



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: February 2013

What's On...

Sunday 3rd February, 11am-noon
'Reflecting with God'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 3rd February, 12.30-2.00pm
Congregational Growth Meeting
'Speaking about Unitarianism'

Thursday 7th February, 7.00-8.00pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Blessing the Candles' - Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10th February, 11am-noon
'What About Judas?'
Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 10th February, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Susan Smith

Sunday 10th February, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Monday 11th February, 7.00-9.00pm
'Rediscovering the Bible'
Bible-reading with David and Jane

Thursday 14th February, 7-9.00pm
'Reflecting with God' Group (1/5)
Essential to sign up by 3rd February!

Sunday 17th February, 11am-noon
'A Beautiful Harmony'
Led by Rev. Richard Boeke & Sarah T

Sunday 17th February, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Our Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Thursday 21st February, 7-9.00pm
'Reflecting with God' Group (2/5)

Thursday 21st February, 7-9.00pm
'Death: A Self-Portrait'
Outing to the Wellcome Collection

Sunday 24th February, 11am-noon
'The Good and the Bad'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 24th February, 12.30-2.00pm
Worship Leaders' Practice Group

Monday 25th February, 7.00-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 26th February, 7.00-9.00pm
Reading Group: 'The Summer Book'

Thursday 28th February, 7-9.00pm
'Reflecting with God' Group (3/5)

Dates for Your Diary:

Friday 15th March – **Avebury Trip**

Sunday 24th March – **Equinox Walk**

A Message from our Minister:

Who Owns This Place?

This was the question asked by a passer-by when I was doing some weeding at the front of our church a few years ago. I launched into a lively yet concise explanation of Unitarianism only to be stopped mid flow by a further query. "No," he said, "I mean who *owns* this building?"



No expert in charity law, trust deeds or the role of charitable trustees, I mumbled an answer about our building belonging to our congregation. The passer-by moved on, and I kept weeding and thinking about what ownership means. Individual ownership of an item usually means you have the right to use it or sell it but if we 'own' a church building as a group of people, a congregation, selling is not generally an option. Even our use of the building is more complex than 'ownership' might suggest. Our congregation has sole use of our church on Sundays and we have a regular booking on Thursday evenings for one room in which to run small group activities such as our RE courses and engagement groups. At most other times the building is used by other groups and organisations. A quick look at our Annual Accounts shows that most of our income comes from letting our building and that without these lettings we could not survive. We are wealthy in having a building in central London but our lettings income is needed to pay our considerable running costs.

So we own our church building but we do not have sole use of it. And ownership can hold other meanings – caring for, knowing about, committed to. In that sense we are more like custodians of this community resource, which is for the use of many people – both in the present and in the future. We also honour the memory of those who have gone before us by continuing to take good care of the congregation they established.

If I could convey one thing to anyone new who is considering the possibility of joining Kensington Unitarians it would be to give them a sense of the truly remarkable potential that we have here. What would you like to have happen? What new possibilities could we create together with all the resources that we have? In the last year I have watched people set up new groups, collect money for charity, organise outings, social events and social action projects, get involved with new forms of worship, write articles, sing, cook, entertain, read together. I begin most Sunday services by saying that Kensington Unitarians is a community created by all those who walk through our doors. I wonder what you'd like to get involved in creating here together this year. Got some ideas? Come and have a chat sometime.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Wishes for the World' from our Christmas Tree * 'Sara Groves' * 2013 Membership * 'A Postcard from Malta' by Ellen McHugh * Poems by Carolyn Appleby and John Hands * 'Reflecting with God' * 'Heart and Soul' midweek spiritual gatherings * 'SimpleGifts' * Booking for GA Annual Meetings in Nottingham * Equinox Walk to London Wetland Centre * 'Death: A Self-Portrait' Exhibition * 'Life Ending' by Jeannene and Sarah * and 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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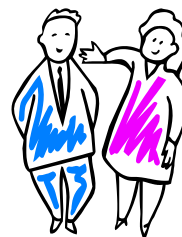
Congregational Lunch

Easter Sunday 31st March, 12.30pm



A date for your diary: our next congregational lunch will be after the service on Easter Sunday. A sign-up sheet will be circulated nearer the time so you can let us know what food or drink you are planning to bring along to share.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

3 rd February:	Alice Lambert
10 th February:	Natasha Drennan
17 th February:	Niall Doherty
24 th February:	Jo Ridgers

Coffee:

3 rd February:	Sue Smith
10 th February:	Heidi Ferid
17 th February:	Caroline Blair
24 th February:	David Darling

Greeting:

3 rd February:	Gina Bayley
10 th February:	Annie Fowler
17 th February:	Gisela Boehnisch
24 th February:	Annie Fowler

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

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Faith and Fun' at the GA: Unitarian Annual Meetings

11th - 14th April at Nottingham University

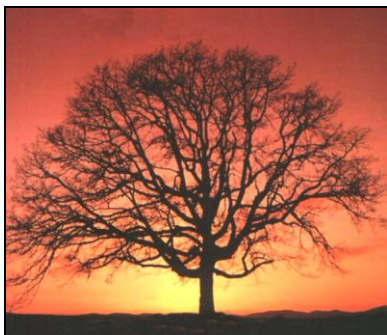


**Come along, be informed and inspired, and
enjoy the company of other Unitarians!**

A wide range of meetings and workshops are offered over the four days, as well as shared worship, inspiring guest speakers and the plenary sessions where participants can voice their views and vote during discussions on the motions presented. The GA is an opportunity to influence decisions on the future of our Unitarian movement, and a chance to get together with lots of fellow Unitarians. Cost: £366 (if booked early - by 22nd February 2013).

For more information see: www.unitarian.org.uk/ga
or ask Jane for a copy of the flyer/booking form.

'Reflecting with God'



**A 5-Part Theological Reflection Group
Begins Thursday 14th February, 7-9.00pm
Continues 21st, 28th February and 14th, 21st March**

PLEASE SIGN UP BY 3rd FEBRUARY!!!

This spring at Essex Church we will be offering a small group for personal and shared theological reflection. This is similar to the 'God in Daily Life' course that Jane and Jenny ran back in 2008 which some of you may remember.

