



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2015

What's On...

Thursday 2nd July, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Finding Stillness'
Led by Natasha Drennan

Sunday 5th July, 11am-noon
'We've Got Talent'
Led by Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 7th July, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 9th July, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: Bring Your Own

Sunday 12th July, 11am-noon
'Shame, Shame, Shame'
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 12th July, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 12th July, 2-3pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 14th July, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Sunday 19th July, 11am-noon
'In Praise of Curiosity'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 19th July, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 21st July, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 21st July, 6.45-9pm
Men's Group with Jim Blair

Thursday 23rd July, 7-9pm
Women's Group (*continuing*)

Sunday 26th July, 11am-noon
'Stories that Touch Our Lives'
Led by Rev. Joy Croft & Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 28th July, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 30th July, 7-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Moments of Beauty A Message from our Minister



The A40 is not the most appealing of roads as it leaves London to the west. Especially in a traffic jam. But last week, whilst queuing at a junction, my wait was cheered by a delightful sight. A builder walked by, dressed in dusty overalls. In one hand he was carrying his bag of tools and in the other a sprig of Philadelphus. And he was smiling – to no-one in particular; just smiling to himself as he walked along, ever so often lifting the flowers he was holding up to his nose.

Do you know the plant Philadelphus? Also known as mock orange, it has a remarkable fragrance. It's a smell that takes me straight back to childhood. A neighbour's front garden had a large Philadelphus bush growing in it when I was a child, with blooms enough to pick a few to take home. The white petals soon fell off but for a little while their perfume was very sweet indeed. And all these years later I still remember that smell.

After that moment of beauty on the A40 I am spotting Philadelphus bushes everywhere here in London, having never noticed them before. You've probably experienced this phenomenon in your own life from time to time. We become interested in something, and lo and behold we start to notice it everywhere we look.

So will you join me perhaps in a 'noticing moments of beauty' campaign this next month? Let's be open to the possibility of beauty in all its forms, especially in potentially inauspicious places like an A40 traffic jam. Lebanese mystic Khalil Gibran reminds us that

"The appearance of things changes according to the emotions;
and thus we see magic and beauty in them,
while the magic and beauty are really in ourselves."

When we notice these moments of beauty we are activating a part of ourselves. It takes a bit of effort because for many of us it's often easier to notice the bad bits, the difficult moments, the ways in which the world proves our negative stories about it. But hurry up. Philadelphus bushes won't be blooming for much longer. I wonder what will come into blossom next and what moments of beauty you might experience.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Still Here, Still Upright' by Caroline Blair * Visions for Our Kensington Unitarians Community * News from the Essex Church Management Committee * Roy Clark: Norton Folgate Photographs * 'R W Emerson' by Niall Doherty * 'A Retreat Invitation to Individuals' from Carolyn Appleby * Reflections on Liberty * Unitarian and Jewish Spirituality Event * Sea of Faith Network Events * LDPA Meeting in Brighton * 'Stepping Forward' 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.



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London W8 4RT

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Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

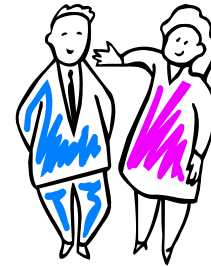
ADVERT: Children's Leader



Kensington Unitarians have a new children's leader and are looking for someone to work alongside her or to cover occasional Sundays. Our children's leaders lead inspiring and fun sessions for our children's group on Sunday mornings, 11am to noon. Would suit a parent or someone with childcare or teaching experience. Good pay. Starting soon. We can give full support with ideas for activities.

For more information contact our minister Sarah Tinker on 07960 057567 or email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

5 th July:	Melody
12 th July:	Juliet Edwards
19 th July:	Natasha Drennan
26 th July:	Michaela von Britzke

Coffee:

5 th July:	Sue Smith
12 th July:	Sue Smith
19 th July:	Jane Blackall
26 th July:	Juliet Edwards & Annette Percy

Greeting:

5 th July:	Roy Clark
12 th July:	Annette Percy
19 th July:	Gina Bayley
26 th July:	Annette Percy

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

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 2nd July, 6th August,
3rd September 2015 from 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 will be followed by refreshments and fellowship.

