



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: March 2019

What's On...

Sunday 3rd March, 11am-noon
'Holding Grudges'

Led by Jeannene Powell

Wednesday 6th March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 7th March, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'The Hardest Word?' with Jane Blackall

Sunday 10th March, 11am-noon
'Oops!'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10th March, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion

Led by Tristan Jovanović

Wednesday 13th March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 17th March, 11am-noon
'Redemption?'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17th March, 12.30-1.15pm
'Find Your Voice'

Singing Class with Margaret

Sunday 17th March, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 24th March, 11am-noon
'The Unforgivable'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 24th March, 12.45-1.30pm
'Andalusian Memories'

John and Heidi's Book Launch

Sunday 31st March, 11am-noon
'The Forgiveness Project'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 31st March, 12.45-2.30pm
'Could You Be a Reader?'

Worship Workshop

A Date for Your Diary:

Sunday 12th May, 12.30pm

Essex Church AGM

Forgiveness

A Message from our Minister

Peggy Tannant writes: *"Forgiveness is an act of great power but let us not use it to disturb those who are already troubled. No, speak rather of acceptance, for there peace lies. The troubled and the hurt must reach forgiveness in their own time."*

This month's ministry theme at Essex Church is 'forgiveness'. It's a concept that needs to be used with care. We are sometimes told that to forgive wrongs

done to us is psychologically healthy, that we need to 'let go and move on'. But hearing people's stories of their lives and dealing with the effects of wrongs done to me, has left me cautious about forgiveness. I wonder how you respond to it, what part it plays in your life story?

I am inspired by those who find forgiveness in their hearts for those who have wronged them. Dr Martin Luther King Jnr's words sit on my wall as a reminder: *'It is impossible even to begin the act of loving one's enemies without the prior acceptance of the necessity, over and over again, of forgiving those who inflict evil and injury upon us'*. But Dr King goes on to emphasise that only the wronged person can forgive and they must do that only when they are ready. A thoughtlessly expressed view that someone must forgive a wrong done to them can be hugely oppressive for someone who has suffered. Forgiveness, if we are to use that word, has to be the prerogative of the person who has been wronged. Only they can say when the time to forgive is, they cannot be rushed, they are the ones who must go through the inner processing that is necessary for forgiveness to occur within their hearts. Forgiveness needs to take its time and its place, allowing grief and anger, loss and pain to be worked through. Forgiveness does not condone what has occurred and it does not have to involve forgetting. Some events in life cannot be forgotten, should not be forgotten. Some people are seemingly given the task by life to bear witness to wrongdoing so that the world cannot forget the evil of which humanity is capable. And who are we to say that forgiveness is essential for psychological well-being?

It may be that the very word *forgiveness* itself needs to be treated gently and sparingly. It may be a word that cannot take the weight that is placed upon it, better then to speak of acknowledgement of what has occurred, of acceptance and reconciliation. Perhaps then we might truly understand the huge power of loving kindness, in all its many shapes and names to transform life here on earth.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



In this month's newsletter...

* 'Could You be a Reader?' Worship Workshop * Volunteer Coordinators: Can You Help? * Hucklow Summer School 2019 * 'Andalusian Memories' – John and Heidi's Book Launch * London District Annual Meeting in Croydon * Retirement of GA Chief Officer Derek McAuley * Warden's Column: Wi-Fi * Photos from our February Tea Dance * Poems by Brian Ellis * 'Changing Stories, Changing Lives' address by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much more ...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

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



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

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Volunteer Coordinators Needed: Can You Help?

Kensington Unitarians: Stewarding and Coffee Rotas			
	STEWARDED	COFFEE	GREETING
Jan			
6 th	Alice Lambert	Pat Gregory	Michaela von Brinke
13 th	Niall Doherty	Liz Tuckwell	Estelle
20 th	Estelle	Sue Smith	David C
27 th	Juliet Edwards	Maureen Cummings	Rebecca Hope
Feb			
3 rd	Gabby	LIZ T	Maureen
10 th	Susan	PAT GREGORY	Maureen
17 th	Sue	Abby	JOHN N
24 th	Niall D		ANNIE F.
		COFFEE	GREETING
			ROY

