



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2010

What's On in August/September:

Sunday 1st August, 11am
"Portable Spirituality"
Led by Kate Buchanan

Sunday 1st August, 12.30pm
Youngsters' Social
Lunch at the Mall Tavern

Saturday 7th August, 10.00am
Walking Group: Grand Union Canal and Horsenden Hill
Meet at Greenford Station

Sunday 8th August, 11am
"Identity"
Led by Juliet Edwards

Sunday 8th August, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique
Class led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 8th August, 5.00-6.30pm
Songs and Silence for the Soul: Chanting and Stillness

Sunday 15th August, 11am
"Stories of Our Communities"
Led by Rev. Joy Croft and Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 17th August, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group:
'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Thursday 19th August, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE:
'Reading Sacred Texts'

Sunday 22nd August, 11am
"Slowing Down, Taking it Easy"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 22nd August, 1-3pm
Workshop: 'Spiritual Paths to help Deal with Stress'
Led by Rev Sarah Tinker and Arthur Krebbers

Sunday 29th August, 11am
"The Bible: Tackling the Tricky Bits"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 31st August, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:
'The Tipping Point' by Malcolm Gladwell

...CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

A Message from our Minister: Voyages of Discovery

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." ~ Marcel Proust

Here we are again – the two-month issue of the church newsletter, heralding a summer holiday time. Yet probably most people in our congregation will not be going away and may therefore know one of London's secrets, that this can be a great capital city in which to spend the summer. There are so many free events to enjoy.



Those in the know are this year recommending jazz in Canary Wharf and the scintillating array of Brazilian themed events on the Southbank. There are also brass bands to hear playing in some of the Royal Parks, including every August Sunday afternoon in nearby Kensington Gardens. The new London Cycle Hire scheme will soon have bikes to hire just a few moments away from Essex Church. The Wellcome Collection is hosting a superb exhibition called 'Skin', which explores what the curators describe as the 'largest and perhaps most over-looked human organ'. If ping pong takes your fancy, there are free table tennis tables appearing around the capital this month, and you can find them at the Serpentine Gallery's Summer Pavilion along with chess boards.

But whether we are travelling far afield or simply exploring our local parks and museums there are spiritual teachings that can guide us along the way. It's good to remember that there is always more to learn about the world, about one another and about ourselves. Being open to 'not knowing', to being the learner or the newcomer, is a spiritually refreshing place to inhabit. To be still curious – in a long term relationship, in a town or country we think we know well, in a body and a mind we have inhabited all our lives – is a challenge. But it brings rewards. Going on holiday, travelling away from home, is one way to shake up our routines and bring fresh energy and new horizons into our lives. But if we travel purely in order to be distracted then we will eventually face one of life's many delicious paradoxes, that in the end we simply face ourselves once more. In that sense there is no escape.

Our ultimate companion on this journey through life is our self and whether we choose an inner or an outer exploration perhaps the best orientation is for us to be prepared to accept that which we discover, with all the gratitude and delight we can muster.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'This I Believe' Course Report * 'How I Came to Essex Church' by Gina Bayley * Social Action Group Update – Blog, Fundraising, and Environmental Volunteering * Spiritual Bookshelf: 'Path Without Destination' recommended by Jo Ridgers * 'Visiting Other Congregations' by Stephanie Saville * News of our Congregation * Summer Building Projects at Church * Poems from John Hands * and more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians meet to share experiences, to learn from each other, to explore our diverse faiths, to welcome spiritual seekers and offer companionship on life's journey.

The community meets for a service each Sunday at 11.00am. The format varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a children's group. Our wide range of activities includes religious education courses and spirituality workshops, meeting for fellowship, engagement groups on a variety of themes, community arts projects, regular chanting and dance sessions, and opportunities for quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

Many other groups share our church building. If you are interested in hiring one of our rooms for your own organisation or event please contact our warden by telephone or email.



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
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Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

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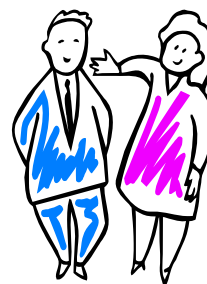
Gathering of the Waters

Sunday 12th September 2010



We will be having our traditional 'Gathering of the Waters' service once again this September. Wherever you travel over the next few months – or even if you are staying at home in London – please remember to collect a small sample of water and bring it back for this service. We will hold a simple ritual on this day to gather everyone in after the holiday season.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

1 st August:	Gina Bayley
8 th August:	Alice Lambert
15 th August:	Maire Collins
22 nd August:	Tristan Prooth
29 th August:	Kathryn Reynolds
5 th September:	Will Lyons
12 th September:	Natasha Drennan
19 th September:	Gina Bayley
26 th September:	Tristan Prooth

Coffee:

1 st August:	Maire Collins
8 th August:	Jane Blackall
15 th August:	Caroline Blair
22 nd August:	Margaret Darling
29 th August:	Christine Joshi
5 th September:	??
12 th September:	Jo Ridgers
19 th September:	Margaret Darling
26 th September:	Sheila Prellberg

Greeting:

1 st August:	Kathryn Reynolds
8 th August:	Sue Smith
15 th August:	Gina Bayley
22 nd August:	Marijke Rigby
29 th August:	Arthur Krebbers
5 th September:	??
12 th September:	Tristan Prooth
19 th September:	Sheila Prellberg
26 th September:	Karl Askew

In recent months, we have been circulating the rota list via email, and this seems to be working well.

Please contact Jane with your email address if you are willing to receive this email once a month.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Summer Building Work and the Power of Prayer

There are only a few weeks in the year when our busy building is quiet enough for us to tackle building projects – early January and August. You may remember our last 'little' building project in January that led to the church being unexpectedly closed for three weeks. That project still has a few problems to be ironed out but nothing daunted we are about to embark on the next building improvement scheme. By early September we hope to have

- New notice boards outside the church
- New shelving and cupboards in the library
- Newly decorated foyer, stairs and library

All of this work is about something larger – our commitment to let the world know of our liberal religious community and to have our building and grounds reflect who we are as a congregation. As religious liberals many of us have an ambivalent attitude to intercessionary prayer. But perhaps we could lay our theological uncertainties to one side this summer and in addition to all the world problems that urgently require intervention, be it human or divine, let us add our building works to the list – that all tasks might go smoothly and be completed on time.

**Sarah, Jenny and Jane
Essex Church staff team**

STOP PRESS: Our new noticeboards have been installed!
We'll have some brand new posters on display soon...



Congregational Lunch

Sunday 12th September 2010



After the 'Gathering the Waters' service on Sunday 12th September we will be holding one of our regular congregational lunches, for which we ask people to bring food to share. There'll be a sign up sheet circulating after services in August and early September for you to jot down what you would like to bring. Do put this date in your diary and come along if you can that day.

Celebrating Five Years of Ministry

We will also be celebrating the fact that our minister will have been with us for five years in September and is still smiling. In fact she so enjoys her work that she's providing the celebratory drinks for our lunch on this day. Fruit cocktails, champagne? Come along and raise a glass.

A Forthcoming Workshop at Essex Church:

Spiritual Paths to Help Deal with Stress

Sunday 22nd August, 1-3pm led by
Arthur Krebbers and Sarah Tinker



All the world's faiths have something to offer when it comes to dealing with the stresses and strains of everyday life. In this course we will find out more about the messages of these faiths and explore ways to put their wise words into action in our lives.

All are welcome. No need to book. Bring a sandwich to eat before the course so that we can start promptly.