Our July gathering will be led by Natasha Drennan on the theme of 'Finding Stillness'. If you would like to know more about the gatherings email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Good Cause Collection of the Month Refugee Council



Collection on Sunday 26th July

The Refugee Council is one of the leading charities in the UK working directly with refugees, and supporting them to rebuild their lives. They also speak up for refugees using our direct work as an evidence base, and ensure refugees have a stronger and more influential voice in decisions that will affect them. They work with a range of partners and in collaboration to ensure we can best support our clients. The charity was founded in 1951 in response to the UN Convention for Refugees, which was created after World War II to ensure refugees were able to find safety in other countries. Since then, the Refugee Council has provided practical and emotional support to refugees from across the world to help them rebuild their lives and play a full part in society.

This month's good cause was suggested by Eliz Beel.

For more information see: www.refugeecouncil.org.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:

April – Simple Gifts – £126.04

Emergency collection for Nepal – £285.50

May – Acid Survivors Trust – £125.60

Sculpture Exhibition

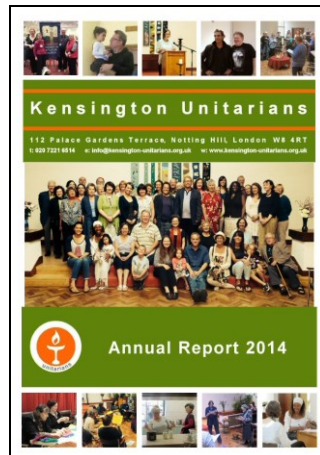
**Featuring Heidi Ferid
Thursday 2nd July, 6-9pm
St Pancras New Church**

Our very own Heidi Ferid is taking part in a sculpture exhibition in early July. You would be welcome to come along to the private view in the Crypt at St. Pancras New Church, Euston Road, London NW1 2BA (nearest station Euston) on Thursday 2nd July from 6-9pm.



Annual Report

The 2014 Essex Church annual report is available for members to collect next time you are at the church. It is also up on the website (in the 'Resources' section). We are happy to send out copies to those who are further afield so do get in touch if you would like one.



Essex Church Committee News



We're grateful to all our current committee members for being willing to stand for another year, and to Carole Grace for joining the committee, bringing her particular interest in our congregation's social justice work. Thanks also to Natasha Drennan for agreeing to take on the role of treasurer.

The committee extended a big thank you to Sam Boyero who has been working as our children's leader for over a year now and has brought such warmth and enthusiasm to all their activities. We're delighted to welcome Nadia Crippa as our new children's leader and the committee agreed to the funding of a second children's leader if we can find someone suitable so that there is always a children's leader available on a Sunday morning.

We agreed to get curtains for the library and to investigate the possibility of finding new blinds. Sarah and Heidi are working on this and it will be funded by a generous donation from a congregation member.

The issue of reviewing our constitution was mentioned again and the committee would be glad to hear from anyone with skills in this field with time to research the matter.

The committee heard that our application for our building to be registered for the solemnisation of same sex wedding ceremonies will soon be completed and that we will be the first religious building in the Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to be registered. We're grateful to Jeannene Powell for taking over as authorised person.

Our next committee meeting will be held on Thursday 30th July and all congregation members are welcome to raise any issues that they would like to be on the agenda.

Unitarian and Jewish Spirituality:

A dialogue on the Theology of the Spirit



Saturday 25th July from 11am-2.00pm

**Rev Jo James of Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel,
Leeds & John Heyderman of Beit Klal Yisrael**

Beit Klal Yisrael are a liberal Jewish community that have met here at Essex Church for many years now. They hold regular study sessions and have invited us to join them for this meeting on 25th July. These study sessions are free and open to all. They generally stop at around 1pm and have a shared vegetarian lunch. As a wisdom tradition which deliberately deviates from orthodox Christian doctrine, Unitarianism has been perceived as closer to liberal Judaism than to most mainstream Christian denominations. It emphasises the oneness and unity of God, places high value on the use of reason, discourse and debate, and is based on a non-hierarchical polity. We will be discussing the similarities and differences between the two traditions, in particular the significance for both of Ruach or the Spirit as a manifestation of the Eternal.

Liberty



After a recent service with a theme of Liberty we thought about what liberty meant to us and here are some of our responses.

The freedoms in my life that I cherish:

- My economic and social freedom as a single woman – rare I suspect in most of human history
- To criticise my government
- To worship as I please or not to worship
- The freedom to choose my own destiny: work, partner, where I live, what I say, and who I choose to associate with
- Physical mobility
- As a woman I cherish the freedom to own property, following my path without asking permission; I am no-one's property.
- Being free to change my mind or admit I am wrong
- Being free to roam, walking where I want. My parents took part in the Kinder Trespasses – a campaign that changed our country for the better.

