walker, London

Our own Annie Fowler is involved in this charity event...



The Mayhew Animal Home's

# HYDE BARK

Sunday 9th June 2013

10am - 5pm

A great family day out packed full of attractions including dog agility, a temptation alley, pooch portraits, vet demonstrations, children's activities, pet behaviour advice, face painting and so much more! We will be holding our spectacular celebrity judged dog show and a leading a fantastic sponsored dog walk around the beautiful Serpentine Lake.

The Mayhew's Hyde Bark is now in its second year. The event runs from 9.45am to 5pm and will be jam packed all day with exciting stalls, entertainment and activities. Our amazing dog show will get the day off to a woofastic start with celebrity guest judges and entertaining compères. Enter your pooch into the show for just £3! Registration opens at 9.00am so get there early as places go fast! The sponsored dog walk starts at 4.15pm and is £10 per pooch, a great way to end a magnificent day of fun and fundraising.

Have some laughs at temptation alley, watching your furry friends resist all manner of treats and put your pet to the test over the fantastic agility course provided by Halo Dogs. Visit our Animal Welfare Officers and Vet tent, receive advice from dog trainers and pet behavioural specialists and browse a range of exciting stalls. There will be demonstrations, refreshments, entertainment, face painting, children's activities and much more! All money raised will go directly to helping our cats, dogs and rabbits here at The Mayhew. For more information see the website: [www.themayhew.org/events/hyde-bark-2013](http://www.themayhew.org/events/hyde-bark-2013)

**About the Mayhew:** The Mayhew Animal Home was established in 1886 and is currently one of the busiest and most effective animal welfare organisations in London, helping thousands of dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals escape a life of abandonment, neglect and cruelty each year. More than just a rescue and re-homing centre, The Mayhew offers free and low-cost veterinary services from our Community Veterinary Clinic, provides a range of Community Animal Care programmes through the work of our Animal Welfare Officers and has a growing Mayhew International arm improving animal welfare worldwide.

## July Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the July issue is **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June**. Please send your church newsletter contributions to our editor, Jane Blackall, or any committee member by then. Thank you!!!

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



# Conservation Volunteering in Madagascar - Azafady

If Lemony Snicket, author of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, wrote a book based on my experiences in Madagascar, the blurb on the back cover may read something along the following lines:

*Dear Reader,*

*If you wish to read about a relaxing, stress-free sojourn on the world's fourth largest island, filled with accounts of unadulterated delight and uninterrupted pleasure, please put this book down immediately.*

*The pages of this tome, I regret to inform you, include such disagreeable matters as an unusable debit card, a set of treacherous concrete steps, clusters of flies feasting upon a cut and swollen foot, excessively extroverted volunteers, an upset stomach and a long night walk involving rotting logs, swamps and rain.*

*You are strongly advised to forget this story and search for reading material of a more comforting nature.*

*With all due respect,*

*Lemony Snicket*

Thankfully, however, Lemony Snicket's account, while referring to real events, would not give the full picture. Although the trip turned out to be more challenging than I'd expected, it also contained many moments of enjoyment and amazement, and I am very pleased that I had the opportunity to volunteer with such a worthwhile organisation as Azafady.

We (volunteers, research assistants, guides and cooks) spent most of the month in the picturesque coastal region of Sainte Luce in south-east Madagascar, staying in a campsite next to the hamlet of Ambandrika. Most days were spent tramping about beautiful littoral forest fragments, searching for lemurs or herpetofauna. The lemur behaviour walks involved walking through the forest until we spotted a lemur, which we would then follow for an hour and a half, recording its movements every five minutes. Lemur transects involved walking quickly to a particular route in the forest and then walking slowly along the route, looking out for lemurs. We would record details of each lemur we spotted (e.g. its species, the type of tree it was in, whether it was an adult or a juvenile, how far away the tree was from the transect etc.). The herpetofauna transects involved 'sweeping' the forest floor with sticks in order to find snakes, geckos and frogs, the details of which were then recorded. The data collected through this work is used nationally and internationally to highlight the plight of the fauna and flora in Sainte Luce. This is particularly important as the area has been earmarked for future ilmenite mining which will remove two-thirds of the remaining littoral forest.