'This I Believe'

The 'This I Believe' group has yet to have its last session as the newsletter goes to press but we wanted to show some of our 'work in progress'. If you visit the 'This I Believe' website (www.thisibelieve.org) it invites you to submit your own statement of belief and there are well over 50,000 essays already there for you to read and, in some cases, listen to. These are not dry statements of faith but rather a remarkably eclectic selection of personal stories and personal philosophies. The collection began in the 1950s and the website is now sponsored by Kellogg's, which caused some of us to react!

Here are some extracts from our own work in progress. They are pieces that we wrote as exercises along the way – responding to questions such as:

- What sayings have stayed with me and shaped my life?**
- What have I learnt from life?**
- What is important to me?**
- What are my values and priorities?**

'Learning from Cats'

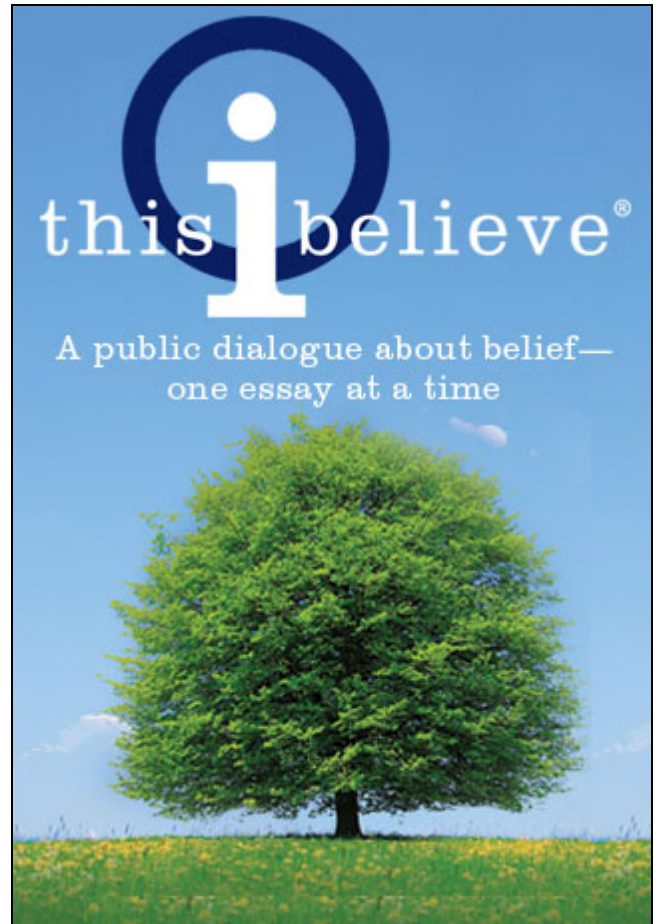
All I need to know I learned from my cats. A joke? Well perhaps. But they are profound creatures. They seem to understand life, love and happiness in a way that most humans do not. And they do not need words. They have a powerful body language and that is enough. Not that I am against words. I like talking and am fairly articulate in several languages, but ultimately words can breed misunderstanding and mistrust. I believe in the power of the eye, in the power of breathing and the power of a smile. All I need to learn I can learn from my cats.

'Learnt in a Library'

Every Saturday afternoon I used to go and help at my local library. I started when I was only 7 and felt so proud to be allowed to walk there on my own, and so thrilled to be shown how to date stamp the books that people wanted to borrow.

Oh, the pleasure of putting books in alphabetical order by author's surname. And books from a very early age represented freedom from me – freedom through knowledge and freedom to escape into other worlds – non-fiction and fiction – another way to order the books.

Through those many afternoons spent in the library I have learnt that order provides a useful counter-balance to life's chaotic nature but that order on its own ceases to be much fun after a while. Libraries are great but they need people in them as well as books.



'Buen Camino'

Earlier this year, I enjoyed a 2 week pilgrimage in northern Spain – part of the Camino de Santiago.

Camino etiquette is such that everyone smiles and says in Spanish "buen camino" (have a good journey) to every single fellow walker they meet. Even if they meet them every day for a month. Every walker replies back "buen camino", some cheerfully, others wearily. Those two words are a powerful unifying force, a simple yet sincere way we acknowledge our fellow pilgrims and wish them well on their way.

I had grown to enjoy both saying and hearing the refrain on the country lanes, in the mountains and in the villages. It tended to fade off as we neared towns and cities. I remember one afternoon after a hot walk through miles of suburbia to reach the centre of Burgos. Three local residents smiled and wished me "buen camino" - one even calling out from the balcony of his 5th floor apartment. I felt immediately welcome in their large bustling city.

Back in London, I try to remember to smile at the supermarket cashier, the bin collector, my fellow tube traveller; today, they are on their personal camino.

(article continues on next page)



"You must understand the whole of life, not just one little part of it. That is why you must read, that is why you must look at the skies, that is why you must sing, and dance, and write poems, and suffer, and understand, for all that is life."

J Krishnamurti

'This I Believe' *(continued)*

In the first 'This I Believe' session we talked about the sayings that we were brought up with and we were moved to hear some people's memories of harsh words and actions meted out to them when young.

Sayings

This is how you moved your lives and ours – from one Coercive adage to another. 'Mind yer manners! Speak when you're spoken to – Put yer 'ands Under the table. Teck yer cap off when you go into Somebody else's 'ouse – did yer 'ear me?'

She never told yer more'n twice – never, just twice, then The third time you got it – yer ears boxed, or your bottom Slapped or belted. No, she never wasted words on you – never.

'Surviving'

I believe that ultimately life is all about surviving until it's your time to die. Surviving so that we can fulfil the potential that is within us, surviving so that we can use the innate gifts we are born with, surviving so that we can best utilise the opportunities we meet along the way.

'Less Is More'

The first thing that springs to mind with regard to the adage "less is more" is in a conversation. When someone wants to tell me something that is important to them they need the space to find their words and tell their story in their own time and in their own way. What I can offer is maybe a prompting here and there but need to resist the temptation to interrupt and ask questions. Few words from me will enable more from them. I can wait for my turn to talk.

My knowledge of this adage comes mainly from trying to manage and recover from living with a debilitating chronic illness. The idea is that if you don't over-tax yourself or you use energy in little bits you won't worsen your symptoms. Therefore you, or rather I, can or are more likely to be able to fulfil planned tasks.

For example, this morning I awoke early and the sunny, blustery day beckoned me outside to prune the roses. Soon I was out there snipping. I took my trusted timer with me, set it for six minutes at a time, sat resting for the first 90 seconds and then got to work for the remaining four and a half minutes. Over the course of the next hour I used time in this way repeatedly and managed to complete the pruning without tiredness. Having written less than the suggested minimum of 350 words, you may find that 'less is more' when you come to reflect on this!

Would you like to have a go at writing your own statement? There are some writing instructions we can give you as well as the exercises we have been following in this course – just leave a message for Sarah in the church office – 020 7221 6514 or info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Heidi, John, Sarah, Rita, Maire and Carolyn

...a forthcoming course here at Essex Church...

Adult RE Course: 'Compassionate Communication'



**Thursday Evenings at Essex Church
9th, 16th, 23rd September, 7th, 14th October**

We have made arrangements for trainers in compassionate communication (or 'non-violent communication') to come to Essex Church and teach a five-session course this autumn.

You may already have read the article I wrote about my own experience of an introductory weekend on this subject, with Jill and Richard Broadbent who will be teaching this course, in the February newsletter. I found the training to be very inspiring and worthwhile and would highly recommend it.