What liberty means to me:

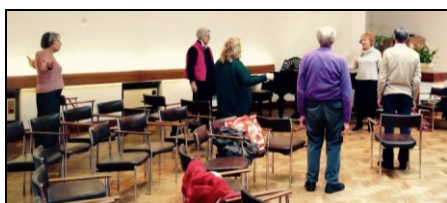
- Gratitude that I was allowed to be myself from childhood onwards
- I can think as I please
- Liberty is truly defined by how I live in Britain
- The gift of thought and where this leads; how a drop in the ocean is worth it!
- Every person is unique and is encouraged to be themselves – that's true liberty in my book
- Freedom to choose, to make commitments, to love and laugh and be who I am.
- Genuinely free thinking, actually quite rare

Some worldwide issues that matter to us:

- Global warming
- Division of people into opposing groups
- Degradation of women
- Poverty
- Injustice
- Helping those suffering natural and man-made disasters
- Sexual abuse and violence against women
- Abuse of animals and the planet
- Intolerance
- Economic divide getting wider between rich and poor
- Solving problems that can be solved – food and clean water, eradicating diseases like polio, malaria and the like

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



Sunday 19th July (note irregular date),
23rd August, 27th September 2015,
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm

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

Still Here, Still Upright

Five weeks ago, I delivered four sacks of garden-centre compost to the church garden. With the cheery resilience of the never-ill, I enjoyed the mild physical effort of scurrying from car to garden, with the compost on my arms; not all at once, naturally, but easily, effortlessly, one at a time.

Less than a week later I was told that I had stage 4 cancer. I was quickly able to establish that this did not mean '4 out of 100'; like the dial on my electric blanket, 4 is the top setting, and a good deal too hot. Still unwell from my unexpected surgical liver biopsy, I don't mind saying (now) that I held a kind of covert 48-hour pity party for myself; my twin thoughts were, "I expect I'll be dead inside a month"; and, "good." I just wanted none of it.

Back on dry land, I have learned a lot more. I was amazed and moved to learn that, 10 years ago, the hospital could have offered me, in effect, nothing at all; they would have 'sewn me up and sent me home', with nothing better than the promise of a lot of morphine. 10 years really is not very long. I just looked at my diary for 10 years ago, and saw that I was on the church committee, that the creativity group was making beaded bracelets (or half-making them and letting someone keener and more skilful finish them off for us), that we were discussing some kind of church photography outing. It's not exactly like looking at a different historical era. But for me, it IS. The kind of tumours I have can now be analysed in such microscopic detail, and targeted so precisely, that they virtually create separate pharmacy regimes for each individual patient; they do all the mini-micro lab work (not a technical term by the way; I am absolutely winging this bit) then invent you the perfect medicines.

I had a bit of a wobble when I found that I am attached to the palliative oncology team; presumably there is a 'you just stick with us and you'll be fine' oncology team elsewhere in the hospital which I am not in. But palliative care is not another word for 'waste of time really'; their three aims are to stop things getting worse, to make things better, and to make sure I am comfortable and happy while this is going on; it is hard to think of three aims you would rather choose.

And even in my low-key visits so far, there is a pleasing air of relaxed support to the department. It could not be more different from some over-stretched NHS departments: the kind of rushed, muddled 'admission ward', where feverish nurses run in and bark at you that you have come up on their computer as Mr Arthur Sproat, and it would save everyone's time if you would just agree to stick to that. (I did once visit a friend at a major London hospital, and the staff not only shepherded me to the bed of a total stranger, but flatly contradicted our mutually dismayed statement that we did not know each other; when they finally, grudgingly agreed, they said that they had no idea where the right patient was, but that "I could look round if I liked". Since the hospital had nearly 1000 beds, this was a treat indeed.)

Very senior doctors have made virtually open-ended appointments for me to talk nonsense to them. I have been allowed to become a bit bratty; armed with my new free prescription status, I have drawn up a wish-list: can I have a big box of paracetamol, but not those ones that are hard to swallow please, only dainty little ones, and I might try a few of these and a bit of that, and some support socks might be handy. Even on my pre-operation form, I pointed out that I



had a slightly annoying and unsightly skin tag – nothing whatsoever to do with any illness – and they cheerfully agreed that it should be removed at the same time. Only when I went on to suggest that they might throw in a nose job and eye-bag removal did they seem to think I was going a bit far.