The group will be based on creative listening and draw on ideas from the book 'Reflecting with God' by Abigail Johnson. Members of this group will be asked to make a commitment to attend all five of the sessions and to give a 15-minute presentation at one of them on the theme "How is 'God' present in my daily life?" (*please feel free to interpret the word 'God' in any way that is meaningful to you*). Please don't be intimidated by this task! It is not intended to be an intellectual exercise, though it will hopefully be a deep one, more like personal journaling on an experience or issue in your everyday life. We also ask that all commit to offering others respectful attention and confidentiality.

Places on this course are strictly limited and we strongly encourage you to commit to all five sessions to take part. For these reasons we would like to encourage you to sign up as soon as possible if you would like to come. Please contact Jane to sign up or to have a chat about what the course involves: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Jane Blackall and Sarah Tinker

'We may have good intentions to reflect on the many layers of our lives, but the busyness of our existence tends to take priority over quiet time. Typically we reflect on issues by letting them rattle around in our heads...'

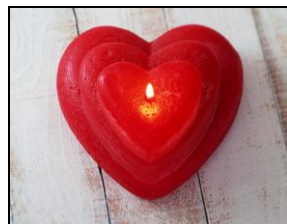
We reflect theologically when we pray, and in the midst of crisis when we ask, "Why me, God?" We do it when we ask, "Is that all there is?" We do it when we try to bring justice into the decisions we make. Although such theological reflection takes place, it can often be random and unstructured.

In this group, we will offer a structured process for engaging in theological reflection by looking at real-life events through a series of questions, which are designed to help individuals to think through situations with the eyes of faith.'

Abigail Johnson, in 'Reflecting with God'

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

'Heart and Soul' Midweek Spiritual Gatherings



Thursday 7th February 2013 from 7-8pm

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

In January 2013 we held the first of our spiritual gatherings, which will take place on the first Thursday evening of each month, for new and alternative forms of Unitarian worship. This went well and we are looking forward to the next one!

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

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

The service on 7th February will be coordinated by Sarah Tinker and has the theme 'A Blessing of the Candles'. We plan to involve a team of worship leaders each month and look forward to experiencing a variety of worship styles.

Jane Blackall

'The season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday (13th February), is an invitation to be honest with ourselves about the ways in which our lives, as lived, do not align with the love and compassion and wholeness of which we are all capable. It is an invitation to look at hard truths, to name our mistakes, and make a commitment to real, measurable change. And it's an invitation to do this not just for a few guilt-inducing moments, but over a significant period of time – a period of time which is culturally mythologised as being long enough to make real progress toward changing something.

Lent means making room in our spiritual lives for humility, for self-emptying, for sinking in to what is deeper and wider than the individual self. Lent means turning away from arrogance and our persistent illusions that we are in control of it all, and turning toward a more authentic encounter with our humanity and with Life. The way to make Lent a meaningful time of reflection and growth is to really make a commitment to it.'

Rev. Ellen Cooper-Davis (Unitarian Universalist Minister)

A Kensington Unitarians Cultural Outing:

'Death: A Self-Portrait'

Thursday 21st February, 7.00-9.00pm

Wellcome Collection, 183 Euston Road, NW1 2BE



Natasha Drennan is organising an outing to this fascinating exhibition at the Wellcome Collection. Please get in touch with her if you plan to come along or would like to know more: tash_drennan@hotmail.com / 07551 250 049.

'This exhibition showcases some 300 works from a unique collection devoted to the iconography of death and our complex and contradictory attitudes towards it. The collection is spectacularly diverse, including art works, historical artefacts, scientific specimens and ephemera from across the world. Rare prints by Rembrandt, Dürer and Goya will be displayed alongside anatomical drawings, war art and antique metamorphic postcards; human remains will be juxtaposed with Renaissance vanitas paintings and twentieth century installations celebrating Mexico's Day of the Dead. This singular collection, by turns disturbing, macabre and moving, opens a window upon our enduring desire to make peace with death.'

Anglo-Saxon Riddle Poem

Partial to none, neglecting no-one, I call on all I can
Leaving few unvisited. I bring unsolicited rest
Respite from labour, much sleep, time for soulful meditation.
Especially I love little children
Visit them oft, in schools and nurseries,
Pass swiftly to their minders and teachers
Giving leave to those who least deserve me,
Call carefully at night: where you hear my voice
Loud like a fart, or gentle like a trickling gutter-stream
Passing swiftly from one ungrateful cattle to another.
Yet all who receive my blessing curse my coming
Try to discourage me: speed my passage with rueful
Concoctions of foul herbs, fruit, or regular inhalation
If they can. Impartial as I am no-one welcomes me.
Pray, heal my distress, put me from my misery
Tell me who I am.

John Hands

Love Melts the Frozen Path

With you I use no words,
I am dumb.
You reply with high-pitched tones.
I offer you harvest of summer –
seeds of sunflower
and water from the tap.
They come packaged inside my house.
Will you find and peck at them,
you robins who know the flowing stream
and kernels from the source?

Carolyn Appleby

'Rediscovering the Bible'

A monthly bible-reading group at Essex Church



Meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7pm:
11th February, 11th March, 8th April 2013

We started a monthly bible-reading group at Kensington in November, for a trial period of six months, following on from a group which was held at the Golders Green church last year.

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

Do contact us (email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you have any questions or just to let us know you're planning to come along. The bible-reading group is open to all who share a spirit of goodwill and curiosity about discovering the text anew – no particular theology will be presumed – please bring along a bible (any translation you like) if you have one.

This group is offered in conjunction with the Liberal Christian affinity group of the district association (LDPA) and we hope to see friends from throughout the region at these meetings.

David Darling and Jane Blackall

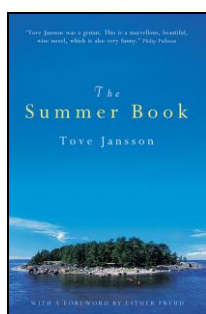
Next Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for the February issue is **Sunday 10th February**. Please send your newsletter contributions to Jane Blackall or any committee member by then. Thank you!!!

Email your articles to:
jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Essex Church Reading Group 'The Summer Book' by Tove Jansson



Tuesday 26th February 2013, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's February session will be based on 'The Summer Book' by Tove Jansson which was suggested by Juliet Edwards. This will be the 99th title discussed by the reading group since it started up nearly ten years ago.