We are still looking for a few more reliable people who are at church fairly regularly to form a congregational team of 'Volunteer Coordinators'. Can you help? Jane normally goes round with the rota sheet after the service to sign up prospective volunteers to steward, greet, and make coffee. However, now that Jane is involved in ministry training, she is going to be away a lot more on Sundays and won't be able to keep such a close eye on this. We are hoping to get a small team who are willing to take responsibility for making sure the list gets circulated and updated on Sundays. It needn't be an onerous task, especially if it is shared between a few people, but it could potentially make things run more smoothly. Contact Jane if you could help: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Why did God create the world and fill it with such erratic, unpredictable creatures as we human beings are? One Jewish tradition would have it that God made the world the way it is so that we would have the possibility of being nice to each other. The Talmud teaches that when a person does a good deed when he or she didn't have to, God looks down and smiles and says, "For this moment alone, it was worth creating the world." When we go out of our way to be kind to someone, in large ways or small, our reward is the knowledge that we have redeemed the world.'

Harold S. Kushner

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

- 3rd March: Juliet Edwards
- 10th March: Billy Jackson
- 17th March: Julia Alden
- 24th March: Heidi Ferid
- 31st March: Brian Ellis

Coffee:

- 3rd March: Pat Gregory & John H
- 10th March: Sue Smith
- 17th March: Rebecca Hope
- 24th March: Maureen Cummings
- 31st March: Pat Gregory & John H

Greeting:

- 3rd March: Roy Clark
- 10th March: David Carter
- 17th March: Juliet Edwards
- 24th March: Liz Tuckwell
- 31st March: Marianne Harvey

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

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Could You be a Reader?

Worship Workshop after the Service
on Sunday 31st March, 12.45-2.30pm



We will be holding a short one-off workshop after the service on 31st March (note change of date) for anyone who is interested in – or even just curious about – being involved in services as a reader. The workshop will be suitable for both people who have never done a reading in church before and those who have experience but would like to work on their technique.

This is a great way to get more involved at church so if you'd like to take part please email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to sign up and we'll be distributing some readings in advance so you can have a read through before the workshop.

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 7th March and 4th April, 7-8pm

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



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

LDPA: London District Unitarian Meeting

Saturday 16th March from 2pm

Croydon Unitarian and Free Christian Church
1 The Croydon Flyover, Croydon CR0 1ER



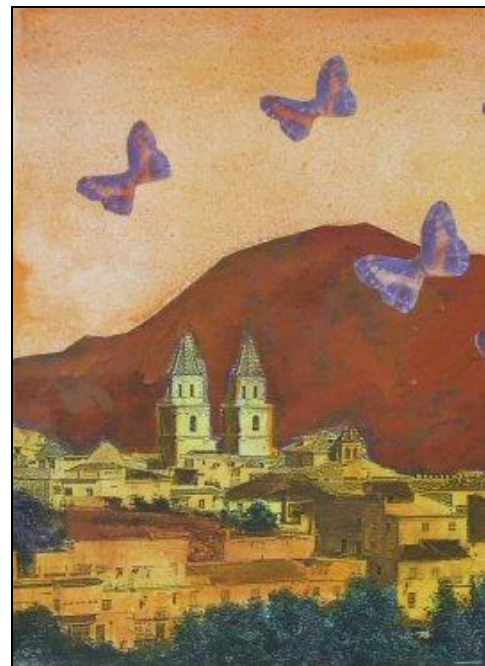
This is an opportunity to support our London and South East District's annual meeting and meet up with other Unitarians. Let me know if you'd like to join me on this afternoon out.

Sarah Tinker

'Andalusian Memories'

Launch of John and Heidi's New Book

Sunday 24th March from 12.45-1.30pm



John Hands and Heidi Ferid will be launching their new book of poems and art, 'Andalusian Memories', after the service on Sunday 24th March. Do bring your lunch and plan to stay!

Thematic Ministry



Bring us your ideas! We three meet regularly as a team to plan services and other activities around our monthly themes and it's always more interesting when other people have made suggestions too. So do have a look through the themes for the year ahead and let us know if there's a particular song, poem or other reading you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering. Or maybe there's a piece you'd like to write for a future newsletter or an outing you'd like to organise. Perhaps you'd like to read in a service or play an instrument or lead a meditation. Let us know. Here is a list of our remaining themes for 2019: Forgiveness and Redemption (March); Great Lives (April); Relating and Relationships (May); Coping and Flourishing (June); Curiosity and Wonder (July); Hopes and Dreams (August); Moving On and Staying Put (September); Religious Life (October); Time and Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December). Here are some ways to explore this month's theme of 'forgiveness and redemption':