In our parents we see our future. I used to look at my mother – a fine and handsome woman until the day she died – and reflect that I looked nothing like her, then look at my father and reflect that I looked just like him, and that I had chosen the wrong parent. In his later years he has developed a kind of rococo turkey wattle under his chin, which I have taken to looking at with disapprobation as I wait for mine. I wondered whether I might kind of squish it up with scarves, or whether possibly get away with an Elizabethan ruff. I am aware now that I am far less likely to ascend to full wattle-hood. Doctors do not use the word 'cure' when discussing stage 4 cancer: they use words like 'delay', 'help', 'treat', 'make you feel better'. By working in the field of elderly care, I have always been 'that nice young lady'; if I had worked until I was 75, I would still have retired as 'that nice young lady', these things being relative. I have to accept that my chances of reaching 90 and having to drink Horlicks from a non-spill cup have been hugely reduced. But 'hope' means many things, all of them good.

I decided very early after diagnosis that I needed a mantra; something positive to make part of me. The mantra I went with was 'I am surrounded by love and care'. And it has been a good one; I AM surrounded my love and care; from family of course, from friends, from people at the church, even from my own patients, many of whom have promised to pray for me, or at least to carry on making me laugh. I have been touched beyond words by all the messages of support. And I AM well; not carrying sacks of compost, but lots of walks in the sun, lots of nice, ordinary times. Of course I have to have an operation and will be less well for a while; but the operation is seen in the light of a 'let's just get this out of the way and get you better again' thing, and not a big drama.

So let me just say: thank you. And I'm still very much here.

Caroline Blair

Our Vision for Our Kensington Unitarians Community



At a recent service entitled 'Mission Possible' Sarah asked us to think of our vision for this community. She's happy to receive more ideas over the coming months. Here are three responses from people attending that day:

'My vision is for Kensington Unitarians to be a place of light and love for people of all religious, social and any other persuasion. We are not a cookie cutter congregation and must allow dissent and diversion from unspoken norms. We are already a shining beacon – let's be a lighthouse!'

'My vision for our community is to find more ways to reach out to parents and families and their children and give them such a good time they want to come to church on Sunday morning to see their friends. Unitarian children's activities really appealed to my children all those years ago and now my grandchildren. There is a freedom of thought and an encouragement of independent ideas about spiritual matters that is still quite rare in our society. Unitarian approaches to religion can be fun as well as deep. And let's remember the snacks. The children already like our biscuits; let's make sure there are drinks for them too. And maybe some fruit. A small point but an important one when you're young.'

'My vision for this community is to let people know what a laugh we often have on Sundays and yet we also have space for sadness and all other human emotions. This feels real.'



A Vision I Have for this Congregation

(a reflection from our service on Sunday 21st June)

For the next few minutes, I'm going to share with you one of my future visions for our Unitarian Church community.

I have noticed, over the past few months, some couples in the congregation holding hands during the services. I think it's so lovely and wonderful that couples feel so welcomed, relaxed, accepted and "at home" here, that they feel able to do that.

What I've begun to think about, though, is the fact that these couples happen to be heterosexual couples and I wonder - Would same-sex couples, or others within the LGBT community feel as comfortable or welcome to hold hands here during Sunday Worship? And would we, as a congregation feel just as comfortable having them do that also?

I think that spiritual and religious diversity is represented and celebrated so well in our congregation. It's one of the reasons why I choose to come here. And I think I can say the same, to a degree, about sexuality diversity, and gender inclusivity, but I think there's still more that we can do.

We've made a start in simple practical ways of having gender neutral toilets and there are plans to display a rainbow flag on our front door and website. I do ponder the question about how, as a congregation we further educate ourselves and gain a deeper understanding about this, in order to be even more open and welcoming of those from the LGBT community, and indeed from any other diverse communities, including those with alternative lifestyles, who wish to explore their faith and theology in community with us.

From people I know and have known in the past, from these communities, often their experience of a church environment is that it's somewhere that the truth of who they are is not welcome or accepted, and seen as perverse or wrong in some way. For them, trying to be part of that community has meant they've had to hide or split off that part of themselves in order to fit in. But this has just lead to inner turmoil, distress and them choosing to leave as they never felt they really belonged.

