



What's On...

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

Thursday 2nd March, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul':
'What's Good? What's Evil?'
Led by Melody and Sarah

Sunday 5th March, 11am-noon
'It's All about the Money!'
Led by Jeannene Powell

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

Sunday 12th March, 11am-noon
'A House for All'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12th March, 12.30pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Jane Blackall

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

Sunday 19th March, 11am-noon
'Balancing Good and Evil'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

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

Sunday 19th March, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

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

Sunday 26th March, 11am-noon
'Right Living?'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
*This will include a charity collection for
Women's Federation for World Peace
(Unitarian Peace Fellowship Appeal)*

Sunday 26th March, 12.45-2.00pm
Conversations on Good and Evil

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

Good and Evil

A Message from our Minister

*'She's evil. If you dangle your arm down
like that she's going to bite you.'*



Animal attacks are just one of the hazards we working ministers have to contend with on a home visit. I've had guinea pigs wee in my lap; dogs have left copious moulted hairs on my black trousers; pet rats have nibbled my shoes; but it is only cats that have bitten me, scratched me and left me keen to leave a property at the earliest opportunity.

But is evil an appropriate description of such behaviour or is it simply instinct that has a cat attack a bare human arm? What does evil mean anyway? It's 'one of those words'; beloved of theologians and philosophers, rich in meaning, full of complexity, telling us perhaps as much about the person using the word as the individual it is sometimes used to describe. The word evil indicates an extreme form of behaviour, an action that is generally considered morally reprehensible – beyond simply bad or wrong.

In earlier theological times, the so-called 'problem of evil' was how such a concept and a reality could exist in a world created by an all-loving, all-powerful God. No wonder the mythology of demonic forces is so rich, for a supernatural source of evil must have made sense. Such forces are alive and well in modern fiction and horror films. Yet most of us reading this newsletter probably regard evil as a potential within every human life, a potential more likely to emerge if particular circumstances hold sway. We know how easily we can be influenced by others and by the societal norms we live within.

The use of 'evil' as a description for shocking acts, may distance us from the wrongdoer and the crime. As a society we struggle to make sense of certain actions and so we describe the perpetrators as evil. But such simplistic labelling can be a way to let us all off the hook of our discomfort and confusion. How might we respond more thoughtfully when our society has within it occasional children who murder others, or groups who sadistically torture a vulnerable person, or people who destroy innocent others in order to make a political point? Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote, 'If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of their own heart?'

I wonder if you agree with him that the potential for both good and evil lies within us all?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Church Membership with ChurchApp * 'Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance – A Jolly Occasion!' * Our 40th Anniversary * Report from FUSE 2017: Festival of Unitarians in the South East * A Thank You from Tyler * Heidi Ferid Art Exhibition – Private View * Hymns Wordsearch * Warden's Column * Poems by John Hands & Eliz Beel * 'Wisdom of the Body' by Sarah Tinker * 'On Wisdom and Feelings' by Jeannene Powell * Cultural Outings * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

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



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London W8 4RT*

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Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops



**Sunday 19th March, 23rd April (note irregular date) 2017
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

Margaret has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

5 th March:	Brian Ellis
12 th March:	Heidi Ferid
19 th March:	Melody Chapman
26 th March:	Gina Bayley

Coffee:

5 th March:	Melody Chapman
12 th March:	Melody Chapman
19 th March:	Sue Smith
26 th March:	Maureen Cummings

Greeting:

5 th March:	Gina Bayley
12 th March:	Sue Smith
19 th March:	Brian Ellis
26 th March:	Roy Clark

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

Our 40th Anniversary



When we embarked on our major building renovation project I did not have in mind that our church building would be celebrating its 40th birthday in 2017. But since everything is now looking so fresh and new, maybe we should plan a celebration in July, which is the month when the very first service was held here at the newly built Essex Church, back in 1977. Two other Unitarian church buildings were also opened in 1977, in Hull and Southend. Their congregations are also facing the need for major building renovation work.

If you have any thoughts on how to celebrate this 40th anniversary do let me know. Maybe we could invite ideas on a special present for the church? What would you like to give to this building if you were its fairy godparent?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thematic Ministry in March



We've reached month four of our first year of thematic ministry and this month our focus will be on 'good and evil'. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas about this month's theme for you to think about and do have a look at the themes for the months ahead in case there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Thanks to everyone for the deep conversations that we're having about these monthly themes.