I loved spending so much time outside, doing physical work. Even on the days when we didn't see any lemurs it was enjoyable just to walk through the dense forest. Unless it was raining...which luckily it wasn't, most of the time. We (volunteers) also helped with environmental education classes at the local school and English classes for adults. We would plan the lessons, which would then be translated into Malagasy by the Head Guide, who would deliver the lessons. During the lessons the volunteers would act out environment-themed plays, hold up props to illustrate stories and help with outdoor games. 'Wink Murder' proved surprisingly popular with the children. Helping with English lessons was a good way to learn more about the daily lives of members of the local community.

Azafady works very closely with the local community, discussing any ideas it has for future projects or events with the community leaders. In addition to the environmental work it undertakes in the Sainte Luce area, Azafady started the 'Stitch Sainte Luce' project last year, which involved training local women in embroidery to enable them to increase their family income by making and selling a range of accessories. They make beautiful, intricately-designed bags and bracelets and have very recently started advertising their wares online, if you would like to have a look (<http://stitchsainteluce.yokaboo.com/>). After a month of volunteering and several days of solo travel I returned to the UK feeling hardier and very grateful for what I have in every area of my life.

For more information on Azafady, please see its website: [www.madagascar.co.uk](http://www.madagascar.co.uk). The church kindly donated to the charity in February.



*Alice with a ground boa.*



*Scenery on the way to Sainte Luce.*



*The local school which Alice visited.*

**Alice Lambert**

# Warden's Column

June is a popular month here and as well as our (very full) programme of regular bookings, there are quite a few one off events.

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June, the UK branch of MSIA (Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness) are holding their AGM here as they have done for many years.

On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> and Friday 7<sup>th</sup> there will be a sale of fair-trade clothing imported from India and work by local artists (there's a full advert for this elsewhere in the newsletter).

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>, the Alister Hardy Society is holding their annual day conference here. AHS has strong Unitarian connections and holds a public lecture here every couple of months on the theme of science and religion. Full information about their programme is at [www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk](http://www.alisterhardyreligiousexperience.co.uk)

On Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> there's a public meeting of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Community and Police Engagement Group (CPEG) and on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> the Temenos Academy has arranged a talk on The Perennial Philosophy by Professor Arthur Versluis (7pm, admission £5)

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June there's a committee meeting for the Churches Fellowship of Psychical and Spiritual Studies (CFPSS) in the library and on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> there's an all-day Psychocollage workshop led by Sandra Vigon (again there's a fuller advert for this elsewhere).

Busy month!



Jenny Moy

## Art and Spirituality Network Day Workshop:

### 'Now I Become Myself'



Led by Angela Shütz and John Harley  
Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013, 10.00am – 4.30pm

Forest Hill Quaker Meeting House,  
34 Sunderland Road, London, SE23 2QA

The theme of the workshop comes from May Sarton's poem on identity and the process of feeling more grounded after years of hiding and pretending. We will be using dramatherapy techniques to get in touch with our inner personalities and choose an aspect of ourselves to work with creatively. There will be mask making and a ritual in which we can give oxygen and space to one of our inner selves we want to express more of in the world. There will be space for sharing and reflecting throughout the day.

**Cost: £25 (including art materials and drinks).**  
**Advance booking essential.**

For more information see the Art and Spirituality website:  
[www.artandspirituality.net/forthcoming-events](http://www.artandspirituality.net/forthcoming-events)

## 'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 16<sup>th</sup> June, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> August  
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. 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. 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.



# Multifaith Calendar

## ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> June – Corpus Christi – Christian (Catholic)

The festival of Corpus Christi celebrates the institution of the Mass/Eucharist. It falls 60 days after Easter. In the ancient world it was customary to scatter flowers in the path of important people as a sign of respect and reverence, and this custom was adopted by the Church to honour the Blessed Sacrament as it was carried in procession on this festival day. In some countries, including England & Wales, the festival is celebrated on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday.

## ☪ 6<sup>th</sup> June – The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascent / Lailat Ul Isra Wa-I-Miraj – Muslim

This festival celebrates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, in the tenth year of his prophethood, from Makkah to Jerusalem, and through the heavens to the presence of God, all in one night. On this night the Prophet received the command that Muslims should pray five times each day. The rock in Jerusalem from which the Prophet ascended is now contained in the Dome of the Rock. Muslims mark this night by reading the Qur'an and saying additional prayers.

## 🐉 12<sup>th</sup> June – Dragon Boat Festival / Duanwujie / Tuan Yang Chieh – Chinese

Most notable now for the great dragon boat races which take place between slim rowing boats (sometimes 100 feet long) shaped like dragons. People also go down to the rivers to picnic and celebrate on boats. Originally the festival commemorated the suicide by drowning of the poet and statesman Ch'u Yuan in about 279 BCE.