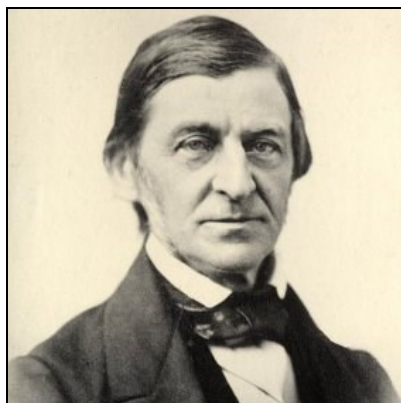
I don't think Unitarianism is like that, especially with Unitarians the world over fighting for legislation for same-sex marriage. In fact, our church here at Essex Church is about to become the first place of worship in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea to be able to legally perform same-sex marriages.

So with all this in mind, I believe that us working even more towards being known as a spiritual community where people don't have to hide the wholeness of who they are and the relationships which they belong to - in whatever form those loving and consensual relationships take, I really envisage this to be a worthwhile and beneficial undertaking.

Jeannene Powell



Reflection on RW Emerson



*From the recent 'Heart and Soul'
on 'Those Who Inspire Us'*

Emerson is a philosopher-poet with a keen, intuitive mind which seeks truth and essence. I find his essays and addresses, written with such eloquence and feeling, both elevating and inspirational. His vision encompasses Art, Literature, Public Life, Science, Philosophy, Nature and Spirit, all informed by a transcendentalist aspiration and ethic. He utilises bold impressionistic brushstrokes to convey this grand sweep.

One of his principal ideas is the correspondence between mind and nature whereby each mirrors the other; natural phenomena replicate themselves in the fabric of thought itself. Another key idea is the link between the individual and the universal whereby turning within one finds a correspondence with the wider world. In the depths of one's being one is able to draw inspiration from the universal spirit. As Emerson writes, 'I behold with awe and delight many illustrations of the One Universal Mind. I see my being imbedded in it; as a plant in the earth...'

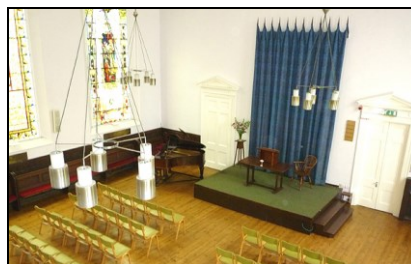
Although on the face of it Emerson can sound grandiloquent and bombastic, this is merely the style he adopts for the expression of truth and spirit. His thought takes flight, possessing a momentum and buoyancy which serve to liberate the mind and ignite the soul. Having been swept along by the currents and eddies of his soaring oratory, I, as listener, am left uplifted and enlightened.

Niall Doherty

'Nobody gets everything he or she yearns for. I look at the world and see three sorts of people: those who dream boldly even as they realize that a lot of their dreams will not come true; those who dream more modestly and fear that even their modest dreams may not be realized; and those who are afraid to dream at all, lest they be disappointed. I wish for more people who dreamed boldly and trusted their powers of resilience to see them through the inevitable disappointments.'

Rabbi Harold Kushner

London and SE District Quarterly Meeting



**Saturday 11th July 2015, 1-4pm
Brighton Unitarian Church,
New Road, Brighton, BN1 1UF**

Arrivals from 1:00pm (tea/coffee will be available)

2:00 to 3:00pm - Service 'Looking to the Future...' led by the new District Minister, Rev. Martin Whitell

3:00 - 4:00pm - Introduction to the GA booklet 'A Vision for our Future' led by Robert Ince (Unitarian EC Convenor)

'Breath and Balance' Feldenkrais Method Workshop



9am-1pm, 11th July 2015 at Essex Church

The Feldenkrais Method is an educational method focusing on self-awareness and learning involving gentle movements, which can bring about improved coordination and enhanced functioning. It is named after its originator, Moshe Feldenkrais (1904-1984), an engineer and physicist as well as a Judo teacher. What are the benefits?

- A more efficient posture
- Easier and fuller breathing
- Relief from tension and muscular pain
- Greater relaxation and well-being
- Improved performance
- Increased vitality

The Feldenkrais method is for everybody and this workshop is open to all ages and abilities. Newcomers to this method are also welcome. As well as being a Feldenkrais teacher Niall is an accomplished flute soloist and is the Sir James Galway Rising Star 2015. He has taught the Feldenkrais method of somatic education to musicians across Europe, USA, Canada and South Africa. He is co-founder and faculty of Whole Musician. This series of lessons will be of particular interest to musicians.

Booking essential - Cost: £40

email niallor1@hotmail.com – see www.niallflute.com

Roy Clark: Norton Folgate



Our very own Roy Clark has recently had his work featured on the 'Spitalfields Life' website. Visit the website to find out more about his excellent series of photographs of Norton Folgate.