April – 'Transformation' / May – 'Connection'
 June – 'Courage and Resilience' July – 'Identity'
 August – 'Triumph/Disaster' / September – 'Purpose/Mission'
 October – 'Generosity' / November – 'The Unknown'

Good and evil are a classic dualism, seemingly two ends of a spectrum, the opposite of each other. But we know real life to be more multi-layered than that. 20th century psychology, particularly the work of Carl Jung, has introduced the concept of the shadow into everyday understanding. The idea is that we repress elements of ourselves that are considered unacceptable and possibly then project such attributes onto others. This can lead to a 'demonisation of the other'. Jung suggests that we examine carefully any strong negative reactions we have to other people, individuals and groups. What characteristics do they share? How might we be denying such elements in ourselves? We've already had several laughs during recent lightings of candles of joy and concern in our services here at Essex Church when someone has mentioned the need to 'embrace our inner Trump'. As certain politicians gain popularity by targeting particular groups, we liberals perhaps need to take care that we don't further polarise complex issues by imagining that we are superior in any way. There's surely a fascist lurking within most of us. Yet to add to the complexity of this month's theme, consider the idea that it could be considered evil to stand and watch when we know wrong acts are being committed. And aren't we all in the western world standing by and watching some truly appalling wrongs being perpetrated on our behalf around the world? Evil is not solely used to describe the action of individuals. Surely institutions can be considered evil in the effect their policies have on others? Might we consider capitalism to be evil, as an economic system that requires there to be 'haves' and 'have nots'? It is surely morally wrong that our UK economy is boosted by arms sold to the Saudi Arabian government for use on the citizens of Yemen. As people starve to death in the famine of South Sudan, what enables each of us to tuck into a hearty dinner?

One suggestion for this month might be for each of us simply to notice our thinking about good and evil. What values guide us in our own choice of behaviours? Who taught us about right and wrong? What might be a spiritually aware response to news items that shock or frighten us? Philip Zaleski writes that 'we all have evil thoughts; the choice to guard against them is our human legacy.' Do you agree with him?

Come along to our monthly conversation on Sunday 26th March, 12.45 to 2.00pm for what promises to be a deep conversation about our relationship with good and with evil.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

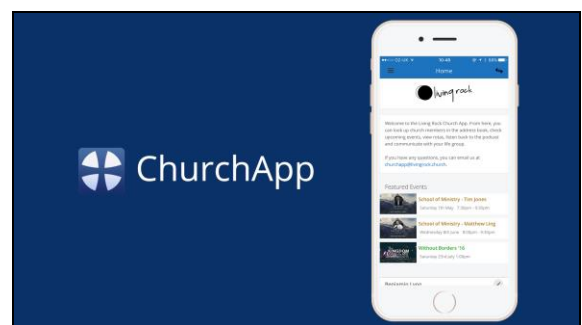
Thursdays 2nd March, 6th April,
 4th May, 1st June from 7-8pm

*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 (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. Melody and Sarah will lead the March gathering 'What's Good? What's Evil?' which will provide an evening's introduction to our theme for this month through music, words and silence. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Church Membership 2017 Introducing the ChurchApp System



Keeping track of the contact details and communication preferences of church members is a more complicated business than most people would probably imagine! In the hope of making it a bit more manageable we are going to try out a new online church database system for 2017 called 'ChurchApp'. We will be getting in touch with all members, friends, and regular attenders soon to check your contact details and confirm membership renewals. If you are not yet a member but would like to be then please speak to me or Sarah and we will give you a form.

Jane Blackall

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance – A Jolly Occasion!



Thanks to Jane for organising our recent tea dance and for making our rainbow bunting, which made the room look so very cheery. I shall never make a professional ballroom dancer and spent most of the afternoon making teas and cutting cakes, ably assisted by Varinder. But all credit to our teacher Rachel who ensured that there were several easy circle and line dances that everyone could join in with. I look forward to more dance opportunities here at Essex Church and to inviting people from marginalised groups to share our lovely building with us. That seems a thoroughly neighbourly thing to do.

Sarah Tinker

It was a wonderful time full of lovely, welcoming people. I particularly enjoyed speaking with some of the people from Essex Church, because everyone seemed excited to be there and to have new people (me) in their midst. I felt there was an atmosphere at the tea dance that made it ok to not know what I was doing or be a little overwhelmed by people and still have a good time. Also, side shout-out for the cake with the raspberries because that was amazing.