## ☪ 16<sup>th</sup> June – Martyrdom of Guru Arjan (1606) – Sikh

The fifth Guru was executed on the orders of the Moghul Emperor, Jehangir, for refusing to pay a fine arising from a charge of treason. Guru Arjan made the first compilation of the Sikh Scriptures, called the Adi Granth, and supervised the completion of what is now the Golden Temple in Amritsar. A gurburb is held on this day which will take the same form as other gurburbs, including an akhand path, a non-stop cover to cover reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.



## ☼ 21<sup>st</sup> June – Summer Solstice – Wiccan/Pagan

The summer solstice is the festival of Midsummer, sometimes called Litha. The light of the sun is at the height of its power. It is a time of plenty and celebration.

## ☼ 21<sup>st</sup> June – World Humanist Day – Humanism

This is a Humanist holiday, celebrated annually around the world but especially in America, on the June solstice. It is seen as a day for spreading awareness of Humanism as a philosophical life stance and as a means for effecting change in the world. It is also seen as a time for Humanists to gather socially and promote the positive values of Humanism. The manner in which World Humanist Day is celebrated varies considerably among local Humanist groups, reflecting the individuality and non-dogmatism of Humanism as a whole. Whilst the event might be a simple gathering, such as a dinner or picnic, with ample time for both socialising and reflection, the method of celebration is left to individual Humanists. Some groups develop intricate social rituals, music, and proceedings which highlight the metaphoric symbolism of the solstice and the light (knowledge) which brings us out of darkness (ignorance).

## ☪ 23<sup>rd</sup> June – The Night of Forgiveness / Lailat-ul-Bara'ah – Muslim

On the fourteenth of Sha'ban, the eighth month of the Muslim calendar and two weeks before Ramadan commences, Muslims seek forgiveness for their sins. Many Muslims believe that it is on this night that a person's destiny is fixed by Allah for the coming year, and the night is often spent in prayer, asking for forgiveness and God's guidance. Some Muslims fast during the daytime in preparation for the night. In certain parts of the world Muslims visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional. In a number of places the night is marked with firework displays. Lailat-ul-Bara'ah falls on the day that is celebrated by the Ithna Asheri Shi'a community as being the birthday of the 12th Imam (Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi), and they therefore observe the night in prayer and worship, and then celebrate the birthday during the daytime.

## ✠ 23<sup>rd</sup> June – Pentecost – Orthodox Christian

An important festival in the Christian year, Pentecost is often seen as the 'birthday' of the Church, since this is when the disciples of Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is named after the Jewish festival day on which this event happened. The alternative name comes from the custom of converts presenting themselves for baptism on this day dressed in white.

## ☼ 30<sup>th</sup> June – Jashn-e Tirgan – Zoroastrian

Jashn-e Tirgan is an ancient quarter year summer festival, celebrated about three months after the spring NoRuz. Tirgan is devoted to the divinity Tir and is associated with the dog-star Sirius and the coming of the rains in Iran and the fertility they bring. On this day it is customary to visit the Fire Temple to give thanks to Ahura Mazda, participate in a jashan or thanksgiving ceremony, listen to stories of how the boundaries of Iran were established in antiquity with its Central Asian neighbour Turan (now Turkmenistan) by an archer shooting an arrow, share a community meal, play with 'rainbow' bracelets made of seven coloured silks, splash each other with water, dance and make merry.

"We all desperately want peace... That is why *shalom* is such an oft-repeated word. For, even as a simple greeting, it embodies deep yearning and solemn promise. So the ancient sage Hillel insisted that it is not enough to simply want peace, to hope for peace, even to pray for peace; he taught us to '*love peace and actively pursue peace.*'"

Wayne Dosick

## 'The Wisdom of Trees'

A retreat led by Rev. John Harley



Friday 5<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Hilfield Friary, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE

A weekend of creativity, reflection exploring the theme of trees through art-making, walking, meditation, poetry ritual and silence. This retreat invites participants to get in touch with their creative and spiritual selves, make connections with others and the world and gain insights into themselves – all in the healing presence of trees.

The weekend is open to all fellow travellers – those of faith and those of no faith or religion. The retreat will involve some walking around in the woods but no long walks. Every care will be taken to make activities safe and restorative – yet working creatively with others can have the potential to bring up powerful emotional material for people. John is a trained therapist though the retreat is not essentially offered as therapy – therefore participants are encouraged to take responsibility for their own emotional processes.