Participants will be encouraged to make a small voluntary donation to help cover the cost of providing this training course. It would be highly beneficial if participants could attend all five of the sessions but this is not compulsory.

What is Compassionate Communication?

A response from Jill and Richard's own website:

"Everyday communication is often characterised by reactivity, misunderstanding and a lack of the connection we long for in relationship.

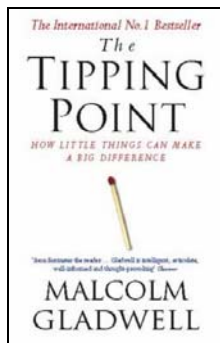
Compassionate Communication is a means of exploring how we make choices in our communication. It supports a greater understanding of how others may hear us and how we may hear others and so provides a pathway to the compassionate and empathic understanding of others and ourselves."

If you are interested in taking part I would very much appreciate it if you would register your interest and put the dates in your diary now as places are limited.

Jane Blackall

Essex Church Reading Group: 75th Meeting in September 2010

‘The Tipping Point’ by Malcolm Gladwell



Tuesday 31st August, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's August session will be based on 'The Tipping Point' by Malcolm Gladwell:

Information from Amazon UK:

"The Tipping Point is the biography of an idea, and the idea is quite simple. It is that many of the problems we face - from crime to teenage delinquency to traffic jams - behave like epidemics. They aren't linear phenomena in the sense that they steadily and predictably change according to the level of effort brought to bear against them. They are capable of sudden and dramatic changes in direction. Years of well-intentioned intervention may have no impact at all, yet the right intervention - at just the right time - can start a cascade of change. Many of the social ills that face us today, in other words, are as inherently volatile as the epidemics that periodically sweep through the human population: little things can cause them to 'tip' at any time and if we want to understand how to confront and solve them we have to understand what those 'Tipping Points' are. In this revolutionary new study, Malcolm Gladwell explores the ramifications of this. Not simply for politicians and policy-makers, his method provides a new way of viewing everyday experience and enables us to develop strategies for everything from raising a child to running a company."

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 and talk about so we tackle a wide variety of material. See our website for more info: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html

‘Howard’s End is on the Landing’ by Susan Hill



Tuesday 28th September, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's September session will be based on 'Howard's End is on the Landing' by Susan Hill. This was chosen by Juliet Edwards. This will be the 75th meeting of the reading group and we are sure to have cake and treats to celebrate this special milestone.

Information from Amazon UK:

"Early one autumn afternoon in pursuit of an elusive book on her shelves, Susan Hill encountered dozens of others that she had never read, or forgotten she owned, or wanted to read for a second time. The discovery inspired her to embark on a year-long voyage through her books, forsaking new purchases in order to get to know her own collection again. A book which is left on a shelf for a decade is a dead thing, but it is also a chrysalis, packed with the potential to burst into new life. Wandering through her house that day, Hill's eyes were opened to how much of that life was stored in her home, neglected for years. Considering everything from 'Macbeth' and 'The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy' through Virginia Woolf, Dickens and Roald Dahl, Howards End is on the Landing charts the journey of one of the nation's most accomplished authors as she revisits the conversations, libraries and bookshelves of the past that have informed a lifetime of reading and writing."



"Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy."

Aristotle (Quotation submitted by Diana Ward)

How I Came to Essex Church

I found 'religion' in my teenage years when I desperately needed something secure to hold onto and it served me well. I accepted all the tenets of the Christian faith without question and I was 'saved'. The security of church became a routine and the routine became a habit.

I've attended all sorts of churches over the years ranging from Evangelical to Anglo-Catholic and usually remained in one church because of its locality (close to home) and the friends I made there. Over time I gradually developed my own set of beliefs and found that I was having to twist church doctrine or re-interpret it to make it fit into something I could live with and I found that the mind and spirit contortions required by the church services were a source of irritation and unease. The habit of church-going had become a rut and the rut had become a prison, which through idleness on my part or fear of change I carried on with for nearly fifty years!

It must have been about eighteen months ago that I read a novel which mentioned the freedom of the Unitarian Church. I had never heard of it before, so I looked it up on the internet and found the Essex Church website, liked what I read, and found that it was not too difficult for me to get to on a Sunday.

I remember the first Sunday I came to Essex Church was like a revelation. I did not have to pretend to fit into a specified template. The service was restful, yet thought-provoking, and I felt that I was allowed to just be myself with all my doubts and queries. I have attended some RE courses and it was a joy to be with people who can be honest, free-thinking and different and yet have the unifying spirit of enquiry, love and tolerance, without being critical and judgemental. It was a wrench leaving the church I had been attending for so long - but I have gained so much that I have no regrets.

To sum up, I feel very much like an old bonsai tree whose spiritual growth has been stunted and contorted for many, many years, but has suddenly been re-planted in the open ground and is now free to grow and develop to its own potential. I look forward to the services each week to receive another refreshing shower of thoughts and companionship which actively encourages new growth. My thanks to you all.

Gina Bayley



'Light the Fire!' Discovery Weekend

"A time to dream, scheme, and build our future"

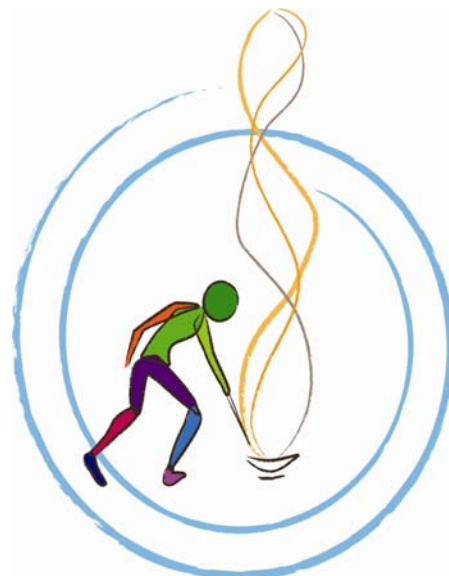
28th – 30th January 2011 in Aylesford, Kent

The LDPA (the association of Unitarian congregations in the South East) is bringing together lively and committed members of the London District to create our future together. The weekend will be an opportunity to explore new ways of experiencing Unitarianism, through worship, discussion, music, laughter, networking and imagining. The exciting and innovative programme is being planned by Louise Baumberg, Kate Buchanan, Miriam Lahage, Andy Pakula and David Usher. The weekend is open to everyone who wants to dream about our future together and to join in the work of making those dreams a reality.

Generous subsidies are being offered to those under the age of 35, or who have become Unitarians within the past three years. To register, visit www.ldpa.org.uk or email louise.baumberg@googlemail.com

Cost: £160 full adult, £100 concessions for under 35s and new Unitarians (including full board). Significant discounts also offered for children.

Venue: The Friars, Aylesford, Kent. The Friars is the home of a community of Carmelite friars, first established in 1242 and offering beautiful accommodation just three miles north of Maidstone.



Blake's London: June Walking Group Report



We (Heidi, Juliet, Derek, Will) met in the entrance to the National Portrait Gallery. It was intended that we would look at Blake's portrait by Thomas Phillips, completed 200 years ago, which is usually in the Regency section upstairs but apparently is not on show at the moment because it is under conservation. Instead we satisfied ourselves by looking at the copy of his death mask which the Gallery Shop has for sale (macabre!)

Turning north we went up Charing Cross Road to Leicester Square. Blake lived briefly on the edge of what was then Leicester Fields; we saw the busts of some of his near contemporaries who had connections with the Square: Sir Joshua Reynolds and William Hogarth, who both had residences in the Square, and Isaac Newton who lived nearby. We had a discussion about William Blake's position in society and Heidi explained that as an engraver he was seen as an artisan and not moving in the same circles as painters.