Jo Troll

THAT tea dance thing is very touching for me..... I have a penchant if not addiction for the romantic fiction of Georgette Heyer (sigh, such an embarrassing confession!) so the whole experience of social dancing.... is hugely exciting and evocative for me... and until yesterday, mostly purely imaginative! It's a WHOLE other kind of self-education which is so much about integration of body/mind, mainly getting out of the head and into listening with the body in a very important way.... and then the social aspect... the challenge of intimacy, close contact with a.n.other is massive. So the dates for the next ones are in my diary! Thank you so much for sharing your passion for this with us all.

Veronica Needa

It was the perfect way to spend a Sunday! Tea, cake and dancing in a lovely inclusive space was wonderful :) and there were vegan, gluten free cake options which was rather splendid!

Ash Hayhurst

In trepidation I took my 2 left feet to the tea dance at Essex Church. I needn't have worried – Rachel was a patient, supportive teacher and everyone learned several dances at a gentle pace. We had such FUN and I recommend it to everyone. Even if you don't want to dance you can come along and chat and drink tea. And did I forget to mention the cakes? They were superb – especially the ginger one with lemon squiggles. Thank you Jane (and Essex Church) for the event. See you on May 14th!

Chris Martin





The tea dance was wonderful. The wide age range was very heart - warming. Younger and not so young dancing together. It didn't matter if you can't yet dance, because Rachel taught us calmly and kindly. Nice to be at an LGBT+ and friends event that wasn't centred around booze - but lovely cakes and tea - very civilised! Well done to all the organisers. Tati and I loved it, very good job!

Gaynor Harper

I arrived, full of nerves, for what I was privately convinced would be a humiliating spectacle of me falling over or breaking someone's toes. I left not only having had a fabulous time but signed up to the lovely Rachel's next dance classes! I thoroughly enjoyed myself. And nobody's toes were broken. The excellent cake was - ahem - just the icing.

Tati Howell

We had a lovely afternoon with the Kensington Unitarians and other dancers. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming. Everyone enjoyed the social foxtrot lesson with Rachel, more experienced dancers helping the novices. The tea and cakes went down a treat! We are really looking forward to the next tea dance.

Jane Sparks

I've always enjoyed dancing, so the opportunity to attend the tea dance couldn't be missed. Rachel, the teacher did a very good job of breaking the choreography into small easy to grasp sections, before we put it all together to music. I learnt the Foxtrot first before a Waltz. Both I'd never done before. Then I stopped for refreshments of tea and cake - which some attendees had expertly baked. By the time I was ready to get back into things, a few people were dancing a Cha Cha Cha. Thank goodness for the Salsa lessons I had years ago as that helped greatly! I joined in and Cha Cha Cha'd my way around the church hall, which had been colourfully decorated with Jane's handmade bunting. There are more tea dances planned throughout the year, and I'd definitely recommend people going - even if you think you've got two left feet. Not only was it great fun, but also a fantastic way to raise money for charity, which we did, via a collection box on the cake stall (*note from Jane - we raised £55.60 for our nominated charity, Diversity Role Models*).

Jeannene Powell

Save the Dates: Future tea dances are planned for 14th May, 23rd July, and 22nd October!



Warden's Column

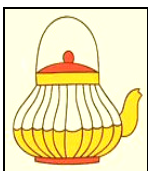
In my last column, having worked out the Top 10 Highest Paying Bookings of 2016, I wondered whether, over the 10 years I've been here, activities here have shifted from religion and psychology towards exercise and children's activities. Having spent an hour or so sifting through all the figures I have readily available, my tentative conclusion is - yes, but not all that significantly.

Before I arrived in 2006, exercise was not an important bookings category, but by 2008 Tse Qi Gung had started meeting in the church on Wednesday evenings and there was an Ashtanga Yoga self-practice in the Hall most mornings. In 2009 John Stirk started his yoga class on Tuesday evening and those three bookings mean exercise has led the Top 10 ever since. But exercise is not dramatically dominant. Prior to 2009, spiritual bookings were most significant and that's remained the next most important category. Seicho no Ie (Saturday evenings) and Beit Klal Synagogue (alternating Friday night/Saturday morning) being key long-standing hirers - with the London Meditation Centre also consistently in the Top 10 since 2011.

When I came here, the only booking you could categorise as "children" was the Associated Board Music exams, but from 2013 day-time bookings for pre-school activities have really taken off - with Little Foxes sports club (www.thelittlefoxesclub.com) consistently in the top 5 since then. After school classes for older children have also become popular recently (particularly dance) - and last year one of those also made it into the top 5 (www.spencerstageschool.com). All in all, I'd say since 2013 children's bookings have become more financially significant than psychology - but again only slightly. There have been 2 psychology groups in the top 10 almost every year - usually the C.G. Jung Club and the Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists, but occasionally the Guild of Pastoral Psychology edges one of them out.