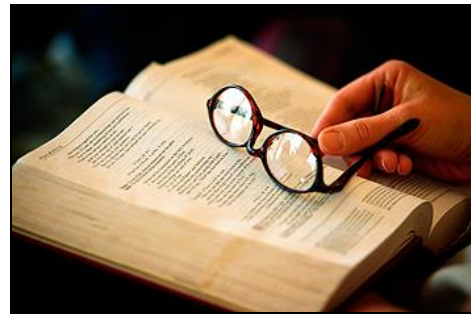
John Harley is a dramatherapist, art teacher and Unitarian minister. He has been facilitating creative workshops for nearly twenty years and is the Chair of the Art and Spirituality Network, an organisation that offers opportunities for mindful creativity in safe, supportive group settings. He is fascinated by the interplay and dialogue between what some of us call spirituality – or exploration of the beyondness and mystery in this life – and our expressive, artistic, intuitive selves. He believes that when we give ourselves permission to play, take creative risks and get in touch with our bodies we can access a natural emotional intelligence and a sense of well-being and groundedness.

**Cost £155 – £170 - all meals and resources included.**

**For more information visit:** [www.beherecreate.co.uk](http://www.beherecreate.co.uk)

## 'Rediscovering the Bible'

A monthly bible-reading group at Essex Church



Meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at 7pm:  
10<sup>th</sup> June, 8<sup>th</sup> July, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2013

We started a monthly bible-reading group back in late 2012. In the sessions we simply read through the bible together, pausing to reflect, and share our own thoughts and feelings on what we read. We began with the Acts of the Apostles and we have now gone back to the beginning to tackle Genesis. We were very pleased to welcome eleven people to the first session and a core group have continued to gather each month since then. There has been a lot of laughter and fun in these sessions as well as exploration, discovery and learning.

Do contact us (email [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)) if you have any questions or just to let us know you're planning to come along. The bible-reading group is open to all who share a spirit of goodwill and curiosity about discovering the text anew – no particular theology will be presumed – please bring along a bible (any translation you like) if you have one. This group is offered in conjunction with the Liberal Christian affinity group of the district association (LDPA) and we hope to see friends from throughout the region at these meetings.

David Darling and Jane Blackall

## Charity Stamp Collection



The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) are seeking used stamps and we will collect them and send them on to them. They ask us to leave 1cm around each stamp. You can leave them in the box in the foyer or ask a committee member to put them in the office.





Volunteers needed at SimpleGifts! SimpleGifts, the Unitarian-inspired, "hands-on" social action initiative in the heart of East London has a high class problem. Given the tremendous success of our Tuesday After School Club, we are actively looking for new volunteers to join the fun. We need help in the following areas: food prep/distribution, homework help (for primary age children), high energy games, arts and crafts table, intake/general supervision.

If you could spare even an hour or two on occasional Tuesday afternoons (between 2:30-5:30 pm), we would be very grateful for the help.

We are also looking for 2-3 extra volunteers to work with a new, informal English Language "chat" group held at the same time as our After School Club. If you have experience with teaching English or would be comfortable facilitating a conversation group, you would be especially welcome.

Our 6 core volunteers (most of whom make it every week) come from only 2-3 greater London Unitarian chapels but with 65+ carers and children attending each week, we are hoping to expand our reach. We are also planning to expand our programme to include a New Migrants lunch and social centre on Thursdays but this will be dependent on recruiting additional volunteers. We take good care of our helpers and the feeling our volunteers report after a busy afternoon is tremendous--please consider joining us, even if only to check us out.

Our Mansford Street location is a short walk from the Bethnal Green tube stop (Central Line) and is also accessible from the Overground and several bus lines.

For more information, to register your interest, or take make a much needed donation for this Unitarian 'good work', please contact us: [info@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk](mailto:info@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk) or call Rob Gregson on 07411280667. Many thanks!

## Peter Roots

We're sorry to report that Peter Roots who worked as our church administrator from December 2002 to February 2006 has died in China, where he had been working at the Beijing University of Technology. Peter was a colourful and in many ways, larger than life, character. He did a good job in making links with the many user groups of our building. Our thoughts are particularly with his ex-wife Mary, who independently had found the Unitarians and became a good friend to our congregation, and their children.

## 'Painting the Spring'



Thanks to our own Heidi Ferid for leading a workshop on 'Painting the Spring' after the service on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April.

A selection of the paintings from the afternoon's activities are shown above (photograph courtesy of Sarah Tinker).