- Sarah York tells us that 'Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that there is no human being "who does not carry a treasure in the soul." . . . The Quakers call it the divine light within every person. If we cannot see any sign of it, then we are called upon to offer the most sacred kind of love. In so doing, we may not be able to redeem them, but we redeem ourselves from hatred. Love your enemy. Love your enemy not because it redeems your enemy, but because it redeems you'. This is not an easy task and can only be embarked upon when you are ready to do so. But if it does feel like the right time, make a list of your enemies, those you hate, fear, despise, are angry with – perhaps with just cause. Can you find love for them in your heart, despite their wrongdoings?
- Choose an aspect of your life that you feel ready to forgive yourself for this month: some character flaw, some particular episode for which you feel ashamed perhaps, a wrong you committed, some hidden meanness of spirit in you. Choose just one aspect of your life and repeatedly use a suitable statement in writing, in your own thoughts or in conversation with a friend stating that you forgive yourself. Find a wording that works for you:

'Even though I stole that coat, I still love and approve of myself. I forgive myself for being mean towards my sister when we were young.'

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

WE ARE AT THE TIPPING POINT...

ONE WORLD LONDON '19

Award-winning songwriter Helen Yeomans brings her acclaimed piece of choral theatre to London. Featuring fresh, original music interwoven with spoken word to illuminate the crossroads at which we stand today.

FEATURING: THE LONDON ONE WORLD CHOIR, THE NEW NYC CHOIR AND SPOKEN WORD ARTISTRY

"One of the most moving musical events I have ever experienced"

SUN 14th APRIL, THE RITZY
SAT 27th APRIL, RICH MIX
SAT 11th MAY, CONWAY HALL

Info & tickets, visit:

www.helenyeomans.co.uk @OneWorldLondon

One World London '19 Featuring our own Sonya Leite

'Award-winning songwriter Helen Yeomans brings her acclaimed piece of choral theatre to London. Featuring fresh, original music interwoven with spoken word to illuminate the crossroads at which we stand today.'

I am singing in these three performance venues and would love your support or positive vibes sent on the days.

This an amazing choral theatre concert and all the music is composed by Helen Yeoman who premiered this work last year in Leeds. We have sold out at our first venue The Ritzy in Brixton in 4 days!!

Only Rich Mix in Shoreditch and Conway Hall in Holborn are left now. Please either go to the website on the flyer (www.helenyeomans.co.uk) or direct to venues for tickets.

A range of music styles including original works from 3 modern Beat Poets Vanessa Kisuule, Cheryl Moskowitz and Luke Miller.

Hope to see you there.

Sonya Leite

OneLight Gathering

Friday 8th March 6.45 for 7pm-8.30pm
Monthly Here at Essex Church



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

www.onelightgathering.co.uk

London Playback Theatre



Friday 17th May, 7.30pm

'Relating and Relationships'

Please Note: the previously-advertised March event has now been cancelled.

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

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

Hucklow Summer School 2019 For Personal and Leadership Development

'Theology in the Flesh'

How Might our Embodied Experience Shape
our Answers to Life's Ultimate Questions?



17th - 24th August 2019 at the Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Theme Speakers: Winnie Gordon, Eleanor Chiari,
Robin Hanford, Jen Hazel, Bob Janis-Dillon

Engagement Group Facilitators:

John Harley and Mark Stewart
Sheena Gabriel and Catherine Coyne
Sarah Tinker and Danny Crosby
Celia Cartwright and Sue Woolley

Children and Young People's Leaders:

Claire Maddocks and Jim Blair

See the website to download an application form and find out more about what's on offer or speak to Jane Blackall for more information:

www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk

An Easter Date for your Diary: Good Friday Gathering

Friday 19th April, 12.45 for 1pm to 2pm



An opportunity for reflection: with music, poetry and stillness to accompany the Gospel narratives of Jesus' death.

Photographs from our February Tea Dance

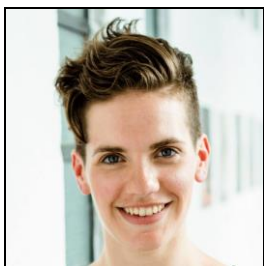
Latin, Ballroom and Line Dance for All!