More information from Amazon:

"The Summer Book is a fresh, vivid and magical novel about seemingly endless summers of discovery. An elderly artist and her six year old granddaughter while away the summer together, on a tiny island in the Gulf of Finland, their solitude disturbed only by migrating birds, sudden storms and an occasional passing boat. Gradually, the two learn to adjust to each other's fears, foibles and yearnings for independence, and a fierce yet understated love emerges - one that engulfs not only the summer inhabitants, but the very island itself. Tove Jansson writes with a special toughness, and with a quiet, dry sense of humour, about a small girl and her grandmother, who as kindred spirits share the long days together."

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

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html

Congregational Growth Meeting

Sunday 3rd February, 12.30-2.00pm



Churches grow primarily by word of mouth so it's well worth thinking about how we speak about our community. However, many of us find it tricky to talk to friends about our Unitarian community, or to answer questions about it. More generally, we can struggle to articulate our complex thoughts and feelings about spiritual and religious matters, in a world that often seems to be looking for easy answers.

These issues will be the focus of our next growth meeting after the service on 3rd February from 12.30 to 2pm. Do put that date in your diary and come along with your ideas and willingness to explore (as well as a sandwich) We'll provide a bowl of soup to warm us.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
10th February, 10th March, 14th April 2013**

**Also a weekly class starting on 5th February
each Tuesday lunchtime from 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 (£5 to members of church congregation).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

Multifaith Calendar

🌐 2nd February – Imbolc – Pagan

Also called Oimelc and Candlemas, Imbolc celebrates the awakening of the land and the growing power of the Sun.

✝️ 2nd February – Candlemas – Christian

This is often called The Presentation of Christ in the Temple and commemorates the day Mary took Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem to present him to God.

🏯 3rd February – Rissun (Setsubun) – Shinto

A Spring festival that marks the division between Winter and Spring and is celebrated with beans.

🌸 8th February – Parinirvana (Nirvana Day) – Buddhist

Mahayana Buddhist festival marking the anniversary of Buddha's death. Pure Land Buddhists call the festival 'Nirvana Day'. This is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 15th.

🌏 10th February – Chinese New Year

This coming year will be the Chinese year of the snake.

✝️ 11th February – Our Lady of Lourdes – Christian

Marks the day in 1858 when St Bernadette had her first vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

✝️ 12th February – Shrove Tuesday – Christian

Also called Pancake Day and Mardi Gras. The British name of "Pancake Day" comes from the tradition of making pancakes to use up all the food that could not be eaten during Lent.

✝️ 13th February – Ash Wednesday – Christian

The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches. Lent is the season marking the time Jesus spent in the wilderness.

🌸 15th February – Parinirvana (Nirvana Day) Buddhist

Nirvana Day is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 8th. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

🌸 15th February – Vasant Panchami – Hindu

Dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning and Brahma's wife. The festival marks the beginning of Spring.

★ 21st February – Fast of Esther (Taanit Esther) – Jewish

A fast in commemoration of the fast of Mordechai and Esther. This is not a major Jewish fast.

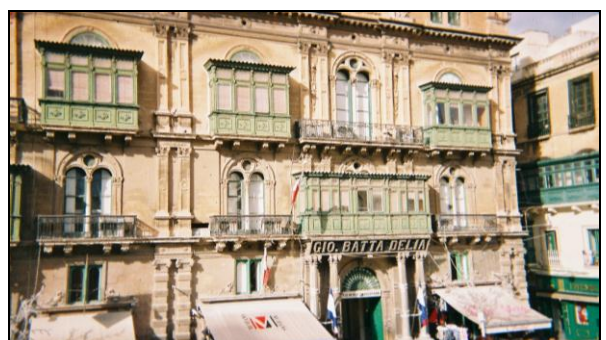
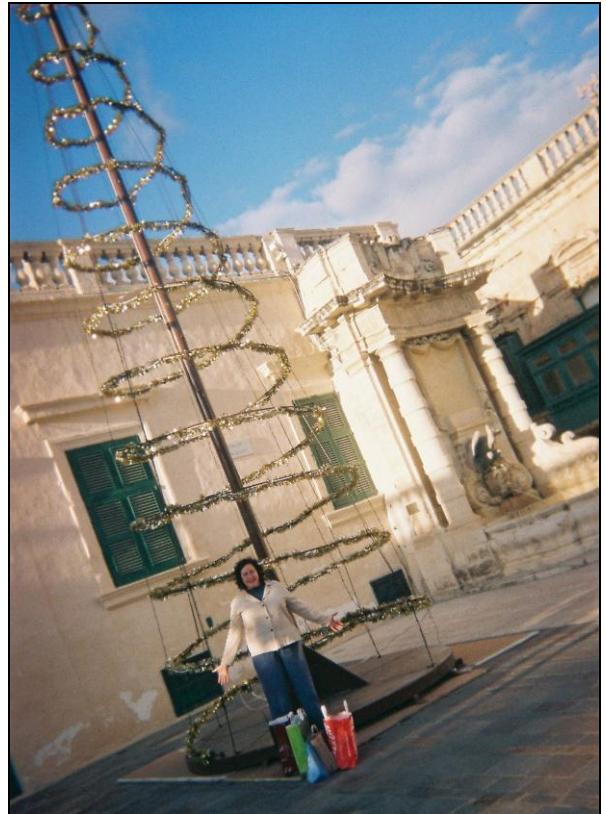
★ 24th February – Purim – Jewish

Purim commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther.

🌸 25th February – Magha Puja – Buddhist

Fourfold Assembly or Sangha Day. Marks the day Buddha addressed a meeting of 1250 arahants.

A Postcard from Malta – In Pictures



A Postcard from Malta...

Good morning from a sunny and raining Monday morning in Malta! I know this sound like a strange combination, but the weather patterns in Malta have proved interesting. I am here as a student on the Erasmus programme, for one year, and I will be coming back to London in the autumn for my 3rd year of study at Heythrop College. This opportunity is part of a European mobility scheme to enable young students from European countries to spend up to one year here studying, as opposed to study in their home country.