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings

### 'Symbolism'

with wisdom from Revd. Peter Dewey



Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2013

6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church

*The gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary.*

Come and enjoy as we gather in healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come help us create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long - with silence, music, spiritual transformation journey, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved eternal self, family & friends.

### Forthcoming Gatherings:

12<sup>th</sup> July – Mothering/Fathering;  
9<sup>th</sup> August – Health; 13<sup>th</sup> September - Accomplishment

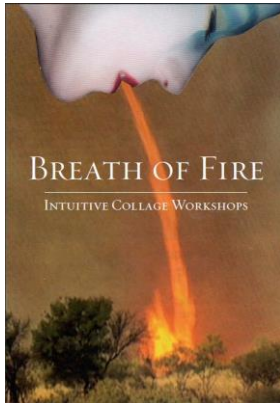
*These events are free. Donations for expenses are welcome.  
Any surplus will go to Essex Unitarian Church*



An external event taking part at Essex Church

## 'Breath of Fire'

Intuitive Collage Workshops  
Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 9.30-4.00pm



*'Mystery is at the heart of creativity.  
That, and surprise.'* – Julia Cameron

This hands-on workshop will be an introduction to intuitive collage using Seena Frost's SoulCollage process. Participants will begin to create a personal deck of collaged cards depicting and symbolising aspects of the personality, inner guides and significant archetypal figures. This is a unique and fun way of engaging the unconscious, accessing inner wisdom and enhancing personal awareness.

**Cost: £100 (all materials included)**

For info/reservations contact: Sandra Elsdon Vigon  
Jungian Psychotherapist/Certified SoulCollage Facilitator  
svignon@sandravigon.com / www.sandravigon.co.uk  
or telephone Sandra on 07913 821 626

## 'Home-Grown' Fair

Here at Essex Church this Summer

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2pm-7.30pm  
and Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June, 10am-5pm

**'Home-Grown' – Helen Lancaster and Nicky Hessenberg**

Cotton quilted Indian jackets, printed cotton tops and trousers, nightdresses, pyjamas and more.

Sale of samples and ends of lines.

**Carola Zololovitch** - Artists' cards and works on paper.

**Sarah Ovans Glass** - Antique and modern collectable glass.

**Sasha Kamen** - Fine handmade jewellery.

**Joanne Bain** - Stoneware ceramics.

For further information please contact Helen Lancaster and Nicky Hessenberg: home-grownlondon@live.com

## Good Cause Collection of the Month:



## Arundel Castle Cricket Foundation Collection on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

For our next fourth-Sunday charity collection we will be supporting Arundel Castle Cricket Foundation, which was suggested by Stephanie Saville. Here is what she has to say about it:

*It was decided a long time ago that, rather than to try and run a charity ourselves, it would be preferable to support many charities. In order to achieve this, it was agreed that the collection from the last Sunday service of each month, would be used for charitable donations – given directly, rather than from one charity to another. Congregation members would be able to nominate deserving causes and the committee would decide upon the recipient. To this end I would very much like to recommend the following as a recipient for the June collection.*

*The Arundel Castle Cricket Foundation was formed in 1986 to encourage young people, largely from disadvantaged inner city backgrounds, to develop their lives and enhance their education by way of activities, (cricket and otherwise), at the Arundel Castle Cricket Ground in West Sussex. Since 2000, there has been an increased emphasis upon helping children with special needs to enhance their self-confidence and belief. Since 1986, some 250,000 children have benefited from the scheme which goes from strength to strength. The foundation is incredibly grateful and thankful for the support received from so many people.*

*Myself, I have scant grasp of cricket – and even less of finance – but I do understand the inestimable gift of self-esteem and that which it bestows on children to whom fate has not been very kind. Thank you, Stephanie.*

**For more information see:**

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

## Previous Charity Collections:

Thank you for your generosity in contributing to recent charity collections. I am pleased to let you know that we will be sending the following donations to good causes:

**February – 'Azafady' (Madagascan Charity) – £157.36**

**March – 'Send a Child to Hucklow' – £199.16**

**April – British Red Cross (UPF Lent Appeal) – £181.22**

# International Association of Religious Freedom

From the AGM of British IARF on 18 May 2013, the big news is the announcement of the 2014 IARF Congress.

The August 2014 Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) will be held at the University of Birmingham, U.K. The theme will be RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, GLOBALISM AND THE DIGITAL AGE (exact title still to be approved). Skh Muhammed Amin-Evans is chair of the host committee. In early summer 2013, details will be on [www.iarf.net](http://www.iarf.net).