Over the decade then, the balance in the Top 10 has shifted from Spirituality, Psychology, Children, Exercise to Exercise, Spirituality, Children, Psychology - but with all 4 categories continuing to be financially significant to us. I find that re-assuring - because I think the unique atmosphere of this building comes from the variety of ways it is used.

Jenny Moy



'Chinese culture has a gentle way of talking about friendship: their proverb is that the fifth cup of tea between friends is the best. Tea was made in old China simply by pouring hot water over loose tea leaves in a cup. The explanation of the proverb is that when friends meet, busy and tense from the outside world, the first cup of tea is drunk hastily and without much grace. The second pouring of water requires a longer time to steep the leaves. This is better. The third cup requires still more time. The fifth cup stands for an appreciable length of time before the tea is of the required strength. It is this fifth cup that becomes the symbol of friendship at its best. Even an introverted Chinese person needs the quiet passage of time, measured in cups of tea, to define the deepest friendship. There may be a subtle Chinese hint at another dimension in the symbol of the fifth cup of tea; our word quintessence, meaning whole or total, derives from "fifth essence." Wholeness requires time.'

Robert A. Johnson

Easter Sunday Lunch

After the service on Sunday 16th April



We will be having a bring-and-share lunch after the service on Easter Sunday (16th April). Melody Chapman has kindly volunteered to coordinate the lunch once again. Please plan to bring along some food to share. We are always particularly grateful of people to help out in the kitchen and to stay behind and clear up afterwards.



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 19th March, 16th April,
21st May, 18th June...

Midweek classes on Wednesdays
from 22nd February, 12.30-1.30pm

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

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

Contact: Sonya Leite
on 0207 371 1674

FUSE: Festival of Unitarians in the South East

Horsley Park, Surrey – February 2017



The 'Colouring Our Prayers' workshop led by Jeannene and Jane.

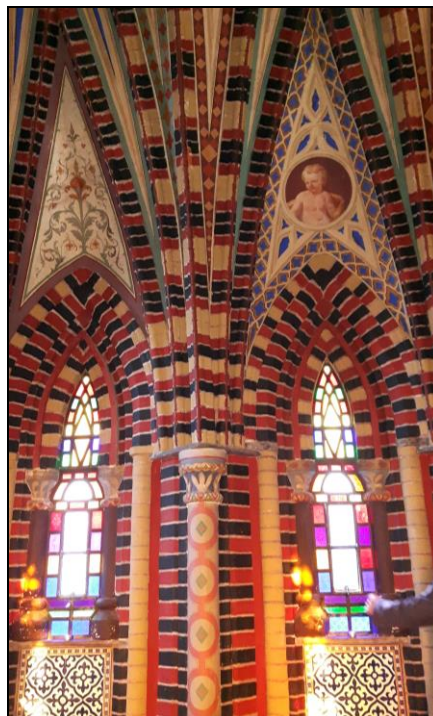
Towel Streaking, Worship, Workshops and Food!

Arriving at the train station on Friday, to a new FUSE venue, I wasn't really sure what to expect. My friend and I were met by the hotel shuttle bus which was a pleasant surprise and driven the 5 minute country lane drive to Horsley Estate. Although part of the estate date back to the early 19th century, including a vibrantly coloured Chapel, that I ensured I made time to visit, we were staying in the modern conference centre. The rooms were spacious with comfy beds, and leisure facilities. Unfortunately though, the changing rooms were being refurbished, so this brings me to the towel streaking! They have a lovely warm pool, but due to no changing room available, many of us were having to rush back to our rooms in wet swimwear and towels, which highlighted who were the daring Unitarians in the bunch, and made an amusing talking point!

As for the Worship, our opening and closing services carried the themes of birds and feathers, which the Rev Kate Dean led. I love worship at FUSE, being with so many people from different congregations, singing along to uplifting songs, including one from the musical "Kinky Boots", and delighting in the imaginative play the children's group put on for us. As with previous years, there was a very good selection of workshops to exercise the mind, body and spirit. Jane and I ran a "Colouring our Prayers" workshop, which was well received and I attended Circle dancing, creating a sacred object and going for a nature walk. The walk gave many of us an opportunity to explore the grounds and get some fresh air. Sarah guided us, taking time to feel, smell, hear and look closely at things. And we had a treat watching the horses in the neighbouring field galloping about. On top of all this, the sun even came out - so I think Sarah must be well connected!