The benefits of this are as follows: the weather - even now, in so called winter - it is not like experiencing a British snowy winter. In the daytime, we can have lovely hot sun, though it gets cooler in the evenings. We have a heater in our flat, but have not yet felt the need to go and buy gas for it. We have just taken to wearing extra jumpers when it feels cold. The Maltese dress as if they are experiencing an Arctic winter, and we see the British holiday makers here for their winter sun in their shorts and sandals. I also save on my university fees, which is a big plus, as London is so expensive. It is only a five minute walk from where I live to university. There are many Erasmus students, about 800 in all, and - guess what - I'm the oldest one! The Maltese students are pleasant but tend to have a reserved character, so you have to break the ice with them first. Being a student at my age is a bit of a novelty for some of the students but, despite this, I try to mix with them all and attend a few social events but have so far resisted the regular night club evenings to Paceville.

My niece Philomena has joined me on this adventure, and I am so glad she has. We are living in a massive flat, about twice the size of my home in Norfolk. We each have our own bathroom, which is such a luxury, something that we both enjoy. In the area where we live, the majority of people live in flats, so this makes for lots of noise, as our neighbours are not quiet characters when they get talking, or when they move around. We are also living in the heart of the red light district; we only became aware of this fact when we got followed by a man in his car on the day we moved into our flat. It makes for interesting walks in the evening. We have not been followed since, so maybe it was a just a very late night welcome to the area. Outside in the street, there are many cars; nearly every Maltese student has a car, which is seen as a bit of a status symbol here. So rush hour traffic on a small island can be slow and rather stressful. Lots of honking of car horns, the cries of the donut sellers, the gas man has a particular sounding horn, so you know when they're around. So, lots of noise, compared to my home back in Sheringham. Philomena and I have started a movie and pizza night in our flat once every two weeks that we invite students to. This has been an enjoyable activity, as I have met students who are doing different courses, and I would not have met them otherwise. We make a group decision of the movie to watch, order in a pizza and afterwards talk about the movie. We live next door to a student hostel, and I think they like coming into a typical Maltese home with British hosts!

Some of my favourite things about Malta: the buffalo red tomatoes look and taste divine. I have been told they are sent to Queen Elizabeth, who lived here for a while when she was first married. It is easy to get everywhere, the buses are really cheap, and they have even cheaper resident fares. Boris Johnson sent Malta the Arriva bendy buses that used to be in London. There is constant debate on the subject of the buses. I have never been on a bus before where the driver stops the bus to take a call on his mobile, gets off the bus to have a cigarette break, and changes the route when there are not many people on the bus. This is a different way that you have to accept when living in another country.

Philomena and I went to Gozo, a little island off Malta for our Christmas break. We have found a place we really like called Xlendi, and stay in a nice hotel called St Patrick's. Much to our delight on Christmas Eve, whilst sitting on our balcony, we spotted a famous person who obviously came to Gozo to get away and not be recognised! Anyway, Philomena and I noticed the Gozitans around this person had no idea they had Margaret Mountford from the 'Apprentice' show in their midst. We were tempted to shout out "you're fired"! But we didn't and respected her privacy. Billy Connolly apparently lives on Gozo, and I was told the area, and so I went that way for a walk, hoping to bump into him. Alas he was probably away filming 'Quartet'. I get the impression that lots of people choose Gozo for the quiet life, it is lovely and green, and not too far from Malta but very different. Everywhere you go in Malta there are signs of Britain's former rule of the island. There are red post-boxes and red telephone boxes everywhere, Dewhurst the butcher, Lipton, Co-op, and signage that I recognise from my childhood. Some of the shop displays are very 1970s - the window displays are piled high with all the many goods the shop sells - I find it very refreshing, and prefer it to the slick designer themed window displays of Kensington.

Because of the size of the island it is easy to see people in a way that would not happen in London. In Valetta, we saw Prime Minister Gonzi, just walking around without the high security trappings that would be evident back home. My tutor invited me to a party to meet the Lateral thinker, Edward de Bono, who lives in Malta and London. So I had the chance to have lager and cake with a world renowned philosopher! I nearly forgot to mention the cats - there are about 200 cats who live in the grounds of our university. People come every day to feed them. They lie asleep on the students' cars in the sun, and if you have a big bag they follow you, thinking you're there to feed them. Yesterday I asked the security guard why they were so many, and he said "because of the rats!" I wish I hadn't asked!

As it is now exam time at the university, any spare blessings or prayers would be much appreciated. I hope my Malta story has given you a little glimpse into our world. I wish all the members of Essex church a wonderful year in 2013.

Ellen McHugh

Equinox Walk: London Wetland Centre

After the service on Sunday 24th March, 1pm



Continuing our series of quarterly walks, have a think about joining us on Sunday 24th March, for a gentle walk to celebrate the spring equinox. We will head off after the service to the London Wetland Centre in Barnes. Please note that there are entry fees to access the nature reserve. For more information see www.wwt.org.uk/visit/london

Our last walk, marking the winter solstice, was affected by bad weather conditions but five hardy souls still went out in torrential rain to walk along the Regent's Canal.



Essex Church Membership 2013



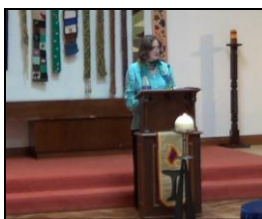
In January current members and friends of our congregation will be receiving their annual letter and form to fill in for membership. Its good practice to ask people to renew their membership in this way each year and we'd be grateful for your feedback on how our form feels to receive and fill in. We'd also be grateful if you could return the forms speedily to the church office – or even fill them in straight away on a Sunday morning – as this makes it much easier to administer.

Our annual suggested subscription remains at £40 for members and £16 for friends. This payment is not a requirement but it in some way covers the cost of newsletter production and mailing and the annual quota payment we make for each member to our central General Assembly. Some people pay with a cheque, others put money in the collection during the year to cover this cost, or pay by standing order.

Please don't let finance stop you from filling in the form but also do ask yourself what you can afford to contribute to the running costs of the church, or other ways that you might contribute to our community through your time or enthusiasm.

Membership is a really valuable way to show that you support our congregation and are in accord with its liberal religious ethos. If you want to know more about what membership entails then do get in touch with me and have a chat.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



Worship Leaders' Practice Group – 24th February

In late 2012, regular worship leaders, and several others who have expressed an interest in leading services at Essex Church, were invited to an initial meeting of the Worship Leaders' Practice Group (WLPG). In our first meeting eleven of us considered the question 'What is Worship?' and talked about things we felt that worship should always do (and things it should never do...)