See: www.spitalfieldslife.com/2015/06/05/roy-clark-in-norton-folgate

Sea of Faith Network Events



The Sea of Faith organisation runs interesting events that may appeal to Unitarians. They describe themselves as "Exploring and promoting religious faith as a human creation..." Unitarian minister Andy Pakula is one of the speakers for their 28th Annual Conference:

'Out of Our Minds: What Can We Offer Towards a Healthier World?' 23rd -25th July 2015, University of Leicester



Many of us feel that the world is becoming a more frightening place with old and new conflicts igniting or re-igniting. Apparently happy and successful young people are leaving secure, loving homes to join them; an increasing concern for mental illness – bipolar disorder and depression; a growing suicide rate among middle aged men and the terrible revelations about the sexual exploitation of young people. This year's Conference seeks to explore what we can offer towards a healthier world from the perspective of progressive religion and humanism.

See their website for more details: www.sofn.org.uk

And early notice of a conference to be held here at Essex Church in the autumn: Sea of Faith in the Churches (SoFiC) is a special interest group within the Sea of Faith Network that explores the interface between church and SoF, and is open to anyone who is interested.

'Church Going Forward' Saturday 10 October 2015 Essex Church, 10.00 for 10.30am

Speakers include Revd Dr Diane Rees who has conducted interesting research into the role of women in the Church of England and Revd Meg Burton a very experienced hospital chaplain with a particular interest in end of life care.



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
12th July, 9th August**

Midweek classes on TUESDAYS - 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 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

A Retreat Invitation to Individuals



Would you like a day's break from your busy life and busy mind? Do you need time to take stock of an aspect of your life? Come to my quiet bungalow and lush secluded garden in Hayes, West London* and experience a Retreat tailored to your requirements.

The Choices on Offer Are:

- Quiet, rest, guided meditation and relaxation; Mindfulness.
- Gentle exercises, a meadow walk alone or accompanied.
- Lunch, herb teas, coffee etc
- Writing, drawing, poetry, looking at other books; music.
- Reiki healing.
- A confidential listening ear.
- Self-help techniques.
- Help to appreciate what you have.
- Discussing what next for you.
- Or use my space in your own way, as we would discuss.

About Me: My name is Carolyn Appleby, In my working life I was first a nurse, then a counsellor, then retrained as a social worker until I retired early. The reasons I'm offering retreats are to connect and to share what I have and what I've learnt through recovering from severe M.E some years ago. I'm a member of Essex Church.

If you would like to come telephone this mobile number: 07821671187 or email: daybreakhayes@sky.com and give your phone numbers.

**Buses 140, E6, E9, 90. Nearest stations: Northolt (Central Line) Hayes and Harlington (Paddington mainline). Free car parking.*

Cash donations to cover costs will be accepted.



Small Group Communion



**12th July, 9th August, 13th September
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:

12th July – Led by Tristan Jovanović
9th August – Led by Mike Eichler and Elisa Melgosa

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

Creativity Group: Bring Your Own Crafts

Thursdays 9th July and 13th August from 7-9pm



Our creativity group meets once a month and is open to all. You are welcome to bring along whatever art or craft project you're working on and do your own thing whilst enjoying the good company of the group. Participants are often happy to share their skills and recently we have been helping each other learn to knit, to make lino prints, and to do crewel embroidery.

One of the particularly enjoyable features of this group is the space it offers for fellowship and conversation while we are each working on our individual projects alongside one another. Alternatively we have some basic art materials available if you would just like to play with pens, pencils, and paints during the evening. If you know anyone who might enjoy coming along to these sociable evenings then please do help us spread the word.

Jane Blackall

'Stepping Forward: Volunteering as a Spiritual Practice'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – adapted
from service given on 31st May 2015

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

I wonder how many of us have seen a film starring Harrison Ford from 1985 called *Witness*. It's set in a small Amish religious community in the States and shows their traditional farming lifestyle. There's a scene where the whole community works together to build a barn for a newly married couple – I've found a clip to show you over coffee later and barn raising as it's called is still carried out in Amish communities to this day. I mention it as an example of a community working together to help others and in truth there's nothing unusual about that. Throughout human history we will have survived and prospered by helping others in our community, knowing that when we ourselves were in need we too would be helped.