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



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

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



A Message from Rachel Sparks:

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

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

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

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



Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE)



It was a treat to spend a sunny February weekend in Worthing's Chatsworth Hotel for the London District's FUSE weekend – a Festival of Unitarianism in the South East. Kensington Unitarians had a particularly good turn out this year - with Eliz Beel, Jane Blackall, Jim Blair, Mark Bowen, Roy Clark, Carole Grace, Jeannene Powell and Liz Tuckwell attending.

As always, it was great to see friends from around the country and catch up on news. The GA's President, Joan Cook, a member of Edinburgh Unitarians, came along. And a presentation was made to the GA's Chief Officer Derek McAuley, who is retiring in April.

I led a meditative walk along the pebbly beach and people enjoyed this quotation from Annie Morrow Lindbergh: *'Perhaps this is the most important thing for me to take back from beach-living: simply the memory that each cycle of the tide is valid; each cycle of the wave is valid; each cycle of a relationship is valid. And my shells? I can sweep them all into my pocket. They are only there to remind me that the sea recedes and returns eternally.'* We spoke of our memories of times spent on beaches and asked what messages the sea might have for us on this weekend.

Look out for details of next year's FUSE weekend and a special thank you to Harold Lorenzelli for taking the service when some of us were away.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



London Underground Piccadilly Line

journeying dawn to dawn
(Life Line)

about twenty seven thousand times,
I ride Acton Town to Hammersmith
(Piccadilly Line)

nine thousand times or so.

(that's every third day of my life).

but it's not tedious;
I find satisfaction
in the perfect run,
ideal speed giving
the smoothest ride,
sounds of motion singing,
blurring passing suburbs
into a scenic trance
of transcendent commuting,
to nirvana in the Hammersmith
bus and tube interchange.

Brian Ellis

A Date for your Diary: Outing to BedZED Eco-Village

**Friday 12th July in Beddington
(booking deadline 31st March)**



You are invited to join an outing on Friday 12th July to BedZED (Beddington Zero Energy Development) in South London Zone 4, the UK's first large-scale eco-village – with optional lunch and walk including Beddington Farmlands Nature Reserve.

This is an initiative of St James's Piccadilly Eco Group but others including Kensington Unitarians are welcome. The 1.5 hour bespoke tour of BedZED will cost £24 full price or £18 concessions (students, pensioners and those on benefits). The last date for booking and payment is Sunday 31st March. For further details contact me after the Sunday service (except 24 Feb) or on 07952 578524.

David Carter



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 17th March, 21st April 2019**

Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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

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

Retirement of GA Chief Officer, Derek McAuley



Derek McAuley is retiring from his post of Chief Officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches on 30th April 2019. Derek gave over a year's advance notice to enable the EC to undertake a thorough review and recruitment process, following which Liz Slade was selected as the next Chief Officer. There will be a six-week handover period with Liz Slade, Chief Officer designate, when Derek will share his extensive knowledge and experience of the denomination and its wider connections.

Derek has been Chief Officer for over nine years. During this time he has worked alongside four Executive Committee Convenors and numerous Executive Committee members. He has been a visible ambassador for the General Assembly making alliances with leaders of many other faiths. A notable achievement was campaigning and working with The Quakers and other concerned parties to lobby the Westminster Parliament for Equal Marriage. Internally he has improved and streamlined the General Assembly governance processes, and built a strong team of committed staff. Derek retires knowing he has been instrumental in leaving the General Assembly in good shape.

The General Assembly President and the Executive Committee invite you to show your appreciation of Derek's work by contributing to a Testimonial Fund, which will be presented to him at the General Assembly Meetings on Thursday 18th April 2019.

Please send cheques by Monday 1st April 2019 made out to "The General Assembly of Unitarian & FCC" with 'Derek McAuley Testimonial' written on the back of the cheque, to Unitarian Headquarters, Essex Hall, 1 Essex Street, LONDON, WC2R 3HY. If you would like a remittance acknowledgement email, please also write your email address on the back of the cheque.

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



'St Michael Steiner School Class Holiday' Collection on Sunday 24th March

Pat Alexander is fundraising to take her class on a week's trip to an eco-village in Spain this summer and they will be grateful for all the support we can give, especially for youngsters whose families may find the costs a struggle. Pat will tell us more about Steiner Education in our service on 24th March.