Blake was born at 28 Broad Street, now Broadwick Street, on November 28, 1757 so off we went, using back alleys to avoid the usual Soho crowds. The house, which stood at the corner of Broad and Marshall streets, was demolished in the 1960s, and in its place is a ceramics shop, which is part of a tower-block. Here, as a baby, Blake had his earliest vision of God outside the window. Here, also, much later in his life when the house was his brother's underwear shop, Blake put on the only solo exhibition of his paintings. None of the work sold, and the only press review dismissed him as an "unfortunate lunatic".

Blake never left London except for a brief period from 1800 to 1803, when he rented a cottage at Felpham, near Bognor Regis. He met his wife in the then remote village of Battersea, where they lived for a time. Blake also lived in Poland Street, a couple of streets along Broadwick Street, at number 28 (original building now demolished) and it was here that he engraved and wrote 'Songs of Innocence'. As we walked the streets I asked the walkers to imagine life as it was then; an area of new building in brick in the 'new' flat fronted style, with upstanding party walls to conform with the 1707 Fire Prevention Act, and without the conveniences of modern life such as clean water on tap, flush toilets and sewers.

We completed the walk in the Strand, outside the Savoy Hotel. In Blake's day this was the site of Fountain Court, where he lived the final seven years of his life, and died in 1827.

Will Lyons

Photographs by Juliet Edwards

Forthcoming Walks: Grand Union Canal & Horsenden Hill / Two-Tree Island

The Essex Church Walking Group has made provisional plans for its activities over the next few months so please put the dates in your diary and plan to come along. We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length.

Caroline Blair will be leading a walk along the Grand Union Canal and to Horsenden Hill on **Saturday 7th August**. We will be meeting at Greenford station (on the central line, zone 4) at 10am that day.

Jane Blackall will be leading a walk to Two-Tree Island on **Saturday 4th September**. We will be meeting at Fenchurch Street station at 10am and taking the train to Leigh-on-Sea station in Essex (the journey takes about 45 minutes and tickets will cost £9.50 return). This is a nature reserve so it is well worth bringing binoculars if you have them.

If you are intending to come on any of these walks please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email us on walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.

Songs and Silence for the Soul



Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church Sundays 8th August and 12th September from 5.00 to 6.30pm

The next few Songs and Silence sessions will be a bit more varied in content and timing so do check the dates and times if you plan to join us.

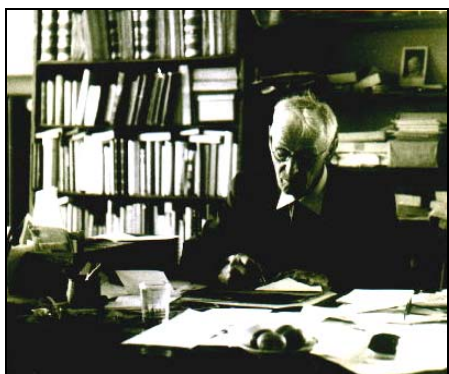
Aug 8th - 5 to 6.30 led by Lubna Arielle
with sounds of the chakras and opening the heart

September 12th - 5 to 6.30 with chants
from the mystical traditions of the world

Oct 10th - 3.30 to 5pm with the Quakers

After that, the Songs and Silence group will stop for a while whilst we have a think about the musical groups we want to have running here at Essex Church. If you have ideas about this, would like to run something or know someone who might like to run musical activities here then do get in touch.

In the meantime, if you want to raise your voice, why not come along to our monthly singing classes with Margaret Marshall on Sundays. Phone Sarah via the church office on 0207 221 6514 or email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you would like more information.



“Fate and misfortune are no longer robbers lying in wait behind the impenetrable wall of the future; the soul that has become conscious governs itself and things, there is no power that can rob the wise of their inner harmony which is happiness. The main point of this teaching lies in the principle that one attains mastery over ‘things’ not through harshness and physical violence but through reverence, which is the beginning of all wisdom, goodness and beauty. To feel reverence toward all we encounter, to question everything concerning its native character and speech, to honour even what is alien through consideration and love: this is how the wise make friends even with what is dark and unmanageable and come to realise that no good or ill fortune comes from outside, that only the way we accept all that happens to us is decisive in its effects on our lives.”

Herman Hesse

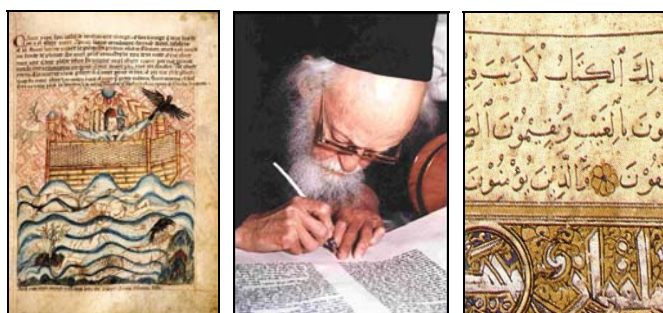
Adult RE at Essex Church: Reading Sacred Texts Thursday 19th August, 7.00-9.00pm



Most of the world's religions have sacred texts that underpin their faith. They are treated with reverence; their words may be learnt by heart and are often repeated.

For this special evening you are invited to bring your own sacred texts, which we will then read to one another in an atmosphere of openness and loving respect. What words are special to you? A favourite poem perhaps, some words from scripture, a song or even a silence?

This will be a worshipful and illuminating experience and we will be inviting friends from other faith traditions to join us, so do come along, bring your favourite readings and invite others who might like to share such a sacred time together. All are welcome but do be sure to let Sarah our minister know that you plan to come along – phone 020 7221 6514 or email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.



Update from the Essex Church Social Action Group

Developments from the last meeting of the Social Action Group. Our next meeting is on 26th September – all are welcome.



Swaziland Education Project – Fundraising Continues...

Last year as a congregation we committed ourselves to supporting two children from Swaziland who live in an SOS Children's Village for those whose lives are affected by HIV-AIDS. Sisters Patience and Fortunate are lively girls who are keen to be educated and to make a life for themselves despite the challenging circumstances into which they have been born. Iona, Caroline and Jim Blair have all visited the Village and came back with many photos to show and stories to tell. You will be able to hear more about their visits in the service on Sunday 5th September when the collection will go towards our fundraising effort. But there's no need to wait till then. Our aim is to raise at least £1,000 a year for at least five years. We reached that target quickly last year and this year we already have £300 from the collections made in memory of Patricia Walker. So do start writing your cheques – made payable to Essex Church, with Swaziland written on the back – and let's see how much we can send to support this inspiring cause.

Sarah Tinker

Kensington Unitarians Social Action Blog:

It was decided that a good way to keep each other informed about our social action projects was to use a blog which we could all contribute to, sharing resources, and accounts of our own experience. Tristan has kindly set this up and explains more below...

Posterous is a great social tool for co-ordinating efforts and sharing experiences. One reason I chose it as my blog is because it's extremely easy to use: all you have to do is send an email to the blog's address with the subject as the title of the post and they do the rest. You can send pictures, links, maps, links, text—anything—and they do the formatting. The instructions are simple because it's so easy!

If you'd like to be able to post to the site, all you need to do is send Tristan your email address. If you've been involved or expressed interest in the group and confirmed with Jane, then I have already added you to the permitted contributors. You will only be able to send emails from the address you registered. If you change address, or your send address is different, you'll need to let me know. Similarly, if you need support, please email or grab Tristan in church.