Academic papers are written attempting to define volunteerism and to separate it from the simple helping of one another that's part and parcel of human existence. These problems of definition also make it hard to measure just quite how much volunteering goes on. One recent study asked the question 'Did you help, work or provide any service or assistance to anyone outside your family or household without receiving compensation?' If you ask that question of yourselves in relation to the last few months you might be surprised by just how much volunteering you've been doing, much of it without any formal arrangement or even conscious planning. It's human to notice another's need and to do something to help.

Mutual self-help is an essential in pre-industrialized societies, so essential that it doesn't need a name. It's part of life. But once we have industrialization and urban societies, using money as the primary means of exchange, then we see the rise of volunteering as a concept and as part of life. So it was in 19th century Britain that new charitable organisations were formed, that depended on volunteers to carry out their tasks of improving social conditions.

I'd intended not to say a word in this service of a political nature so if you're tired of hearing me grumble on about the 'austerity agenda' that is dominating our current political landscape then cover your ears for the next minute. But it would be wrong I think to wax too lyrically about how marvellous volunteers are and not point out the danger of a state backing away from its responsibilities to society's most disadvantaged members and leaving less regulated charitable organisations to do the work. Yes there's an important place for charities in modern society but surely they are not a replacement for a state welfare provision. The two need to work closely alongside each other and I personally expect my taxes to contribute towards the care of those in need. Governments have a duty of care to all and for me that means the most vulnerable need greater resources than the most capable of independence. Enough of that.

Let's move to a more spiritual place. We're here in church after all and so far we Kensington Unitarians are not joining in any Big Society projects though I know of churches running programmes to help prisoners to rebuild their lives, to teach English as a



second language, to help families who are struggling, churches are hosting the ever more needed Foodbanks. Maybe this is a conversation for us to be having – asking one another what our role is in 2015's social setting. Because the religions of the world have long been at the forefront of social care. They all emphasise the importance of service to others and have provided and continue to provide education, medical care and care for the most vulnerable within their communities.

The message from all these religions is that by serving others we are serving the divine. Jesus expresses this so clearly as recorded in Matthew's Gospel:

Matthew 25:35-40, English Standard Version (ESV): For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

This sums up service quite beautifully I think because at its core is the teaching that though human existence sometimes feels like a solitary endeavour, it's not. We are all one human family. When we serve one, we serve all.

Spiritual writer and activist Andrew Harvey in his book *The Direct Path* describes five different but interdependent forms of service "all of which need to be pursued and fulfilled together to be fully empowering and effective." These are

- Service to the Divine
- Service to the self
- Service to family and friends
- Service to the community
- Service to the world, to all sentient beings and the cosmos in which we live

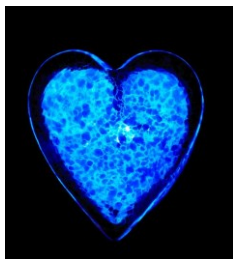
Harvey reminds us that the ultimate aim of the mystics' path is selfless service as an instrument of the divine – the message of our chant earlier – *o signore, fa di me, un instrumento della tua pace*. St Francis' prayer – O lord make me an instrument of your peace. This is St Theresa of Avila's image of us as God's hands here on earth.

'Stepping Forward' *(continued)*

From the mystical heights I must bring us to the dark side for a moment because like every human endeavour serving others has its shadow side. I wonder if any of these ring bells for you as some of them do for me. Yes, it's a good thing to help others – and the shadow side may be a growing illusion that we know what's best for others – as individuals or at an organizational level. We may cease to listen to the people we are attempting to help because we are so convinced we know best. Yes, it's a good thing to help others and the shadow side is we become so concerned about others that we mask our own needs or we lack the self-reflective ability to notice that in truth we are attempting to meet our own needs through helping others. This way exhaustion or irritability or lack of authenticity lie – if we don't attend to our own needs as well as the needs of others. Yes, it's a good thing to help others and the shadow side is that being on the receiving end of other people's charitable endeavours can feel quite dreadfully disempowering and humiliating. There is an imbalance of power in such a transaction that needs acknowledging and ideally redressing. These are just a few of the shadow aspects of volunteering, a reminder for us all to remain awake and reflective about what we do and how and why we do what we do for other people.

But when volunteering is working well it is a potentially powerful tool both for self-development and for social improvement. A United Nations Report from 2011 on The State of the World's Volunteerism emphasises how volunteering is a means by which people can take control of their lives and make a difference to themselves and those around them. Volunteering can be a route towards social inclusion for those who might otherwise be excluded from social groupings. In a church setting such as ours it is essential for our very existence. This church was created by volunteers, it is run by volunteers and will be steered towards its future by the decisions of volunteers. Ministers like me come and go but volunteers as a body, as a community, as a committee of committed people – they – you – are our past, our present and our future and for you I give thanks.