As a "warm-up" to August 2014, you are invited to RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY, 20-23 August 2013 at Horsham, West Sussex (20 minute train ride south of London Gatwick Airport). Hosted by IARF, the World Congress of Faiths, and Horsham Interfaith Forum. For details see events at [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org).

Students and young adults may apply to be IARF Interns, helping to host IARF Horsham. Please send applications with a brief bio to [r.boeke@virgin.net](mailto:r.boeke@virgin.net).

**Blessings and hope,  
Richard Boeke - Chair, British IARF**

## LDPA Summer Quarterly Meeting @ Billingshurst



**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
Billingshurst Chapel, West Sussex**

One of the best attended and most appreciated workshops at FUSE was led by Stuart Coupe on the use of acoustic music in worship. Stuart was assisted in the workshop by BeHeld, a four-piece folk group.

The Summer Quarterly will be held in charming Billingshurst Chapel, High Street, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9QS

Stuart Coupe and BeHeld will present a service/folk concert as the main programme, and we will be joined again by friends from the Southern Unitarian Association.

**Start times and further details TBC – Contact  
Sarah or Jane if you would like more information.**

## Brockett Park

Lord

This is wonderful: a light wind blows  
The whiskered shocks of still unripened corn;  
The waving boughs of limber ash close by  
Nod as if by custom charged to ward  
Intruders off; blackbirds thread the sighing conifers  
With still-insistent cries: busily the hidden chiff-chaff  
Strikes its tiny anvil: and just above the field's serrated edge  
Dun and mellow cottage roofs appear immensely snug:  
Whilst high above white-cotton clouds drift past  
In indolent repose.

Lord, so much

So much is June: and as sure a glimpse of your perfection  
As this world can afford. Felt, though unseen  
All creatures doze snugly in  
Their hidden lairs. True in the distance  
Dogs are heard, but do not offer chase. This  
Held for a while, like water in a thirsty walker's hands  
In raptured contemplation gives  
Sense and meaning to the quality of heaven

**John Hands (Welwyn, Herts)**



## Dignity in Dying



One of the Resolutions passed by delegates at our General Assembly's Annual Meetings shows our movement's support of assisted dying. This doesn't mean that all Unitarians feel the same way about this complex and sensitive issue; indeed considerable opposition was expressed. Our own congregation discussed this issue in one of our Big Questions sessions and came to the conclusion that this wasn't an area that we thought the GA could make a decision about. But personally I am pleased that the Resolution was passed because I would like more groups and individuals in our society to be discussing such matters and becoming more aware of different points of view. Here's the wording of the Resolution that was passed:

*That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, recognising the worth and dignity of all people and their freedom to believe as their consciences dictate, believes that:*

- 1) *Any individual who faces an intolerable existence because of a debilitating and/or incurable physical condition should have the right to seek support for the termination of their life in a painless and dignified manner; and*
- 2) *legislation should respect their choice and allow them compassionate assistance in achieving such a death without fear of the prosecution of anyone involved.*

In May I was fortunate to be invited to a seminar on Religious Reasons for Supporting Assisted Dying, organised by the faith leaders' group of the organisation called Dignity in Dying. Lord Falconer QC spoke about his forthcoming Assisted Dying Bill, whilst other speakers considered the pastoral and theological aspects of this cause. I was asked to talk about our recent Resolution and the process we had gone through in discussing the issue over the last year. Several people already knew of our Discussion Pack, which is available online:  
[www.unitarian.org.uk/info/assisted-dying-discussion-pack.shtml](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/info/assisted-dying-discussion-pack.shtml)

A Quaker at the meeting told me that the pack had inspired her Quaker Meeting to take Assisted Dying as an issue to be explored by Quakers at a national level. Other speakers included Canon Rosie Harper, who wrote a moving column on this subject for the Guardian recently:  
[www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/may/20/switzerland-dignified-death-uk-assisted-dying](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/may/20/switzerland-dignified-death-uk-assisted-dying)

One of the points that various speakers made was that where assisted dying is legally available few people actually make use of it. People may seek the right to end their lives almost as a form of comfort, which they then do not go on to access. Let's keep this issue on our own agenda here at Essex Church and do get in touch if you would like to take up Kate Hill's offer for advice with advanced directives that she made in her service in April on Death and Appreciation.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

"*Hilm* means being inclined to gentleness or mildness; this adjective describes a person who is quiet and peaceful, slow to anger, quick to forgive, and who is in control of their lower nature. It also encompasses good *akhlaq* because it embodies behaviour like patience and tolerance in the face of unpleasant situations, keeping one's cool when provoked, and remaining dignified, serious and calm in response to distressing or unkind treatment.