The food was delicious and plentiful - a choice of hot and cold breakfasts, buffets of cold salads, hot meat, fish and vegetarian options for lunch and dinner. And an amazing variety of dessert delicacies. With so much on offer, I had to pace myself to not overdo it. However having fitted in 2 swims over the weekend, I decided I could treat myself to an extra dessert! This was my 3rd time at FUSE and each time I've written up about it I've always said that I'll go again, and this time there's no exception. I definitely plan to be an attendee next year, enjoying the connections and company of others and deepening my faith path through body, mind and creative expression.

Jeannene Powell



The chapel at Horsley Park Estate.

Nine of us from Kensington attended the recent FUSE weekend. Helped by the warm weather and the beautiful grounds of Horsley Park near Guildford, where we were staying, this felt like a proper holiday weekend – even though we were with 90 or so fellow Unitarians! One of the highlights for me was meeting up again with Tina Geels, minister with the Dutch liberal Remonstrant denomination, who is very active as part of the International Council of Unitarians & Unitarian Universalists (ICUU). Tina presented the opening pre-conference as well as a workshop on Saturday morning. Her theme was an exploration of how liberal religious communities can reach out in love to their wider world. Her presentation and workshop really got us thinking about our work here in London and ways we might connect with other groups that care about similar issues to us.

I led a 'Spirit of Nature' walk in the grounds this year and all us Londoners were delighted by the fresh air and carefully tended specimen trees. One participant wrote afterwards that they would take home the memory of how being out in the natural world restores the soul. FUSE will be back at the same venue in February 2017 so do have a think if you would like to come along next year.

Sarah Tinker



Meeting up with some friends at the FUSE pre-conference.

**Good Cause Collection of the Month:
Unitarian Peace Fellowship Appeal
Women's Federation
for World Peace
Collection on Sunday 26th March**



The Women's Federation for World Peace UK (WFWP UK) is part of a network of National WFWP Chapters in over 120 nations that are dedicated to empower women with "the knowledge, the tools and the support needed to create peace at home, peace in our communities, our nations and throughout the world".

Programs, designed according to local needs and capacities, include: leadership training for women and girls, education for peace and reconciliation, skills development and advocacy at major UN Offices and various regional and national institutions. In support of United Nation Development Goals, WFWP maintains over one hundred service projects in fifty nations, in the areas of education, vocational training, microcredit, AIDS prevention education, technical support, medical assistance and nutrition guidance.

We adhere to the principle that women, working together, taking initiative and empowering one another across traditional lines of age, race, culture and religion to create healthy families, are resolving the complex problems of our world. Ultimately "solutions" come as true partnerships between men and women are established in all levels of society. The beginning point is within society's most elemental level-the family. From there, Peace will naturally expand.

For more information: www.wfwp.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

December – **Refugee Council** - £289.03
January – **Inclusive Church** - £121.70



Inclusive Communion

**Sundays 12th March, 9th April
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

12th March – led by Jane Blackall / **9th April** – led by Tristan Jovanović



'African women, writes the Ghanaian woman theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "wear hope like a skin." The more desperate a situation is, the stronger the hope. We live by hope, says St. Paul. Hope stretches the limits of what is possible. It is linked with that basic trust in life without which we could not get from one day to the next.'

Mary C. Grey

wisp

I met her

*wandering through a long
corridor
of doors
and windows*

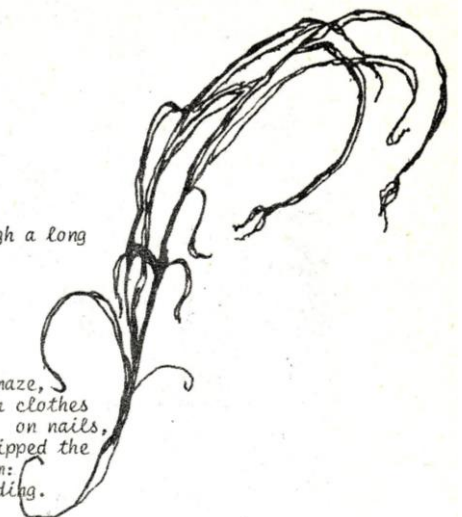
She seemed lost,

*caught up in a maze,
kept tearing her clothes
on nails,
once she even ripped the
flesh on her arm:
bleeding.*

I followed distraught,

*gently calling after her,
falling carelessly about in
an infernal tangle
but she seemed not to hear.*

*perhaps she could not see;
nor knew I was there.*



Poem by Eliz Beel

Hymns Wordsearch – How Many Hymns Can you Find?