'When we say a person has HEART, it doesn't mean they are weak and sentimental. We mean they are willing to be exposed, willing to be touched nakedly by the world. They are strong enough not to wear a suit of armour. They are not afraid of their own experience. In this sense heart is the one hundred percentness of experience. It is a strength and fullness in you that come from putting your awareness in the actual experience you are experiencing. This is true even of negative experiences. With a strong heart you are able to be gentle and sympathetic to all your experiences, not only the pleasant ones.'



Cynthia Kneen

'Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted."



Paul Tillich

Reflections and Invitation to our Men's Group

I have very much enjoyed the first two Men's Group meetings. They have provided a beautiful space for friendship and discussion. Sharing is mixed with thoughtful reflection and laughter. Men being fully present for other men, a special space.

We have discussed how society expects men to behave, the influence of male figures in our lives, male energy and compassion; hardwiring versus nurture. We are exploring the qualities of the mature masculine as opposed the boyhood macho. Requests for the next session have included exploring identity at different life stages and how men relate to women.

We generally start with a theme, but mainly work with what is brought by the group. Whilst I have stated that this is not designed to replace professional therapy, we are a group of men committed to exploring our scars, confusions and uncertainties. This is a space where you will not be judged, but where you can breathe freely and feel valued.

Newcomers are welcome. The meetings provide a special space in an atmosphere of appreciation, attentive listening and self – discovery, offering men an opportunity to explore what it means to be a man, in a culture of trust and support. The next events will be held on a Tuesday between 6.45 pm and 9pm, on near the end of each month.

Session 3 – Tuesday 30th June
Session 4 – Tuesday 21st July
Session 5 – Tuesday 19th August

We meet in the downstairs library at Essex Church, the home of Kensington Unitarians. This is located at 112, Palace Gardens Terrace, London W84RT, next to Notting Hill tube station. Just turn up. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Jim Blair

Email: jim_blair_rhino@hotmail.com / Mobile: 07734511921

Services at Essex Church this July



5th July, 11am
– ‘We’ve Got Talent’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Come and celebrate the many talents of our congregation members. With a deeper look at the importance of being who we truly are. An all age service.

12th July, 11am
– ‘Shame, Shame, Shame’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Many of us will be all too familiar with the heavy feelings of shame, unworthiness, and ‘not being good enough’ in various ways. In this service we will explore the ways in which shame can limit our lives and consider ways to overcome its effects.

19th July, 11am
– ‘In Praise of Curiosity’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What role might curiosity play for those of us on a spiritual path? Described by Albert Einstein as more important than knowledge, curiosity may be the encouragement we need to set off on new journeys of exploration.

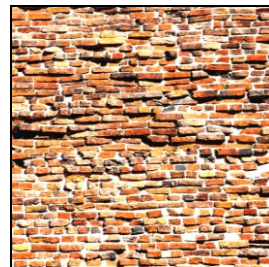
26th July, 11am
– ‘Stories that Touch Our Lives’

Service led by Rev. Joy Croft & Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our world is full of stories with messages for us. What stories, real or imaginary, have touched your lives?



‘Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you, out of your own talent and understanding, out of the things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account.’



John Gardner

One Light Spiritual Gathering ‘Presence’



Friday 10th July, 7pm to 9pm
Here at Essex Church

‘I sometimes ask people, ‘Can you be aware of your own presence? Not the thoughts that you’re having, not the emotions that you’re having, but the very presence of your very being?’ You become aware of your own presence by sensing the entire energy field in your body that is alive. And that is the totality of your presence.’ - Eckhart Tolle

One Light Spiritual Gatherings are offered by Joanna Ryam and Suzanne Cohen. We are open hearted One Spirit Interfaith Ministers offering blessings, celebrations, services and spiritual counselling to people of all faiths and none. Members of the Association of Interfaith Ministers - trained and ordained by the Interfaith Foundation.

In response to requests, we’re are going to start 30 minutes later than usual at 7pm to allow more time to get to gatherings from work. This means that the service part of the gathering will finish at 8.30pm and because of the lateness, we won’t be sharing a pot-luck supper. However, you are most welcome to join us for tea and cake until 9pm if you wish.

For further information contact:
onelightlondon@gmail.com