*Hilm*, along with humility, is one of the characteristics that most pleases God. In fact, these two dispositions are the source and origin of all other good character traits... Just as knowledge can be gained through learning, so *hilm* can be attained by making an effort."

**Musa Hazim Gulçur**

## Unitarian Peace Fellowship Retreat Inner and Outer Peace



**8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

As Lyndon B Johnson once said 'peace is a journey of a thousand miles and it must be taken one step at a time' – come and take your first step with the members of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship for an inspirational weekend at the Nightingale Centre, as they lead you on a 'journey of the spirit and soul' with workshops on:

- Peace in our lives - how we ground ourselves and our peace witness in our theology and spirituality.
- Peace and the creative process – an opportunity to create a 'mandala' or creative writing around peace.
- Commemorating World War I – a Peace Perspective

The weekend begins on Friday with a buffet supper, and ends on Sunday with lunch after attending the Remembrance Sunday service at Great Hucklow Unitarian Chapel.

**INCLUSIVE COST:** Sharing a normal twin room – £102, Single occupancy of twin – £112, Sharing an en-suite room – £117, Single occupancy of en-suite room £127. Everyone is welcome.

Contact Rev. Sue Woolley for further information:  
[sue.woolley@virgin.net](mailto:sue.woolley@virgin.net) / 01604 870 746



# 'Letting Go, Moving On'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2013

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

Today's theme of 'letting go' that Sonya and I chose is a theme I'm drawn to in life, perhaps because it's something I don't always find that easy to do – on the holding on / letting go spectrum – I'd place myself towards the holding on end.

Mind you, I reckon you can make a pretty good case for certain kinds of holding on. I appreciate all the people who've held on to me when I felt myself going under in life. There's a kind of holding on that can, quite literally save lives, and I wonder if there are times in your life when you've been helped by another person's holding on to you in such a way?

I appreciate all the people who've held on to causes that they knew to be right – that kind of holding on – against the prevailing messages of their day – allows a society to move on and develop – that kind of holding on abolished slavery, ended capital punishment, gave women the vote, and in our own time is seeking, for example, equal marriage for people in same sex partnerships – a right which our Unitarian General Assembly is campaigning for. I wonder what causes you are glad people have campaigned for in the development of our society?

There's an inner kind of holding on that gives you the strength to continue even when it seems like everything is against you – this is the tenacity that climbs mountains, wins races, overcomes obstacles in seeking your life path. As I look around our congregation I know some of the fights that some of you have had to battle over the years.

And there's a holding on that you might call commitment – to a friendship, a marriage, to a church community even – a holding on that keeps relationships going when the going gets tough, a holding on that gets you up in the morning to come to church or to help a neighbour or the myriad other ways that we might be involved in life.

So we're not saying that holding on is bad and letting go is good because life as we all know tends to be more complicated than that. But ... of all the spiritual teachings I've been given over the years I think it is the key teaching of Buddhism on the letting go of attachment that has challenged me the most. This challenge is partly to do with my nature, but it's also to do with the era in which we live. Here in the western world in the 21st century we are living in an age where most of us simply have too much ... to much of just about everything. Too much stuff. We, and our storage cupboards, are the product of capitalism's endless search for new customers. It is hard to resist its subtle message that happiness will be ours when we own the next best ... fill in the gap for yourselves with whatever it is you yearn for in the material realm.

The Buddha spoke of our human desire to cling, to hold on, as the source of our suffering in this world and taught the value of letting go. But in 5th century BC the Buddha could not have dreamt of the possessions we now take for granted, nor the struggles that result because of them. Sonya and I have both had to clear the possessions of someone who has died in recent years as I know some of you have too.



You will know the poignancy of such a process and how important it can feel to honour the person who has died through carefully parting with their possessions. It can be a process of recognition and of love but for some it can become a source of family friction and pain. The Buddha would remind us too that letting go and holding on relate both to the material world and also to the world of ideas, the world of our minds – our thoughts, our hopes and our wishes, they relate to our feelings and emotions, to our relationships, to our physical bodies and to our spiritual lives.