You may have noticed that a few Sunday services have been filmed over the last few months. This is for those brave members of the WLPG who are going to use the footage to reflect on their service with a view to improving their skills and sensitivity in worship. When we are going to film someone this will be drawn to your attention in the printed order of service. The camera will be fixed facing the lectern so if you do not wish to be seen on the recording you might like to choose your seat so that it is out of the line of sight. However, the footage will not be made publicly available, and will only be viewed by the worship leader and possibly a small number of others who are invited to offer feedback on their service.

If you would like to be involved in worship in any way, or have any thoughts or suggestions about worship you'd like to tell us about, please do get in touch with Sarah or Jane. The WLPG will next be meeting again after the service on Sunday 24th February.



Our Kensington Unitarians congregation – picture taken after the Christmas Carol Service on Sunday 16th December 2012.

‘Finding Our Voice’

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 17th February, 17th March
12.30 to 1.15pm, at Essex Church



Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. Along with Harold Lorenzelli she has been singing in our choir here at Essex Church for over thirty years now and we're delighted that she is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice.

These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound and Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential.

Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

Worship Studies Course

Foundation Step at Essex Church in 2013



We are delighted to report that we have 32 people signed up to take part in the Unitarian Worship Studies Course (Foundation Step) which we will be running at Essex Church over 4 full days in 2013:

16th March / 13th July / 21st September / 30th November

Demand for places has been much higher than we expected, with participants from all over the district and beyond (including nine from our own Kensington congregation), and the course is now full.

The course covers reflection on the meaning and purpose of worship; issues around speech, presentation and communication; the process of crafting a high-quality service; and other practical matters that worship leaders need to consider. We have got a great line-up of guest tutors from around the country to help teach the course, including Rev. Elizabeth Birtles, Rev. Danny Crosby, Rev. Patrick O'Neill, Rev. Lindy Latham, and Rev. David Usher.

We will keep you posted on how the course is going during 2013!

Rev. Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



Collection on Sunday 24th February

Alice Lambert wrote an article about Azafady in last month's newsletter. She is planning to travel to Madagascar to volunteer for a month with the charity. We will be taking a collection for their work in February. Here are some excerpts of what Alice wrote about this cause:

Azafady is an award-winning British registered charity partnered with an independent Malagasy NGO. I discovered them through Peter Lynch's book *Wildlife & Conservation Volunteering: The Complete Guide* (2012) when I was researching organisations with which to undertake conservation volunteering abroad. I was looking for an organisation that prioritised the expressed needs of the communities in which it worked above everything else, and Azafady appeared to fit the bill.

Azafady's mission, as stated on its website, is 'to alleviate poverty and conserve unique and biologically rich but greatly endangered forest environments in south east Madagascar by empowering some of the poorest people to establish sustainable livelihoods for themselves and improve their well-being'.

For more information on Azafady, please visit its website: www.madagascar.co.uk



Previous Charity Collections:

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

October – 'Unitarian Peace Fellowship' - £82.50
November – 'Freedom from Torture' – £157.42
December – 'Sightsavers' - £182.47 (inc gift aid)

Warden's Column



I couldn't think of anything about the building I particularly wanted to talk about this month - but looking through the diary I see we have quite a few unusual bookings in February, so I thought I'd tell you a little about them.

Starting at the end of the month, Sunday 24th February is Purim – which will be celebrated here by our wonderful synagogue, Beit Klal Yisrael. Purim celebrates the preservation of the Jewish people from a massacre plotted by Haman, grand vizier to Xerxes I of Persia 2,500 years ago – as narrated in the book of Esther. The celebrations traditionally involve comic plays, giving food to the poor and lots of drinking. There is also a Torah reading where the congregation has to make enough noise to drown out the name of Haman every time it is said (54 times) – a bit like booing the villain in a pantomime.

Another venerable festival is Chinese New Year (we're now in 4709) which this year will be celebrated here by our Chinese after school club. This has been organised by local Chinese parents to help their children gain fluency in mandarin. It currently takes the form of a choir, meeting in the library on Mondays from 5-6pm. Chinese New Year starts on 10th February and continues for 15 days; our group will be celebrating on Monday 18th in the afternoon.

On the preceding two weekends we are hosting Acrobatics workshops. This is also a new type of booking for the church - the first one was last December – but now we have three more booked in before Easter. It came about quite accidentally because I'd bought some foam mats to make a softer floor for a dance workshop I organised here in November and one of the attendees liked it so much she asked if she could move her acrobatics workshop here too. Then one thing led to another and the mats have now earned the church five times what they cost me - which feels like a nice thank you for having been able to use the space for free for the original dance event.

On Valentine's Day, 14th February, we're very pleased to welcome back a group whose connection to the church goes back decades, but hadn't met here for several years: the Temenos Academy. Their lecture on the 14th is on "Shakespeare and Education: Teaching a Sacred Cosmos". It starts at 7pm and tickets are £5 on the door.

Finally, on the first weekend of the month, we have a yoga retreat day organised by Elisa Williams and a Tango Release workshop by Adriana Pegorer. Elisa is an Anglican and her approach to yoga is very spiritual – sharing food together and appreciating nature through meditative walking in the park are integral parts of the retreat. Adriana has been similarly creative in developing Tango as more than just a social dance form – using it as a vehicle for everything from gender activism to disability access (through developing ways of teaching that can include visually impaired people). Her work on the latter resulting in her being asked to be a Paralympic torch-bearer at the London games last year.

Our regular bookings are also all ongoing - so I don't think there's a single day next month we don't have at least two groups in and often there are four or five. We certainly are a busy building this month!

Jenny Moy

One Light Spiritual Gatherings

'Nourishment'

Friday 8th February 2013

6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church



The gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary.

Join with us in healing connection to Spirit.

How will you nourish your spirit this year? Come and enjoy as we gather in healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come help us create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long - with music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none.

Bring your beloved self, your family, children and friends.

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

Small Group Communion



**Sunday 10th February, 10th March, 14th April
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. We hope that a team of volunteers will continue to take turns in leading the services so we can experience different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

10th February – Led by Sue Smith

10th March – Led by David Francis Darling

14th April – Led by Tristan Jovanović

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



Staff and volunteers at *SimpleGifts*: Unitarian Centre for Social Action wish a very "Happy New Year" to our supporters, current and potential, within the LDPA. *SimpleGifts* is a year-old social action initiative created, run and funded by UK Unitarians and Free Christians. Our office is located at the historic Mansford St. Chapel and Mission in East London. We operate the *SimpleGifts Café* every Tuesday afternoon between 3-5:30 p.m. Part literacy programme, part community centre, each afternoon includes a free, nutritious tea, homework help, fun crafts and high-energy games for 30-40 local primary school children and their carers.