If you're not interested in posting but still would like to keep up with the social action goings on, you can still visit and have a look! Comments are open to all.

Important details:

Blog URL: kenunisa.posterous.com

Posting email address (send with the title in the subject area): post@kenunisa.posterous.com

Tristan's email: tristan@proothfamily.com

Tristan Prooth

Environmental Volunteering in the Lee Valley Park:

The group decided that we would like to find an opportunity to do occasional volunteering on environmental projects. Having done a bit of research I have recommended that we take part in a day at Bowyers Water in the Lee Valley Country Park. This is a location which is very close to London and easy to reach on public transport (just 20 minutes by train out of Liverpool Street). The date of this event is **Saturday 11th September** and we would need to meet up at 9am.

The organisers describe the day's activities as follows: *"After the annual meadow cut, to help keep the soil low in nutrients, the vegetation needs raking off and the nitrogen fixing alder saplings pulling up. This will provide the correct habitat that the Orchids need to flourish."*

The social action group decided that we need at least six of us to commit to taking part in this volunteering day to make it fun – as long as we have a decent group then we should have fun even if the weather isn't fantastic – so please let Jane know ASAP if you are intending to join in. We will need to contact the organisers in mid-August to let them know we are planning to come.

Jane Blackall



The Spiritual Bookshelf

#15: 'Path Without Destination... The Long Walk of a Gentle Hero' by Satish Kumar

This is the latest in our occasional series of articles where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them...

You know those books you don't want to end... the ones you want to carry on reading forever... the ones where you feel the author is your new best friend... the ones you want to savour page by page and want to consume in one sitting? This is one of those... for me! Satish Kumar is my current hero. This is his autobiography taking us to his 60th year. He'll be 74 in a couple of weeks' time and may well have completed a fourth pilgrimage but this book charts his first three.

The subtitle of the book ('the long walk of a gentle hero') completely describes both the focus of the book and the man. I wanted to have him beside me as I read so that I could ask him personal questions about his journeys both inner and outer, actual. What an incredible and interesting man he is. He still works as the editor of 'Resurgence' magazine, a job he has held since 1973. He has lived and continues to live his life (heavily influenced by Gandhi from an early age) with a commitment to truth which I admire enormously and to which I aspire.

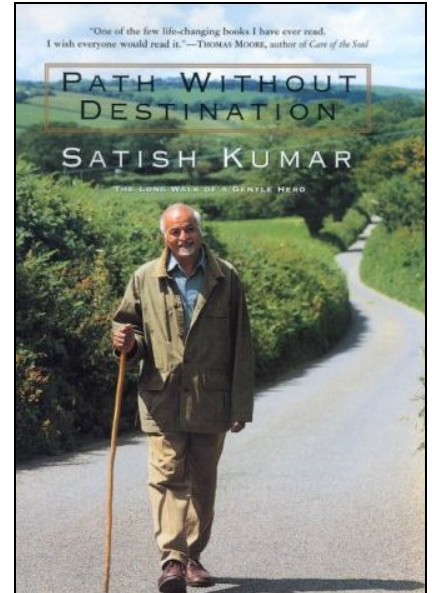
He writes of his life in a gentle, down-to-earth and disarmingly honest way taking us from his birth in rural India to his 60th year when he made his third pilgrimage, this time to Mount Kailas in Tibet fulfilling a long held dream. He is a master of pilgrimages... on foot and carrying no money!! - the first at 24 when he walked (incredibly) from Delhi to Washington DC. It's an astonishing feat to be sure though it certainly competes with his decision to become a Jain monk aged just 9!

His family were Jains; he was raised in a family and environment where there is a respect for life that I can only begin to imagine. My life has been so very different from his. His father died when he was 4 and I suppose in a way he grew up overnight and became emotionally responsible for himself. His family were not poor, he didn't live in squalor but he did live a life in India which would/could support the idea of being a monk at such a early age even if they weren't particularly keen to lose him at such a tender age. Here in the UK there would be uproar and he'd have been taken into care! Different times; different culture.

His first pilgrimage in 1960 was to promote peace by peaceful means, walking from Delhi to DC stopping off in Moscow, Paris and London on the way. This was incredible at the time but in the context of our very fast present day technology and travel it feels even more incredible to even bother! What a man! His second pilgrimage was at 50 when he walked, again carrying no money, to all of the sacred sites in England starting from his home in Devon to Iona, in Scotland and back again staying with volunteer hosts who offered a bed and food for a night or two here and there.

Reading this book I felt humbled and awed; full of admiration for a man with such calm, gentle and powerful conviction. He lived/lives the Nike slogan "Just do it!" If only I had such courage.

Jo Ridgers



New Day Dimension

Nothing secret, three steps beyond the wall
The tide gone out, another gathering. Not ships, not sea
Not space, not anything we could call "containing" but
Released into the void, reappearing in a parallel universe
Call it what you will, all's adventure, all begins again
With another unscored, uncharted day.

John Hands
Lynden Hall Clinic, June 2010



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms Sessions led by Sonya Leite

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm
(8th August, 12th September, 10th October)**

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 £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)
Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

FDA (Fun Days Away)

**A holiday for 12-17 year olds at the
Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

Sunday 8th - Friday 13th August 2010

There are still places left for this exciting youth event - probably the flagship of the Unitarian Youth Programme. 6 days of fun, creativity, friendship, discussions, outdoor pursuits, circle time and all sorts. We will be following a UUA programme exploring relationship issues, identity and reflecting on parenthood.

Cost: £120 (fully inclusive of meals and accommodation)

Look at www.unitarian.org.uk/events for more info.

Contact the GA Youth Officer, John Harley,
for further details at jharley@unitarian.org.uk

Funeral Planning

**Two Informal Workshops at Essex Church:
26th September and 28th November, 1-3pm**

There will be two informal Sunday afternoon workshops at Essex Church this autumn for those who would like to spend some time thinking carefully about their funeral wishes and putting them in writing. Keep an eye out for further details about these sessions nearer the time.

Seen On the Web...

Here's a link for an interesting and immersive website. It's full of interesting video-talks on all sorts of subjects: www.ted.com. I'm sure you'll find something there to catch your imagination!

Submitted by Will Lyons

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

**Sundays 19th September,
17th October, 21st November 2010,
from 12.30 to 1.15pm**



Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. 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 now offering to lead a monthly session to help us all find our voice.

This session is 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.

Comments overheard after Margaret's singing sessions:

'That was great. We could record that.'

*'I had no idea opening your mouth
would make such a difference.'*

'So that's where the diaphragm is.'

*'I can't believe I've just done that.
I've never sung in front of other people before.'*

News of Our Congregation

One of the features of our busy congregation is how often people arrive and depart, yet so often maintaining their connection with us, even from quite a distance. It was lovely to have the McDermott family with us again recently for a welcoming ceremony for their second child Dougal. It was Dougal's 1st birthday and he delighted everybody with his winning smile and his eagerness to grab hold of the voice recorder. Congratulations to Tess and Ben and brother Gilbert on their latest family member.



Last month we said farewell to Mary Spurr who is now back in Halifax, Nova Scotia and is about to start a photography course which has long been an ambition of hers. Erin Lockwood and Lane Powell also returned to the US after successfully completing their courses. We are now saying goodbye to Louisa Bird who is off to start a new job in Amsterdam and to Julia Alden who is about to take up her new post as Principal of the primary section of the International School in Singapore. We wish all of them the very best and we know that they will be calling in whenever they are in London. Julia set a shining example before leaving by paying for three years' membership of Essex Church in advance!