According to Buddhist teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, "letting go means just what it says. It's an invitation to cease clinging to anything – whether it be an idea, a thing, an event, a particular time, or view, or desire. It is a conscious decision to release with full acceptance into the stream of present moments as they are unfolding. To let go means to give up coercing, resisting, or struggling, in exchange for something more powerful and wholesome which comes out of allowing things to be as they are without getting caught up in your attraction to or rejection of them...It's akin to letting your palm open to unhand something you have been holding on to."

You might like to try that simple physical act of holding your hand clenched and then simply, slowly opening your palm, as if you are releasing a tiny creature you have carried to a safe place. Feel the lightness of that simple movement of release, of opening your hand. To let go in this way is like releasing a heavy burden. It offers a way to live and to love more lightly, in the present moment without expectations. Important though these Buddhist teachings are, there are I believe no rights or wrongs when it comes to letting go – the 'I have no possessions approach to life – I am unattached and free' may be right for some people but not probably for most of us. We are rather creatures who can and indeed must work in, and work with, the material world – but perhaps with an awareness of when to hold on and when to let go. Words from American poet Mary Oliver often come to mind for me – from her poem *In Blackwater Woods* when she has described the light-as-air seeds being blown from the reeds in the autumn – floating off on the wind. The poem ends:

*To live in this world you must be able to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it against your bones like your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.*

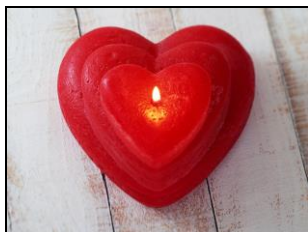
Those few lines perhaps says all that needs to be said about holding on, letting go, and moving on.

Amen.

A New Venture Here at Essex Church for 2013...

## 'Heart and Soul'

### Midweek Spiritual Gatherings



**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013 from 7-8pm**

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

In January 2013 we held the first of our 'Heart and Soul' spiritual gatherings, which will take place on the first Thursday evening of each month, for new and alternative forms of Unitarian worship. They have been going well so far and we are looking forward to the next one!

The impetus to hold midweek worship came, in part, from a recent inquiry from someone who always works at the weekends and is therefore unable to attend Unitarian worship anywhere in London. This seemed a real shame so we decided to try and rectify the situation... and it all came together remarkably quickly!

These services will be led by members of the newly-formed Worship Leaders' Practice Group. If you feel enthusiastic about the prospect of midweek services and experimenting with different forms of worship then please do come along and support us or get involved.

The gathering on 6<sup>th</sup> June will be coordinated by Sarah Tinker and has the theme 'The Wild One Within'. You are invited to bring a picture of a wild animal and to say a few words about what you appreciate about them. All are welcome!

"Courage is a holy gift that exists within you. It's yours when you are ready to reunite with it. When you awaken to courage, it becomes an exciting, life-enhancing force that will lift you back into your power and guide you home to your authentic nature. The greatest act of courage is to be and to own all of who you are — without apology, without excuses, without masks to cover the truth of who you are.

True courage comes not just from feeling confident and strong, but from being the honest, authentic expression of yourself. Think about how audacious it is to really believe in yourself. It takes a warrior's courage to acknowledge that your point of view matters, that your truth matters, that your gifts matter, and that your presence on this earth matters. You don't have to earn this right; it's yours as part of your birthright."

**Debbie Ford**

## Sunday Services in June



**2<sup>nd</sup> June, 11am – 'All Will Be Well'**

**Service led by Rev. Sheena Gabriel and Sarah Tinker**

'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' What are we to make of these words by Dame Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) and how might they be applied to our own lives?

**9<sup>th</sup> June, 11am – 'Flower Communion'**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Bring a flower and take part in our annual Flower Communion service. Originally devised by a Unitarian minister in pre Second World War Czechoslovakia, this service celebrates a congregation's unity and diversity. We can also celebrate the beauty of flowers at this time of year.

**16<sup>th</sup> June, 11am – 'Miracles'**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

In this service we will explore life's miracles and our own response to the seemingly miraculous. Are we believers or explainers of the seemingly inexplicable?

**23<sup>rd</sup> June, 11am – 'Loneliness'**

**Service led by Jo Ridgers**

Alone? Lonely? Alone AND lonely? Is my experience the same as yours? What makes me, but not you, lonely? Is it always bad news? An aching emptiness or an opportunity with a silver lining? Let's explore this almost taboo state of being a little bit...

**30<sup>th</sup> June, 11am – 'On Being Perfect'**

**Service led by Kate McKenna**

We will be welcoming Kate McKenna of Norwich Unitarians to lead this service about accepting and embracing our flaws.