Our success means we are eager for volunteers to come and be part of the fun! We encourage visitors and can easily find a place for all talents and abilities. And--no surprise here but it never hurts to ask--we eagerly seek and need your donations to help keep this new enterprise going.

Every donation we receive is doubled by the Bowland Trust — so your money goes twice as far.

Learn more about our programme and how you might get involved at: www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk. You are also welcome to contact us directly: Rev. Rob Gregson, Programme Director (rob@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk or 07411280667) or Ann Howell, Programme Coordinator (07400873541 or ann@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk).

SimpleGifts is run and funded by Unitarians and inspired by our shared liberal religious values. We hope you will consider supporting us!

Rob Gregson and Ann Howell



Leighton Cole from Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel and new friends at the SimpleGifts Café in Bethnal Green, East London.

Sara Groves



We have only recently heard about the death last November of Sara Groves. Sara and her husband Paul were very active members of the congregation in the 1980s and 1990s. Sara, who came originally from Somerset and had been a teacher, was a member of the church committee for many years and edited the newsletter from September 1995 to April 1999. During this period the newsletter was entitled *The Drawbridge*, following a competition for a 'catchy, memorable title', though the name was later changed. Sara put her own stamp on the newsletter and items by her and Paul are included elsewhere. At a national level, she was a member of the General Assembly Carers' Panel from 1988 to 1993, and was especially involved in the production of the Panel's Bereavement Guide that was made available to the wider denomination.

Sara was very interested in photography, and at Christmas often made calendars using her own photos. Paul and Sara were very fond of visiting Italy, and I remember them enthusing particularly about the Italian lakes. Sara was also a church trustee from 1996 to 2000. In recent years we had sadly rather lost touch with her, though efforts were made to try and re-establish contact. Paul, who held a doctorate in economics and had a special interest in Buddhism, had died in 1997. They had married in the Unitarian church in Hull in 1969, and subsequently came to London. Sara asked to be buried at West Huntspill, near Highbridge in Somerset and had expressed the wish that her funeral 'be conducted with as little fuss as possible'.

Howard Hague

'Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Chinese wise man Lao Tzu counseled, *In times of adversity, make energetic progress in the good*. This is still the real work at hand: for each of us to meet the bad in the world with the good in our own hearts. To energetically rouse ourselves out of tired habits and worn-out loyalties and replace them with bigger and broader circles of inclusion.'

Elizabeth Lesser

Some Writings from the Church Newsletter by Sara and Paul Groves

'Bird's Eye View' by Sara Groves

How time runs on! How the seasons change! Nothing stands still for five minutes. It seems that no sooner have we got things nicely settled and ordered into a pattern that is almost right than the season turns and we have to begin again. It's a great temptation to lament the passing years and to try to keep things as they have always been, but it's a great mistake. Nothing stays the same, it can't, the traveller can't bathe in the same stream twice; it's a folly to try. Time passes and when people stand up for us in buses we should accept gratefully and not get angry. We can't grow backwards, no matter how persuasive the advertisements. The hair won't grow on our heads again! The thing we have to do is to gather up what we have been given, and take it to meet the new challenges that face us.

(from the church newsletter *The Drawbridge* for October 1996)

'A Call for Unitarians to Proselytize' by Paul Groves

Let us have a campaign to spread abroad the fact that Unitarianism exists and can provide a service for those who are interested in and attracted to religion, but whose reason or common sense cannot allow them to believe many of the sorts of things traditional churches expect them to. Let us have religion without the baggage of out-dated beliefs from the past. We suggest that the only place where this can be done, and still remain a church, is Unitarianism. There no specific beliefs are laid down but each member chooses what is most relevant to him or her, so that one can have as few or as many doctrines as one wishes.

There is no need to fudge the difficult bits of other churches' doctrines, which people find hard to accept, so as to bring them more into line with the twentieth century. A new beginning can be made. This does not mean to say that our heritage from the past is valueless - it is only by studying other peoples' and other ages' beliefs and views that we can construct our own: but we must be allowed to build our own. Unitarianism offers a haven and a centre in which each person's point of view can grow, in collaboration and in discussion with other people. Like the views of the past we need to know the views of our contemporaries. That is one of the main reasons why we need a church at all, and why the congregations of Unitarian churches are so closely knit. Our views have an emotional basis, perhaps more than a rational one.

Let us proclaim all this and surely people will realise that Unitarianism has something special to offer: namely a church without a dogma. Many who take advantage of that offer have a common attachment to the moral teachings of Jesus Christ.

(from the church newsletter for April 1989)

Thanks to Howard Hague for finding these articles in the archive.

Wishes for the World

Our Christmas tree this year was decorated with coloured labels filled in at our Carol Service with our wishes for the world. Some of those wishes are printed below. Thanks to everybody who helped to make our Christmas celebrations such a success – by joining in, bringing food to share, putting up decorations, singing enthusiastically, reading in one of the services. Christmas is a particularly good time to get involved with worship but do feel free to make suggestions at any time of year. Do you have a favourite hymn or carol, a reading you would like us to hear or a possible theme for worship? Let us know.

Rev. Sarah Tinker (with photos by Annie Fowler)



That love finds each and every one of us.

I wish for good health, good love, good work, good friends and good laughter.

I long for humanity to 'wake up' and realise our huge creative potential and to start working solely for the good of all.
We could do it!

Peace within myself, peace in the world, peace in my family.

Unfolding truth.

I wish we could remember and be there for each other, not only at this Christmas time, but all year through.

For all to be well.

That everyone has a warm bed and comfort over Christmas time and the rest of the year.

For love and inclusion of all older people whether living alone or with another.

I wish for all children to be happy and loved.

My wish is love to all and joy in the world.

Compassion for others and myself.

Comfort for people who are separated or alone.

Peace on earth and goodwill to all.

That peace should break out all over the world and in our hearts.

A new beginning. I wish for a day of peace with no massacres announced on Sky News, CNN or BBC.

"O hush the noise, all ye of strife, and hear the angel sing!"

Flourishing for all of us.