As always we are glad to welcome our remarkably loyal visitors from over the pond, who fly in like migratory swallows. It's been good to welcome Rick Taylor and his students, Gerry and Bobbi Lucovksy, and Lee and Julian Minghi recently, to mention a few.

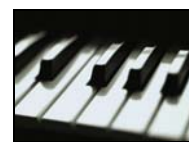
We are in the midst of a project to photograph the whole Kensington Unitarians congregation both individually and together. Since we never all get together on the same Sunday we're going to take a series of group photos like this one to capture all who are with us on particular days. We'll be taking the next group photograph on September 12th when we invite everyone to join us for a 'gathering the waters' ceremony followed by a congregational lunch.

Rev Sarah Tinker



Date for your Diary: Early evening, Sunday 10th October

Josh Johnston, renowned organist with Dublin Unitarians and jazz pianist, will entertain us with music from his latest CD. Highly recommended. More details in our next newsletter



☩ 5th August – Raksha Bandhan – Hindu

Raksha Bandhan is about brotherly protection ('raksha' means 'protection', and 'bandhan' means to 'tie'). On this Hindu festival, traditionally, sisters tie amulets of coloured thread, symbolising protection from evil, around their brothers' wrists and give them an Indian sweet. In return brothers give their sisters gifts.

☩ 6th August – The Transfiguration – Christian

The Transfiguration commemorates Jesus being transformed in the presence of three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, on a mountain top. The disciples saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased - listen to him'. The Transfiguration is a major festival for Orthodox Christians.

➔ 9th - 18th August – Farvardigan (Muktad) – Zoroastrian

The final ten days of the Zoroastrian year can be regarded as all souls days when the fravashis (spirits of the dead) are welcomed and entertained. Prayers of remembrance are recited and the farohars (guardian souls) are invited to join the community of souls, both living and departed, during the special Hamaspathmaidyem Gahambar, a communal feast.

☩ 12th August – 9th September – Ramadan – Muslim

During Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. The Muslim year is a lunar year, so Ramadan moves forward by ten or eleven days each year. Fasting (sawm) is one of the five pillars of Islam, requiring self-discipline and giving everyone some experience of deprivation. Those who are not able to fast give charity to compensate for the lost days. While children may be encouraged to fast, the full fast is not compulsory until maturity. The fast is traditionally broken each evening by taking dates and water after the custom of the Prophet.

☩ 16th August – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Christian

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates Mary being 'taken up', body and soul to heaven. Catholic communities often mark the festival with processions. Orthodox Christians celebrate the Dormition, Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary, meaning her death, on this day.

🌀 19th August – No Ruz – Zoroastrian/Baha'i

New Year's Day according to the Shenshai calendar. Many of the customs parallel the customs for the Persian / Iranian Jamshedi Noruz (see March 21 in the calendar). The main difference is cultural, with celebrations based on the Indian Parsi Zoroastrian culture.

➔ 24th August – Khordad Sal – Zoroastrian

The birthday of Zarathustra is celebrated according to the Shenshai calendar by Indian Parsi Zoroastrians.

☩ September / October – Harvest Festival – Christian

Special services are held around this time of year to thank God for his goodness, in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvest of the fields.

☩ 2nd September – Krishna Jayanti – Hindu

The birthday of Krishna is widely celebrated by Hindus. Many will fast till midnight, the time of Krishna's birth, when he is welcomed with singing, dancing and sweets. In some homes and temples an image of the baby Krishna is put in a cradle and special sweets are offered and distributed.

☩ 5th September – Lailat-ul-Qadr – Muslim

The 'Night of Power' when Muslims commemorate the Prophet Muhammad receiving the first revelation of the Qur'an. Many Muslims will spend the night praying and studying the Qur'an at their local mosque. Lailat-ul-Qadr is usually celebrated on the 27th day (the night of the 26th) of Ramadan.

🌀 5th – 12th September – Paryushan – Jain

Eight days of intensive fasting, devoted to study, prayer and meditation, concluding with a period of confession and forgiveness. Often monks will be invited to give teachings from the Jain scriptures. Paryushana means 'to stay in one place', which signifies a time of reflection and repentance. The practice was originally primarily monastic.

✨ 9th September – Rosh Hashanah – Jewish

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self-examination during which God sits in judgement on every individual. The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue as a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac.

☩ 10th September – Eid-ul-Fitr – Muslim

Eid-Ul-Fitr marks the breaking of the fast for Muslims at the end of Ramadan. Lasting three days, it is a time for family and friends to get together, for celebrating with good food and presents for children, and giving to charity. The charity of the fast - Zakat-ul-Fitr, which is paid during Ramadan, must be paid before the Eid prayer. 'Eid Mubarak' - a happy and blessed Eid, is the traditional greeting.

✨ 18th September – Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

This is the final day of the ten days of repentance, the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar - 'the Sabbath of Sabbaths', and is marked with a total fast for 25 hours. The evening before and most of the day is spent in prayer, asking God's forgiveness for past wrongs and resolving to improve in the future.

☩ 23rd September – Ganesh Chaturthi – Hindu

The birthday of Ganesh (also Ganupati), the elephant-headed deity, seen as the remover of obstacles, is especially observed by Maharashtrians. Ganesh is worshipped by Hindus at the beginning of something new, for example taking exams, moving house or getting married.

✨ 23rd September - 1st October – Sukkot – Jewish

The harvest festival commemorating the 40 years that the Jews spent in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land after escaping slavery in Egypt. A temporary hut with a roof covered only with branches - called a sukkah - is used during the festival. In some warmer countries families may live in their sukkah as well as eating there. Four species of plant are used symbolically during the festival - the lulav (palm branch), the etrog (a yellow citrus fruit), the hadas (myrtle) and the aravah (willow).

Elizabeth Gaskell Event



Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey 25th September 2010

All Unitarians are invited to attend the dedication of a pane of glass to Elizabeth Gaskell in the memorial window in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey on Saturday September 25th following the evensong service, which will start at 3.00pm. The dedication ceremony will begin about 4pm. There will be time to look round the Abbey free of charge before it closes at 5.00pm. This event has been arranged by the Gaskell Society who have funded the cost of the design and installation of the window along with a one-off payment for its future maintenance. The dedication will probably have the highest profile of the many events planned for the bicentenary year. Further details are available from the Gaskell Society- www.gaskellsociety.co.uk.

Rev Dr Ann Peart (via Gordon Deaville)



'Imagine Butterflies!'
A work-in-progress by Heidi Ferid

Youngsters' Socials

After the services on Sundays
1st August and 5th September



The next of our 'Youngster's Socials' will be after the service on Sunday 1st August. Until quite recently these events have been bi-monthly but we are experimenting with having a get-together – a pub lunch or picnic – on the first Sunday of every month. Please put the dates in your diary now!

If you would like to know more about these social events and be kept informed please email social@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

LDPA Quarterly Meeting

Saturday 23rd October 2010



Put 23rd October in your diary for the next District Quarterly, to be held at Brixton Unitarian Church which is within easy walking distance of the Underground. The programme will be jointly led by Kate Buchanan and Jen Hazel. Both are new members of the District Council. The service and programme will follow the theme 'Find Your Voice' – an exploration of the way singing can enhance our participation in worship.

Tenterden Opens Doors for Heritage Weekend

On Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th September, from 11am to 4pm, Tenterden Unitarians will open the doors of their 18th century Old Meeting House as part of English Heritage's Open Days. The small congregation and their Lay Leader, Dr Roy W Smith, hope to welcome many Unitarians as well as the general public on these special days.



October Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 12th Sept.** Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before that date.

Thank you!!!

...looking ahead to 2011 - a date for your diaries...

UCA Workshop with Rev Bill Darlison

Saturday 12th February 2011



We will be hosting a special workshop run by the Unitarian Christian Association (UCA) on Saturday 12th February 2011 here at Essex Church, when Bill Darlison has been invited to talk about the use of ritual in Unitarian services and rites of passage. Bill was brought up as a Catholic and indeed began training as a Catholic priest before working as a teacher for a number of years.

Universal Spiritual Gathering

**Friday 13th August, 6.30-8.15pm
Held at Essex Church**



The Universal Spiritual Gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.

This month: Sink into peaceful and healing connection with the Source of All, the healing presence at the heart of all sincere spiritual traditions through silent meditation, music and eternal wisdom from all faiths and none:

Our guest contributor is Su Johnston, member since 1964 of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Su will speak about and lead us in a 30 minute silent meditation in the spirit of the Quaker tradition. The service will include a restful walking meditation and end with a Sufi blessing.

Future Gatherings:

Friday 10th September:

Healing the Shadow: including 'Drop the Judgement'
with Rev. Rebecca Young

Friday 8th October:

with songs of love and devotion from
India & Pakistan by Razia Aziz

'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'

Through the Bathroom Window

Through the bathroom window the old child gazes
A different scene, a different dawn, rabbits
As well as birds, sparrows not much in evidence...
Anxiously, wonderingly, the young child gazes across the road
At the school they tell him he must one day go to
Not to play, or pedal round on his tricycle, but do
Fearful things called "lessons" for ladies called "teachers".

The old child gazes fearfully back at his progenitor:
'Painful to consider how little that youngster knew; the ways
He might have... the ways I might have' - stop! Stop now. This is not
A haunting, the years are not simply corridors. Down the slope past the pool
Ignoring the empty, gently gyrating house there's still a way ahead
Into the present: always into the present.

**John Hands
Lynden Hill Clinic. June 2010**



Essex Church Creativity Group Sessions in August and September

‘Bring Your Own Crafts’ ‘Decorating Papier Mâché’

Tuesday 17th August, 7.00-9.00pm

Tuesday 21st September, 7.00-9.00pm



In August we will be having a relaxed ‘Bring Your Own’ session – it’s always interesting to see what projects the members of the group have been working on – or if we have seen any inspiring books, pictures, or materials then it would be good to bring them along to share too.



In September, Caroline Blair will lead a session, showing us some techniques for decorating papier mâché objects (photo frames, boxes, ornaments). You can buy such items ready-made from shops such as Cass Art or Hobbycraft. Look out for more information on this session nearer the time...

As usual you are welcome to come along to the group even if you are not particularly interested in the activities on offer – bring along your own craftwork – or simply come along to relax and enjoy the good company.

Visiting Other Congregations

Visiting other congregations and seeing other customs and procedures is hugely educational. I’ve recently returned from Dublin Unitarian Church in St Stephen’s Green where I attended the farewell service for their minister Bill Darlison. Bill, originally from Wakefield, has had such a successful ministry in Dublin and is now looking forward to an active retirement. He has published a number of books already (*including ‘The Penultimate Truth and Other Incitements’ and ‘Enlightenment and Ice-Cream’, both available to borrow from the Essex Church Library*) and hopes to write more and will perhaps be heading to New Zealand to be a visiting minister for a few months.

An interchange of ideas with other congregations can be so useful. I took our newsletter to show the congregation in Dublin and they liked our profiles of committee and church members. Perhaps we can learn from Dublin’s tradition of printing both individual sermons and larger publications. It was from them that I got the idea of podcasts that are now a popular part of our own website. You can apparently listen to many of Bill Darlison’s fascinating sermons on the Dublin congregation’s website and I especially recommend his children’s stories which are a brilliant way to work with the many children who are in the church for the beginning of the service and then are called to the front to be entertained by a story that has a moral message.

Bill’s address was, as always, a mixture of depth and humour as he sought to express how much he had valued his time in Dublin and the importance of community. We sang ‘Nearer my God to Thee’ – “that’s what they sang on the Titanic,” Bill remarked. It’s clear that the congregation is very involved in Irish society – even the President had attended a service there.

Another congregation whose services I attend is the Worthing Fellowship which rarely has more than ten people attending and yet what they lack in numbers they make up for in the warmth of their welcome. They have given up the unequal struggle to carry a tune against the piano and now use recorded music and hymns, which one can join in with without fear of finding oneself a soloist. And it works!

Perhaps this can be an occasional feature of our newsletter – Kensington members passing on ideas they have gained from other congregations – and not just Unitarian congregations.



Dr Stephanie Saville



Warden's Column

August is the quiet time for the building and this year one of our main summer projects is the library. When I arrived at Essex Church four years ago, I thought this was a pretty grim room: dark, cluttered and dirty. Repainting it was one of the first projects of our Wardenship and we also got rid of lots of unnecessary items – including two broken lamps. This inspired Sarah to try washing the curtains and one of our user groups referred us to a good carpet cleaner.

This improved the room a great deal and I started to like it, but there were definitely still some niggles: too many chairs; the playground equipment outside the window; not enough space on the bookshelves.

Reclaiming a Hall cupboard from one of the user groups enabled us to go down to 20 chairs and the nursery installed more tasteful equipment and promised to clean up the wall. Then some money left to the church last year by Patricia Walker made it possible for us to implement more ambitious changes. It seemed an appropriate thing to spend this money on as Patricia had always loved the library: participating in many, many religious education courses there in addition to being a founder member of the creativity and reading engagement groups. A keen reader, she'd also left us the pick of her wonderful collection of books – which made the lack of shelf space even more urgent.

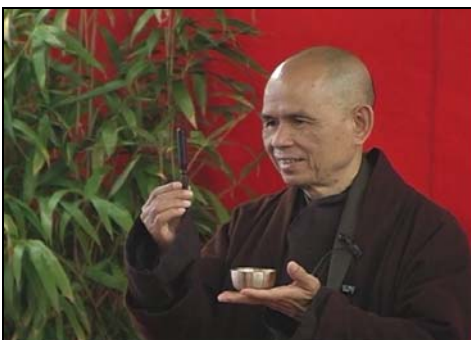
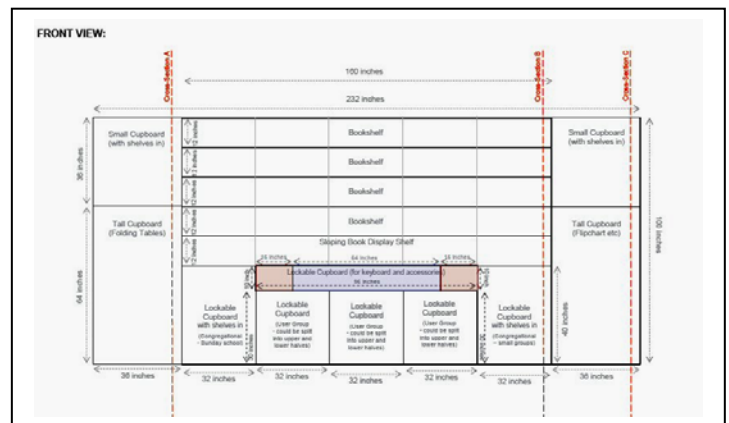
Rather than just extending the existing shelves (tricky to do anyway without fouling the door or the radiator) Jane and I asked ourselves what we felt would be the ideal furniture configuration if we were starting from scratch. We quickly realised that it seemed more natural to have shelving on the right hand wall than the left – this way you would see the books as you came in and hopefully they'd draw you into the space rather than the shelves feeling like they blocked the way into the room. By having shelving along the full length of the wall, it would also be possible to accommodate more books.