40 Hymns to Find:

A Dream of Widening Love
 A Melody of Love
 A New Community
 All Are Welcome Here
 Breath of God
 Bring Many Names
 Brother Sun Sister Moon
 Children of a Bright Tomorrow
 Come Sing a Song with Me
 Dark of Winter
 Do You Hear
 Find a Stillness

For All That Is Our Life
 For the Healing of the Nations
 Gather the Spirit
 Give Thanks for Life
 Goodnight Hymn
 Here in this moment's song
 How Can I Keep from Singing
 I Dream of a Church
 Immortal Invisible
 Isaiah the Prophet
 Jerusalem
 Let it be a Dance
 Love will Guide Us
 Our World is One World

Sacred the Body
 Spirit of Earth, Root, Stone and Tree
 Song of Peace
 Song of Thanksgiving
 The Fire of Commitment
 The Joy of Living
 There is a Place I Call my Own
 To Worship Rightly
 Wake Now My Senses
 Walk in the Light
 We Have a Dream
 We Laugh, We Cry
 We'll Build a Land
 Weaver God Creator

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 D W C M W E L L B U I L D A L A N D B B N E W T B W H P R E
 L E V O L F O Y D O L E M A N E W C O M M U N I T Y M J S L
 D G V C G H I K G O O D N I G H T H Y M N E O Q F P D V G Y

Heidi Ferid – Art Exhibition

Private View – Wednesday 15th March, 6-9pm
Burgh House, London NW3 1LT



Heidi invites congregation members to the private view of this exhibition on 15th March. The exhibition is also open on Thursday 16th, Friday 17th, and Sunday 19th March from 12 noon to 5pm.

A Thank You from Tyler Fundraising for the NSPCC



THANKS FOR SPONSORING ME I RAISED £126
LOVE TYLER PS I GOT 4 BADGES
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

(typed by Tyler)

Jo adds: "NSPCC representatives went into school today, collected the sponsorship money, gave out badges according to how many sponsors each child had ('Well done', 'Fantastic', 'Amazing' and 'Brilliant'). They also delivered a workshop on bullying including online bullying."

‘Wisdom of the Body’

Reflection by Sarah Tinker from 12th February

This reflection is also available online as a podcast.

In a world where there are so many sources telling us what to do and how best to live our lives, Jeannene and I want to encourage us all to consider how we access our own inner wisdom. We don't want to be like the foolish miller and his son in the ancient Aesop's Fable we heard earlier on – changing their minds every time a passer-by gave them a different piece of advice about their donkey. As we planned this service about inner wisdom we realised that *how* we find our wisdom is a very personal matter. How do we know what's best for us? I wonder what your favourite ways of knowing are. Do you have vivid dreams that tell you what's important for you? Are you someone who's guided by gut feelings? Do you know quickly what steps you need to take or are you someone who needs to 'sleep on it' or mull something over - perhaps over days or months?

On today's hymn sheet I've scribbled some pictures representing some of my ways of accessing inner wisdom, ways that over the years I've realised help me by-pass my busy brain - that can worry endlessly about an issue but too often end up tied up in knots or going round in endless circles of worry. Trying to draw doing the washing up or stacking the church chairs was beyond me but they're both simple, physical tasks that seem to switch off my busy brain and allow me to have interesting, different thoughts, thoughts that seem to come from a tangent, another type of thinking. I know some of you find a similar 'restful brain' state in gardening. I don't often remember my dreams but they occasionally reveal a surprisingly new perspective on an issue that's been niggling me. I can have these helpful, tangential thoughts when I'm driving or swimming or walking – and sometimes they're 'light bulb' moments – a flash of new insight arriving seemingly from nowhere. I also value talking over issues with someone else – as though the act of speaking and being heard allows new creative thinking to flow. Maybe you'd like to write or draw some of your favourite ways of accessing your inner wisdom.

An important source of wisdom for me is my body. I am often aware of tiny bodily sensations and, if I pay attention and really listen to them, I can learn more about what's going on. But my relationship with my body wasn't always so connected. For a long time I ignored my body and its messages. I wonder if my story of becoming ill in my twenties resonates with any of you. I'd got a well-paid job, a job to be proud - yet I didn't really feel comfortable sitting at an office desk all day, with no view of the sky and no windows you could open. I was in a relationship that in truth wasn't right for either of us, but neither of us dared to mention it. Instead we bought a flat, which didn't suit either of us as a place to live. Walking to the bus stop on my way to work one morning, I became aware of how painful my feet were. In fact my whole body was aching and had been for quite some while. I remember thinking as I walked that this must be what it's like to be a grown-up – that you have to put up with things feeling not quite right. But in truth I was about to become very ill indeed, developing rheumatoid arthritis. Within six months the job and relationship were ended and we'd sold the flat. I moved to the countryside and started a slow path to creating a proper relationship with my body. I was very fortunate to recover from that illness and through it to start a new way of living, where I paid more attention.