I wish for love and healing of all dysfunctions in families. May all be joyful, healthy and happy.

Joy and ease.

Peace in our hearts and in the world. There are enough resources in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.

A fresh start in the New Year for all those who need it.

Celebrate the darkness.
The light will return.

Company for those alone this Christmas.

Enjoy, enjoy.

That I may find my path in life.

Let silent contemplation be our offering.

Peace and happiness in all the world. Let's all have a ding-dong-merrily on high.

The wish for 21st December is for us to realise that the world 'as we know it' is ending, not that it is the end of the world! There is a perceptible shift happening.

May song fill our lives more freely. Let us sing with the joy of life. So let it be.

Worldwide peace.

Prayers for President Obama too have the courage to enforce strong gun control laws in the USA.

A prayer for peace.

Wishing for the world community – loving kindness, unity – no more social isolation, inner peace.

For this community to continue to flourish in the great work being done here.

For powerless people to find the power to change.

Tolerance and reconciliation to all people.

Wishing happiness to my family in 2013.

May this potent time at the end of 2012 truly mark a change in consciousness to that of love.

'Life Ending'

Reflections by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Jeannene Powell – 13th January 2013

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

Story: This story – known as 'The Appointment in Samarra' – is an ancient one, but was re-told by Somerset Maugham. It deals with what is considered by some to be the essential human predicament – how shall we live, knowing we must die – such awareness being a peculiarly human trait.

A merchant in Baghdad sends his favourite servant to the marketplace for provisions. Shortly, the servant comes home white and trembling and tells him that in the marketplace he was jostled by a woman, whom he recognized as Death, and she made a threatening gesture. Borrowing the merchant's fastest horse, he flees at top speed to Samarra, a distance of some 70 miles, where he believes Death will not find him. The merchant then goes to the marketplace and finds Death, and asks why she made the threatening gesture at his beloved servant. She replies, "That was not a threatening gesture, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra." (*adapted from a version found on Wikipedia*)

Some Thoughts from Jeannene Powell:

My reflections on my first impressions and time working at a hospice.

People come to the hospice for all sorts of reasons, not only to live out their last few days on Earth.

When I first came to the hospice, it was to have my interview for a clinical volunteer role. A role I started after going through their 3 month training programme. I remember the first time I went to St Christopher's Hospice. Even though I'd looked at pictures on their website, I didn't know exactly what to expect, but somewhere in the back of my mind, the childhood memories of visiting old relatives in nursing homes came to mind - the lifeless, stuffy air - darkened rooms and heavy atmosphere. This, coupled with thoughts of hospital visits and the smells associated there, were what I imagined I'd find. To say that I was nervous on my way to the interview is an understatement!

What I found, however, then and subsequently, is a bright, colourful and vibrant place with a peaceful atmosphere. The walls are adorned with the artwork and quilting projects of patients and they're not all in blacks and greys, but pinks, yellows, violets etc. The Anniversary Centre, where I'm based once a week is often abuzz with patients, visitors and staff. People waiting for appointments and people attending groups. The Wards, one of which I'm also based weekly, are spacious and roomy where people have their own privacy. Hygiene is something that's attended to scrupulously there, as it is throughout the hospice, and needs to be, but there's no "hospital disinfectant" smell.



For many on the wards, they are there temporarily, maybe having their pain medication adjusted or experiencing an extra bout of sickness before returning home. People don't just "come to the hospice to die", which is what the general mainstream thinking is, and I guess is what I wrongly thought when I first went.

For some both on the ward and in the Anniversary Centre, who've been going to the Hospice over many years, the underlying tone is that this is a place where life has ended for others, and the associated thoughts, feelings and related subjects are around. There are tears shed, uncertainties shared, fears faced and wonderings about what happens next - as both a practical and religious/philosophical question.

I've found the hospice to be a place where both laughter and sadness, grief and joy co-exist in the same room. Where people are able to talk and plan their wishes and wants about the end of their own life and at the same time have the life that they are still living affirmed and, for some, lived more fully than in their previous decades.

To me, it's a special kind of place. A very special and welcoming environment.

Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of St Christopher's, said, "*You matter because you are you and you matter to the last moment of your life.*" This philosophy and belief permeates through everything they do and the holistic model of care they provide. From the movement and art courses they run to their choir and regular concerts held - sometimes for, but also by the patients.

Also the hospice has a "pilgrim room" as a quiet room where people can light candles or write messages in a book of remembrance for a loved one who's died. This and other forms of Pastoral care are all part of their holistic approach.

For me, volunteering at St Christopher's has shown me that hospices aren't the scary places that I imagined they were, but a place where death is acknowledged in its natural place side by side with life and where people are valued no matter how near or far from the end of their life they are.

Jeannene Powell

‘Life Ending’ (continued) - Some Thoughts from Rev. Sarah Tinker

The story we heard earlier on about the servant who had an appointment with death and had borrowed his master's fastest horse in order to escape that appointment – and yet in his seeming escape was racing only towards his end – that's a story that has stayed with me ever since I first heard it. That's perhaps because it's something I always need reminding of – that we are here on earth but a short time and that, as Forrest Church so eloquently put it in our reading earlier, by being alive we earn the ‘privilege of dying’.

Yet here in the 21st century western world, death has become a private matter, hidden from public view. We have none of the cremations by the riverside of some cultures, nor the almost exuberant public grieving seen in some lands. Improvements in health care have removed from our society the epidemics of previous centuries – when every household would have been visited by death – and far too often would have witnessed the deaths of young children, taken in epidemics such as smallpox and cholera. Consider these statistics taken from a government website:

‘Life expectancy at birth’ estimates indicate how long, on average, an individual born today, could expect to live, if current mortality rates at different ages, applied throughout their life.

There has been a remarkable increase in life expectancy in the United Kingdom over the past century. In 1901 females could expect to live to 49, and men to 45. This compares to the current England & Wales average of 81 years for women and 77 years for men.

Increases in longevity have been accompanied by substantial changes in the main causes of death in the UK, with chronic illnesses such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, generally affecting older age groups, replacing infectious and respiratory diseases as the major killers.

In 1901, almost 40% of deaths occurred amongst those aged under 5. In 1999 less than 1% of deaths were under the age of 5.

The dramatic improvements in life expectancy in this country over recent decades have been brought about through a combination of social and economic policies, improved standards of living, better housing, education and nutrition, preventative approaches to public health, advances in screening, diagnosis, medical treatment and technology, and better access to care.