Website: stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk/our-ethos

Recent Charity Collections:

Nov 25th – Toilet Twinning – £169.28 + £726

December 16th – Send a Child to Hucklow – £271.60

January 27th – Hope Not Hate – £193.98

'God is first and foremost a lover of justice... God declares, "I will surely hear their cry... For I am compassionate" (Exodus 22:23, 27). Divine compassion undergirds the divine love of justice just as human compassion undergirds the prophetic love of justice. The premier prophetic language is the language of cries and tears because human hurt and misery give rise to visions of justice and deeds of compassion. For the prophetic tradition, the cries and tears of an oppressed people signify an alternative to oppression and symbolise an allegiance to a God who requires human deeds that address these cries and tears.'

Cornel West

'Alienation is one manifestation of the spiritual crisis in society; the deprivation of meaning and purpose in every aspect of daily life. So deep is the crisis that we are no longer able to recognize it — it seems to be built in to the structure of "reality," a basic fact about the way things are. Much of what we call "pathology" in our society is a response to that deprivation, from crime to drugs and alcohol — from hooliganism at sports events and rock concerts to reactionary nationalism, from racism to xenophobia to homophobia, to all the hostility directed at people who are different... But we should not deny the reality that a great deal of what the dominant society considers inexplicable behaviour is often an irrational response to a quite real desperation people feel in their lives, rooted in a desire to overcome the terrible feeling that their own lives are meaningless and empty and that the world feels lonely and pointless.'

Michael Lerner

Church Committee News



After the marathon team effort lifting the piano up on to the 'stage' area, we've decided to leave the piano up there for a few months to see if we like it. The sound is apparently better and various user groups are glad to have more free floor space. But access to the cupboards is trickier and some people aren't sure about the piano's position. It encouraged us to say farewell to the rather tired 'altar' that was losing its veneer. We'll be interested to hear everyone's thoughts about this and any other matter to do with the church. You may have a great idea we've never thought of.

We're particularly keen to hear your good ideas of ways to improve the workload for volunteers when we have bring and share lunches. The hard graft often seems to fall on one or two pairs of shoulders and it would be good to spread the work and maybe create some easier systems in the kitchen.

The flooring company who renovated our parquet floors just before Christmas had some problems with the finish in the hall but came back in February to complete the work.

The committee expressed gratitude to Brian Ellis who beavered away painting the hall between Christmas and New Year, along with the many other jobs that he manages to sort out for us — blocking mouse holes, tidying sheds, trips to the tip. We're very lucky to have someone who can tackle such tasks — and keep smiling! Thanks too to Jane for completing the new photo board for the foyer, so we can check people's names and faces. Thank you also to Heidi Ferid who has created a simple loose leaf folder of remembrance for us to place photos and memories in.

The next committee meeting is on Thursday 28th February. Do let a member of staff or a committee member know if there are matters you would like us to discuss.

LONDON Heart Meditation



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

Beginners Course in Heart Meditation

Classes Held on Various Tuesdays

Next: 5th and 19th March from 6.30-7.30pm

Downstairs in the Library Here at Essex Church

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

Beverley Eve

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

For more information visit: www.heartmeditation.eu

Inclusive Communion

Sunday 10th March, 12.30-1.00pm



Once every few months 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. Tristan Jovanović will be leading communion in March. If you would like to find out more about these services then please speak to Jane Blackall.

A Few Tulips



she shared
the flowers;
take these,
a reminder.

of rare words
gifted quietly;
interrupted,
unfinished.

spring colours
soon fading;
white vase
put away.

Brian Ellis

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 17th March and 14th April
(please note irregular date in April due to Easter)
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church



Margaret has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound.

Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and sessions are designed for all, whatever your experience or ability.

General Assembly Annual Meetings

Seeking a Congregational Delegate

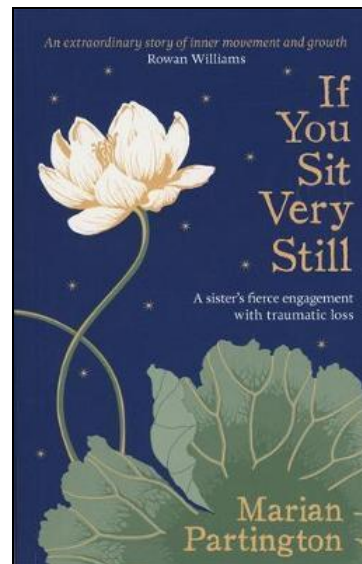


**April 16th - 18th 2019 at the
Birmingham Hilton Metropole
(bookings close on 19th March)**

We still have space for one other person to be our official delegate at these meetings. So do get in touch speedily if this interests you. It's certainly a good way to get a sense of our wider Unitarian movement. There are also remarkably generous 90% discounts available for anyone who is coming for the first time or is under the age of 39 – but the discounts can't be used by official delegates. There'll be other Kensington Unitarians there and you'll have two nights staying in a 'luxury' hotel, complete with swimming pool and sauna. Let me know if you want a booking form or more information.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In the Church Library:



Back in 2012 we hosted the Forgiveness Project exhibition at Essex Church. One of our speakers was Marion Partington and copies of her book *If You Sit Very Still* are available to borrow from the church library. This powerful and poetic work tells of the disappearance of Marion's sister Lucy and the discovery 21 years later that she had been murdered. The book tells of Marion's own journey of healing and is a testament to her sister's life and light. Inevitably not an 'easy read', this book explores the human spirit's ability to transcend loss, cruelty and despair and find peace and understanding.

'Changing Stories, Changing Lives'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From the service on Sunday 3rd February

This is the first Sunday for us to consider our ministry theme of story and imagination. And as is often the case with these subjects we choose, today's address, with its title of 'Changing Stories, Changing Lives' comes with the usual disappointment warning. I'd like to tell you cheerily that you can be whatever you want to be, do whatever you choose in life, but looking round at us lot this morning I think it could safely be said that none of us need pin our hopes on becoming astronauts or rock stars or deep sea divers.

In next week's service Jeannene and I will be telling some spiritual teaching stories that have made a difference in our lives and one of mine you'll probably have heard me tell many times before, it has the refrain 'You never know' and indeed we don't ever know. So if one of you ends up in space looking down on the rest of us, you're perfectly entitled to shout 'I told you I'd do it Sarah'.

I think most of us here today have lived enough of life to know that there are some circumstances in life that just happen, we have little or no control over them, and all we can do is go with what is, to grit our teeth and endure – perhaps with psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's words to strengthen us:

'Everything can be taken from a person but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.'

This ability to create inner realities has been an important realisation in life for me – I wonder if it has for you too? There are times in my life when I've perhaps felt quite rightly very sorry for myself – times of illness or relationship troubles, times when a hoped for outcome didn't happen. Yet in all those times there's come a moment where I've woken up to another reality, to a possibility that this could be different, that a different story could be told. That's why I wanted the two paradoxical quotes on the front of today's order of service – Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron reminding us *'There are no true stories; we are making up every one of them'*.

And Christina Baldwin, who has worked extensively to develop the practice of journal writing as a spiritual practice, telling us that *'There are only true stories. We are discovering the truth in them'*.

They're both useful takes on this human endeavour of creating our own life stories. It's healthy to remember that we interpret what happens to us and make a story about it. Yet we could create a very different interpretation and it could be equally true and perhaps more helpful. How often have we accompanied a friend through the break-up of a relationship where the first story – *I've been abandoned, this person doesn't love me, life is not worth living*, has shifted to another perspective – *I'm better off without so and so. They were no good for me*.

It's also healthy to remember that we contain multitudes of stories, multitudes of potentialities, and part of our journey in life is to discover and explore the many truths that make a human life.

So what we're considering here is the framing of our individual and collective experiences into a narrative, into a story with a narrative arc to it. Though it's worth remembering that not all of us experience life in this way. Some have a far more 'life exists in this

present moment' kind of take on life; some people are very aware of any sense of a narrative as an illusion, a construct that helps us create an individual identity for ourselves, an identity that then appears as far more fixed than it perhaps needs to be.

That's partly what we're doing when we hear ourselves stating our preferences and opinions. We're proclaiming to ourselves – *ah this must be who I am – I'm the one who doesn't like...* (fill in the gap), *I'm the one who can or can't do...* etc, *I'm the one who's always been good at... but I've never been able to ...*

As we work our way through our lives we may come to realise how some aspects of our identity have been created for us by our families or our cultures – bringing those externally forged aspects of our inner identity into awareness is an important aspect of the task of becoming ourselves, of individuation. In our society, for example, we are living through an exciting exploration of what gender identities mean or don't mean. And here with Kensington Unitarians you can be assured of a warm welcome if you want to come to church dressed as a fairy in a pink tutu or in a rugged lumberjack outfit. I hope we will greet you as the unique individual that you are.