Since that experience of illness in early adulthood I've spent a lot of time exploring body awareness. And my awareness has been raised to the great diversity of people's bodily experiences – the richly varied experiences we have of ourselves as embodied, conscious beings. I've heard people's moving accounts of surviving trauma through disassociating from the body and their slow, healing journeys back to their physical selves. I've sat with people moving towards death, some of whom have expressed a sense of being more than their physical selves, and a readiness to let go of the body. If you yourself are in pain at this moment I know how pain made me cut off from my body and I wonder if that is how it is for you or if pain allows you to stay aware of your physicality. How do you stay in touch with your embodied self? Our bodies can help us stay in the here and now if we can pay attention and stay awake to physical sensations. Focusing on our breath and on bodily sensations can be a way to bypass the busy brain, a way to access inner wisdom.

(In the service we were then led in two simple body awareness meditations. Many similar exercises can be found online.)

'On Wisdom and Feelings'

Reflection by Jeannene Powell from 12th February

This reflection is also available online as a podcast.

I want to talk to you about feelings. The feelings we have inside - sadness, frustration, anger, confusion and despair. Through my life, I've felt them a lot. These emotions that we can all feel, within our bodies, within our beings, if we let ourselves.

There have been so many times in my life, though, when I've dismissed my feelings, discounted them, judged them as invalid. Times when they were trying to alert me to something, or point me to a deeper truth about myself or a situation. But I was cut off from feeling them or ignored them, only after the event saying to myself, "I knew that would happen... I should have just listened to myself."

Doing this was a great disservice to me. And a grand injustice. My feelings were trying to communicate with me. Communicate that I was on the wrong path, tell me not to trust certain people or events. Signalling for me to "go for something" I deeply wanted. As I look back, I realise how much I short changed myself. How not listening to my own feelings, and my own inner wisdom steered me on to a path that took me a long time to correct from. And not only that, by not listening to myself, by seeking answers from outside, from friends, professionals and experts alone, it led to a kind of loneliness. A loneliness borne from not really knowing myself and what was right or wrong for me.

Things changed though about two decades ago, when I realised that I couldn't go on with the way things were. My lifestyle choices were un-sustainable for me, partly due to the constant emotional pain and anger, which arose from the continual self-betrayal of going against my right and wise inclinations.

It was at this point in my life, that I first came across guided visualisations. And one visualisation I was guided through a few times, some of you may be familiar with, as we've done variations of it here at Essex church. This visualisation invited me to go on a journey and meet a wise being. Once met, I was invited to ask that wise being a question and listen for the answer, an answer which might come as words, images or sensations.

Visualisations like this, and other tools, not only help to access our inner wisdom, but to strengthen our link to it, so we can recognise it more easily, trust it more readily, and act on it if necessary. I know that this was definitely the case for me.

From dismissing my feelings, to learning to acknowledge that I was feeling what I was feeling for a reason. That every emotion that I had, both mildly or strongly, whether an emotion I liked or



didn't like, it had a purpose. That my anger was alerting me to my boundaries being crossed, either by others or by myself. That my fear was trying to keep me safe. That my frustration was letting me know the strength of my desire to achieve something, and to find a solution to the obstacle preventing that achievement. That my envy was highlighting something I wanted in my life and to find a way to attain it, in a way which worked for me and didn't take it away from anyone else. My emotions, they were one way that my inner wisdom was expressing itself to me.

As the years went by, learning to turn to and trust my own inner wisdom more, the immense pain and anger, I'd been feeling started to diminish, as I began to betray myself less and listen to myself more. And I started to be able to feel and recognise other emotions, such as joy, gratitude and hope. And decipher their messages too, thus gaining a wider and more balance emotional life. And I still do ask other people's advice at times, but in conjunction with having consulted, my own inner wisdom first. And through that, have got on a path in life which feels more right for me and affirming of who I authentically am.

My hope in sharing my own personal reflection with you, is that if you're someone who finds it hard to give credit to your feelings, whatever they may be, that you might think about seeing them differently and viewing them as a valuable source of information, wisdom and guidance.