However, the right hand wall currently has stacks of chairs along it and moving these to the left wall would create even more of a deterrent to entering than the shelves do. We realised that if possible, we'd like to keep the left-hand wall completely clear – or maybe have artwork displayed on it. That meant the only possible place for the chairs was the back wall – but what about everything that was stored there now: folding tables; flipchart and – trickiest of all – the piano.

Then we had an inspiration: maybe a shelving unit running the length of the right hand wall could be specially designed to hold these items – including a good quality keyboard and stand to substitute for the piano? Jane got her measuring tape out and quickly came up with some beautiful drawings and I got on the internet to try and find a suitable cabinet maker. Sarah, with her usual practicality, pointed out that it would make sense to redecorate and replace the carpet before the shelves were installed.

At first it seemed impossible to get all of that to all come together in time for our August window of opportunity, but we seem to be just about on track so, with luck, by September the library will be much more elegant and practical – a fitting tribute to Patricia who strongly embodied both of those qualities.

Jenny Moy



Thich Nhat Hanh Visits London

The renowned Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, who has done so much to introduce Buddhist meditation practices to us in the west, is coming to London to speak in Hammersmith on Wednesday 11th August.

Some of us from Essex Church will be going to hear him talk. Tickets are £20 each – get in touch with the church office (020 7221 6514 or info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you would like to join us or would like more information.



Essex Church Summer Picnic

They say that Unitarians often prefer questions to answers and here are some of the issues that were raised on our recent congregational picnic in Kensington Gardens:

Why does food taste so much better outdoors?

Is it any sign of divine displeasure that a brisk wind whipped up the moment we sat down?

Why is it so hard to find the loos in the park?

The wind blew but the sun also shone on us and a good time was had by all.

Rev Sarah Tinker (photos by Jane Blackall)



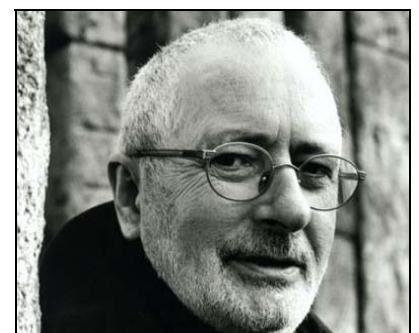
Richard Price Memorial Lecture – Given by Professor Terry Eagleton

‘The New Atheism and the War on Terror’

Saturday 18th September, 7.30 pm at Newington Green Unitarian Church

Newington Green Unitarians are pleased to announce the Richard Price Memorial Lecture for 2010. This year's lecturer will be Professor Terry Eagleton, currently Distinguished Professor of English Literature at the University of Lancaster, and described in the Independent as 'the man who succeeded F R Leavis as Britain's most influential academic critic'. Each year's lecturer is asked to speak on a topical or important aspect of liberty, reason and ethics. Eagleton has chosen to speak on the theme of 'The New Atheism and the War on Terror'.

Tickets (£15/£10) are available from members of the congregation or online through the congregational website at www.new-unity.org. As in previous years the lecture is expected to sell out so please buy your ticket in advance.



What's On in August/September:

Continued from Front Page...

Saturday 4th September, 10am
Walking Group: Two Tree Island
Meet at Fenchurch Street Station

Sunday 5th September, 11am
Morning Service
Led by Caroline and Jim Blair

Sunday 5th September, 12.30pm
Youngsters' Social
Lunch at the Mall Tavern

Tuesday 7th September, 7-9pm
Committee Meeting

Thursday 9th September, 7-9pm
Adult RE: 'Compassionate Communication' (1/5)

Saturday 11th September, 9am
Social Action Group:
Environmental Volunteering
at Lee Valley Country Park
(meeting at Liverpool Street)

Sunday 12th September, 11am
"Gathering the Waters"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 16th September, 7-9pm
Adult RE: 'Compassionate Communication' (2/5)

Sunday 19th September, 11am
"The Castle"
Intergenerational Service led by
members/leaders of children's
group with Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 19th September, 12.30pm
"Finding Our Voice"
Singing Workshop
Led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 21st September, 7-9pm
Creativity Group: 'Decorating Papier Mâché Objects'

Thursday 23rd September, 7-9pm
Adult RE: 'Compassionate Communication' (3/5)

Sunday 26th September, 11am
"Elizabeth Gaskell: A Voice of Social Conscience"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 26th September, 12.30pm
Social Action Group Meeting

Sunday 26th September, 1-3pm
Funeral Planning Workshop

Tuesday 28th September, 7-9pm
75th Reading Group:
'Howard's End is on the Landing' by Susan Hill

Sunday Services at Essex Church

1st August – "Portable Spirituality" Service led by Kate Buchanan

Come and join us for an interactive Unitarian service on the theme of 'portable spirituality'. We will consider how you can take the peace of being in a spiritual place like the church and carry it with you in your busy day-to-day life. Led by Kate Buchanan, member of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel Hampstead and the LDPA Council.

8th August – "Identity" Service led by Juliet Edwards

Our very own Juliet will be leading the service and she says: "My service is titled Identity. A while back I watched a TV programme with John and Pauline Prescott about class. As he described what he felt were his limitations as a result of being working class I found myself shouting at the TV set, "No John, it's about identity!" So this is my opportunity to explore a little further whether it is about identity."

15th August – "Stories of Our Communities" Service led by Rev. Joy Croft and Rev. Sarah Tinker

Every group and community tells stories of itself and can be studied through its narratives. Today we'll be celebrating the power of story to express and reflect the communities in which we live and worship.

22nd August – "Slowing Down, Taking it Easy" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This service will have a suitably gentle pace with readings, music and meditations designed to slow us down for a while. Congregation members and visitors are invited to bring favourite readings and music – contact our minister in the week before the service if you would like to take an active part. This service links with the course on Dealing With Stress we will be running in the afternoon to which everyone is welcomed.

29th August – "The Bible: Tackling the Tricky Bits" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

There are parts of the Bible that most religious liberals would prefer to avoid. As a taster for an evening course that we will be running later in the autumn, this service will boldly go where many would fear to tread, exploring tales of murder, rape, slavery and divine inconsistency.

5th September – Service led by Caroline and Jim Blair

As part of today's service, Caroline and Jim will be telling us all about the Swaziland Education Project, following their recent visit to the SOS children's village.

12th September – "Gathering the Waters" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Come and join us for our annual 'Gathering The Waters' service in which we bring back water collected from our travels and tell people where we have been. This is a chance to re-connect with our community so bring along a little bit of water, and join in the ceremony, even if your water is simply from your garden pond or kitchen tap. This service will be followed by a bring-and-share congregational lunch.

19th September – "The Castle" Intergenerational Service led by members and leaders of our children's group with Sarah Tinker

Castles and battles and dragons and bravery - come and enjoy these archetypal themes with us in this service designed by our children's group for adventurers of all ages.

26th September – "Elizabeth Gaskell: A Voice of Social Conscience" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Elizabeth Gaskell was a life long Unitarian and was married to a Unitarian minister. Her novel 'Ruth' was publicly burnt because of its sympathetic treatment of an unmarried mother and Gaskell did much to bring social injustice to the Victorian public's attention. In this and in her writings about theology and education she was remarkably modern in her views and in this service we will consider her enduring message for us today. *'I am more and more certain we can never be certain in this world.'* (from Mrs Gaskell's letters)