And I hope here you'll have chance to tell the story of your changing life to others and have others help you explore places where you feel stuck. On today's hymn sheet there are some suggestions of ways we might explore telling the stories of our lives – the first two are taken from creative writing workshops – and this idea of encouraging one another to write autobiographically is one we'll be coming back to later in February.

Varied Ways of Telling the Story of Our Lives:

.... In six words, maybe like Caesar's *'I came, I saw, I conquered'* or maybe not!

....In one sentence

The third suggestion is from a course I attended many years ago now where in a pair we repeatedly told each other the story of our life and used different voices and different emotional tones, from high drama to newsreader reporting style. What stays with me from that experience is the sense that one life can look very different from different points of view – we can be both victim and hero, we can be both privileged and hard done by. What's useful is to become aware of the interpretations we bring to our narrative – and the realisation that some interpretations strengthen us whilst others are weakening.

....In two contradictory, paradoxical moods

....In a movement of the body

....In a song or series of songs

Earlier on we heard some of the many meanings of this weekend's festivals of Imbolc, of St Bridget's Day and of Candlemas. I see these connected festivals as layers of storytelling, all inter-weaving, bringing in new threads, the old stories blending with the new, creating something fresh yet with roots in the past. Maybe that's what we're doing when we tell one another the stories of our lives, creating and re-creating as we move through life. And in the month ahead I look forward to hearing what life looks like from your perspective, and to helping one another in the creation of ever-more empowering stories of our individual and collective lives. Amen.

Closing Blessing: Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes: *'I hope you will go out and let stories happen to you, and that you will work them, water them with your blood and tears and your laughter till they bloom, till you yourself burst into bloom.'* In the week ahead may the stories we tell about ourselves and others be empowering, affirming and filled with love, a love that holds you tenderly through all life's adventures. Amen, go well and blessed be.

Services at Essex Church in March



Sunday 3rd March, 11am 'Holding Grudges'

Service led by Jeannene Powell

To start this month's theme of 'Forgiveness and Redemption' we'll examine the topic of holding grudges, and in what ways we feel it serves us and how it hinders us.

Sunday 10th March, 11am 'Oops!'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In a world where we all make mistakes, let's nurture gracious gifts of self-forgiveness, along with understanding for the blunders of others.

Sunday 17th March, 11am 'Redemption?'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From its place in Christian theology to its wider meaning of being saved by the actions of others, redemption is a powerful concept. Who and what 'saves' you?

Sunday 24th March, 11am 'The Unforgiveable'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Some behaviours might be considered unforgiveable. How shall we respond to them?

Sunday 31st March, 11am 'The Forgiveness Project'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Hear more of a life changing project that works with personal narratives, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Warden's Column



The most observant among you may have noticed a small glowing blue circle has recently appeared on the back wall of the church (above the hymn book cupboard). No need to be alarmed - it is not a piece of Pentagon surveillance equipment - nor a miniature alien spacecraft. It is in fact a Ubiquiti UniFi AP AC Pro Access Point - aka a Wi-Fi booster.

We increasingly get requests from user groups for broadband access, but unfortunately, unless you stand right outside the office door, reception is at best intermittent & not really sufficient to stream video for example. The problem came to a head at the beginning of the year, when Cypher Coders - a school holiday camp who met here for the whole of last summer - moved a 3 day January booking elsewhere because it required a better Wi-Fi signal.

We therefore took the plunge and contacted a local firm - Superlative Telecom - about getting an Ethernet extension to the ground floor. The difficulty is that the same concrete slab floor which prevents the signal coming up from the office, was also a serious barrier to getting a wire through. It completely defeated the engineer on his first visit, with his usual drill - but luckily he persevered and came back with something heavy duty enough to get through.

So here's your challenge - if you've nothing better to do on Sunday morning - start at the blue circle and trace all the way back to where the cable comes up through the floor from the office. It's a surprisingly complex path, but Simon made every effort to keep the wiring as unobtrusive as possible, so hopefully the result is not too unsightly.

In any case, good internet access is becoming as necessary a feature of space for hire as light and heating so we needed to keep up with that. Maybe eventually it might even have congregational benefits - if you can't make it to church on Sunday there might be the option of watching a live stream on YouTube someday, rather than waiting for the podcast!

Jenny Moy

Essex Church Membership and Contact Forms

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