And if you're someone who tunes into yourself, your emotions and source of inner wisdom, easily and regularly, maybe you related to some of my story, as western society in general, doesn't teach emotional awareness or emotional competence. And it doesn't value intuitive knowing as much as intellectual or scientific knowledge, or value emotion as much as reason.

So whatever your relationship with your emotions, and whatever you choose to do with them - Your hunches, your gut feelings, your sensations and alike, may just be the wisest part of you, trying to get you, to know yourself just a little bit more.



'Our physical bodies age and lose their strength. Despite all our anti-aging creams and pills and rejuvenating treatments of every kind, slowly the wrinkles creep across our face and our hair turns grey. Regardless of what we do to care for our bodies, eventually they grow old, and we can do nothing to stop that process. In the case of consciousness, there are certain states of mind that have become familiar to us over the years and that continue even as we grow old or live with illness. If we have always been cheerful and calm, for example, we will continue to be cheerful and calm even in our old age. So the qualities of the body will eventually disappear no matter how much we might do to try and safeguard them, but the qualities of the mind, if we have really trained and cultivated familiarity with them, will remain for as long as the mind itself continues. That is why we can say that the qualities of the mind can be developed infinitely and boundlessly.'

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Cultural Outings

There are a number of events coming up this month which might be of interest to people in our community. Maybe someone would like to organise a particular outing and invite others in the congregation to join them?

The Forgiveness Project - Exhibition **8th-12th March at the OXO Tower, SE1 9PH**

The Forgiveness Project is returning to the OXO gallery 13 years after the launch of their 'F Word' exhibition to showcase their latest dynamic and challenging exhibition exploring journeys of meaning and hope. The exhibition uses personal narratives to examine alternatives to cycles of conflict, violence, crime and injustice. The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of talks, conversations and story-telling events. Opening Times: 11.00am - 6.00pm.

WOW – Women of the World Festival **7th-12th March at the Southbank Centre**

WOW festival champions gender equality, celebrating the achievements of women and girls everywhere and examining the obstacles that keep them from fulfilling their potential. For those who enjoyed our recent tea dance, you might like the free social dance which is taking place as part of the WOW festival at 4.30pm on Saturday 11th in the Clore Ballroom in the Royal Festival Hall (Rachel Sparks, who taught at our tea dance, will be assisting 'Mambo Fantastico' in teaching salsa at this event).

Belief and Beyond Belief Festival **Throughout 2017 at the Southbank Centre**

Throughout 2017, Southbank Centre and the London Philharmonic Orchestra present a new festival which explores what it means to be human. Belief and Beyond Belief explores the music, art, culture, science, philosophy, ritual and traditions that have risen out of religion in its many guises. www.southbankcentre.co.uk

One Final Apocalypse

We've tried so many times, each one spoilt
Inconclusive. This is the latest and -
As the Phlogians insist - the last.
unstable species by infinite gradation
Of attributes prompted by
Variations of climate and temperature
Now seems so decidedly precarious.
Better assemble them all at once
Settle on a mean average then
Engineer a cataclysm: just as it all began
A huge inaudible Bang! Incandescent particles
Hurling like shining glitter-wax
Over a trillion metres: speed and the spectacular
Head-to head like two Olympic wrestlers.
Age shall not weary US, nor the years condemn
Nor bugles blare out to finally proclaim
Any sort of dubious armistice
Between US and them,
No kind of brexit, no favourable settlement
For them to renege whenever it suits them –no no!
Species unknown or extinct; a planet made available
For imperial US and all our cosmic descendants.

John Hands

Services at Essex Church in March



Sunday 5th March, 11am **– 'It's All about the Money!'**

Service led by Jeannene Powell

It is often (mis)quoted that "money is the root of all evil". In this service we'll explore different approaches to money in relation to religion and allow you to make up your own mind.

Sunday 12th March, 11am **– 'A House for All'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What message might Nadia Bolz Weber's community, a House for All Sinners & Saints, have for the likes of us? What would it feel like to have every part of us welcomed and accepted, just as we are? What damage is done when we do not feel accepted in our entirety?

Sunday 19th March, 11am **'Balancing Good and Evil'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As we celebrate the spring equinox we'll also take time to think beyond polarising dualism to the rich complexity of real life.

Sunday 26th March, 11am **– 'Right Living?'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How do we make our moral choices in life and what principles guide our steps? We'll share a simple ritual to honour Mothering Sunday and the service will be followed by a Sunday conversation. And don't forget the clocks go forward on this day, so we'll lose an hour in bed. Come early and there'll be coffee and croissants at church for you.