Our longer lives bring new issues to the fore for society to consider. As a Unitarian congregation we're affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian churches – our GA as it's affectionately known. Each April we hold our annual meetings and as part of those meetings we discuss motions proposed by congregations such as ours. One such motion last year called for us to support the right of terminally ill people to seek assistance to end their lives if they so wished – assisted dying as it is often called.

After a full debate, the meeting decided to refer the motion back to our congregations for further consideration – recognising that we all needed more time to study and understand the issues raised. A very useful discussion pack was published – we have a copy to lend in the library and it's also available to read online.

Like many matters in life I think this is one where the deeper we look into it the more we find to explore. And that has certainly been the case for me in the last few weeks as I've been talking to people about this issue of life's ending. And I chose that title of ‘life ending’ with some care because it's become increasingly apparent to me that whilst death for some people is an understandably frightening subject, for most of us it is the process of moving towards death that is our greatest concern – the quality of our living when our health or cognition is impaired. As we have heard from Jeannene, there is much to be impressed with in our hospice movement in this country. Yet such care is available only to some. Too often our hospital teams remain far too committed to prolonging life – there needs to be greater awareness of the existence of palliative care teams that are orientated to easing the end of life rather than keeping a patient alive at whatever cost – be that financial or, far more importantly, the cost to the individual in terms of dignity and physical comfort.

Those who know about this stage of life always remind me of the value of what used to be called living wills – now known as advance directives, where we as individuals can make clear what level of treatment we want in our last days, when we quite possibly will no longer be able to articulate our needs for ourselves. There is much other practical work for our society to do on the quality of care we offer our elders; an urgent requirement for greater clarity of funding for older people's care, an understanding that our ability to prolong life may not always seem like a gift to those who endure loss of self through conditions such as dementia, nor for their loved ones.

When we consider the issue of assisted dying, we will all have our own views and it remains to be seen whether or not our next Annual Meetings will attempt to reach a consensus on this matter. It is certainly worth thinking and talking about and I recommend this study pack to you. But for me that issue is merely a stepping stone to something deeper. We need I think to articulate for ourselves our ideas of life and death. We need a theology that works for us. What are we here for? What happens when we die? Some of us have clear and comforting theologies that help us accept the changing seasons of our lives with relative peace. Others have chosen a path of not knowing, of living with uncertainty. Yet that path can also hold much comfort as we consider the great mystery of all that is and imagine ourselves once more part of that unknowing, that swirling star dust of all matter and infinite space. From that perspective, our existence here together at this time and in this place can start to seem quite, quite miraculous. Let me end by celebrating the miracle that is each one of you. Amen.

‘The Church of Tomorrow will not be of uniform doctrine or of identical organization. There will be unity of spirit, but not uniformity of creed or rite or polity. There will be variety, but not intolerance. There will be cooperation for holiness, but not conformity of theological opinion. There will be identity of ethical enthusiasm but diversity of administrations.’

Florence Kollock Crooker (Universalist minister, from ‘The Church of Tomorrow’, 1911)

Avebury Stone Circle



Friday 15th March 2013
Meeting 9.30am at Essex Church

We're organising a visit to Avebury, just as the first signs of spring appear, and would love as many people as possible to come. Nine people have expressed an interest so far. **We would like to hear from you soon if you would like to join us so that we can finalise our transport plans.**

The plan is that we'll be leaving from the church early enough to arrive late morning, when you'll be able to purchase tickets to visit Avebury Manor and Gardens (£6.75) if that's what takes your fancy. Additionally, there's the Alexander Keiller museum (£4.40; English Heritage Members: free) which is made up of two galleries. One with fun interactive things to do and the other displaying artefacts found when the stones were re-erected. Of course there'll be the opportunity to walk around the stone circle and henge itself (which is free) whether in a group or by yourself. This day aims to be flexible enough for people to follow their interests.

For lunch there's the Circle Café which serves a range of homemade organic hot and cold food and hot drinks, or if the weather's warm enough and you fancy bringing your own food, there are great picnic facilities. Our trip to Avebury will not be complete without a visit to the onsite shop. So whether just to look around at the local crafts or to buy a memento of your outing, there'll be time for that before we head home.

We're currently exploring the option of car-pooling to drive to Avebury, with the church covering petrol and parking costs. We've got two volunteer drivers but we may well need more, so if you've got a car and would be prepared to drive to Avebury, please let Jane or Sarah know.

To book a place or/and to offer to drive, please contact Jane by 24th February at jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Jeannene Powell



Sunday Services at Essex Church

**3rd February, 11am –
'Reflecting with God'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Linking with our next small group, this service will consider how we might dig deeper into our ordinary experiences, viewing everyday challenges and delights from a spiritual perspective, and asking where God might be revealed in our daily living. See page 3 of the newsletter for more about this course and register soon (by 3rd February!) if you would like to take part.

**10th February, 11am –
'What about Judas?'**

Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Would Christianity be better off if the institution was able to forgive Judas? We then have to ask ourselves not only what it means to forgive but question the relationship between the divine and the traitor within ourselves. Followed by small-group communion with Sue Smith downstairs in the library.

**17th February, 11am –
'A Beautiful Harmony'**

Service led by Rev. Richard Boeke & Sarah Tinker

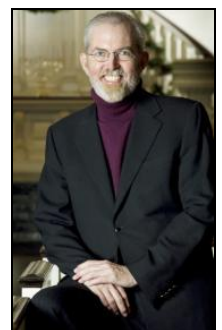
Linking in with the United Nations' Week of Inter-faith Harmony, this service celebrates the valuable work of the IARF - the International Association for Religious Freedom.

**24th February, 11am –
'The Good and the Bad'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The Jewish festival of Purim is a joyous one, with its story of bravery overcoming the evil schemes of Haman, the Persian minister. Our service today will take us deeper into an exploration of its message and ask if it is so easy to separate good from bad.

'If you believe in God, the best thing you can do for yourself is to suspend your belief for a while, because undoubtedly your God is too small and you must grow beyond that God. On the other hand, if you don't believe in God, your very disbelief is a stumbling block. Kick it away and place your faith in something more ennobling than disbelief. Take a flier. Expand your purview. Take a leap of faith.'



Rev. Forrest Church (Unitarian Universalist Minister)