



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: March 2014

What's On...

Sunday 2nd March, 11am-noon
'Still Moving'
Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 2nd March, 1pm-4pm
'Death Café'
Workshop led by Clare Slaney

Monday 3rd March, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 6th March, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Slow Down... and Connect'
Led by Roy Clark

Sunday 9th March, 11am-noon
'Women Inspiring Change'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9th March, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Leader to be announced.

Sunday 9th March, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Monday 10th March, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 13th March, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: Feltmaking
(or bring your own craft)

Sunday 16th March, 11am-noon
'Standing on the Side of Love'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 17th March, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Sunday 23rd March, 11am-noon
'We Shall Overcome'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 23rd March, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Monday 24th March, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Monday 24th March, 7-8.30pm
Cultural Outing:
Philosophy Talk at 'Alternatives'

Sunday 30th March, 11am-noon
'Reckoning Up'
Led by the Rev. Bill Darlison
and Rev. Sarah Tinker

A Message from our Minister:

Telling Our Truths

Poet Muriel Rukeyser writes that "the Universe is made of stories, not atoms". In a Unitarian gathering a while ago we started to talk about spiritual experiences we'd had. One woman tentatively began to tell us of a profound experience she'd had as a teenager, which had left her with a strong sense of a presence that was protecting her in life. But she interrupted her account, laughed in an embarrassed kind of way and said, "I know us Unitarians aren't meant to believe in things like this, guardian angels and the like".



We all quickly encouraged her to continue and were touched to hear how this feeling of being protected had stayed with her ever since and had changed the way she had approached life. Other people then felt able to share their stories, all diverse, not all of the 'super-natural' but all spoken from the heart. That evening I hope we together made it clear that in a Unitarian gathering there is room for all experiences, all beliefs, all approaches to life so long as they do not hurt anyone else. It's one way to define us – that we accept and encourage diversity. In eras past, the Unitarian community was identified by its rational approach to religion but nowadays I think we are called to bring together the known and the unknown in our own lives and in the life of our community. There's room in our lives for the languages of both head and heart and both languages are surely needed if we are to speak our deepest truths.

Deepest truths aren't always crystal clear, cannot always be expressed in a crisp and articulate way. They may falter and feel uncertain or awkward. All the more important then for us to find ways of communicating with each other that open up conversations rather than closing them down. Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find information about our Spiritual Life Skills programme running throughout 2014. This may seem a somewhat random selection of workshops but what unites them is a search for our truth and a search for ways to communicate better with one another at a deep level. That's why I'd encourage everyone to consider attending a course in Compassionate Communication. We're holding one in April but they can be found all around the world, sometimes called Nonviolent Communication. But even if we can't attend such a course, let's attend to the quality of our speaking and our listening and ensure that we make space for the telling of our stories and the sharing of our truths. Perhaps that's what life is all about.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'A Sense of the Sacred' – Workshop Report * 'Get Me to the Church on Time!' *
'Death Café' with Clare Slaney * News from Sarah's recent travels in South Carolina
* A Message from Meredith * Reflections on 'Twelve Years a Slave' by Carol Sheppard *
Foy Conference on 'The War On Drugs' * SimpleGifts Charity Fundraising Evening
* 'Comfort and Cheer' – a recent sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings



Thursday 6th March from 7-8pm

Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library

Followed by social time and refreshments

Our March gathering will be led by Roy Clark on the theme 'Slow Down... and Connect.' This gathering was postponed from last month due to the tube strike. There will be cake!

If you would like to know more about these gatherings please contact jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

2 nd March:	Alice Lambert
9 th March:	Juliet Edwards
16 th March:	Sam Boyero
23 rd March:	Natasha Drennan
30 th March:	Carol Sheppard

Coffee:

2 nd March:	Sue Smith
9 th March:	Kate Brown
16 th March:	Caroline Blair
23 rd March:	Sam Boyero
30 th March:	Sam Boyero

Greeting:

2 nd March:	Ellen McHugh
9 th March:	Roy Clark
16 th March:	Gina Bayley
23 rd March:	Carol Sheppard
30 th March:	Veronica Needa

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

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
9th March, 13th April, 11th May**

Also each MONDAY lunchtime from 12.30

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

Cost £10 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

Hucklow Summer School The Authentic Self: Discovering the Real You



Week of 16th – 23rd August 2014

Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

A week of living, learning, & spiritual development

Activities for all ages, theme talks, engagement groups, and fun! Join us to celebrate the 20th Hucklow Summer School!

Cost: Adult (sharing): £480; Children 3-4 years: £130;
5-11 years: £300; 12-16 years: £365.

For more information contact Kate: 07870 322 519
or info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk

For further details and to download an application form:
www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk



Get Me to the Church on Time!



The only reason that I'm not often late for church is that I live 'over the shop'. So anybody who arrives late at church on a Sunday has my complete sympathy. Travelling in London can be especially slow on a Sunday. But I also sympathise with people who want the service to start on time and prefer not to be disturbed by latecomers. So we're going to ask our stewards to be a bit firmer with latecomers from now on and specifically to ask people, once the service has started at 11am, not to come in until music is playing.

We'll also have 'RESERVED' cards on some seats in the back rows so that late arrivers can slip into a seat without disrupting everyone else. So it would also help if people who arrive early could sit a bit further forward from now on and use the first rows a bit more.

We're committed to being a welcoming congregation and I'm grateful to everyone who goes out of their way to greet newcomers and to make sure that visitors are given attention at coffee time. We're going to ask our Sunday greeter to add this responsibility to their list of duties but it's a task best shared with as many people as possible. Let's make a commitment to ensure that nobody is left alone after the service and that nobody leaves a Sunday service here without having been spoken to by more than one person. These are all ways to encourage visitors to return.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our latest Essex Church Cultural Outing:

Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations



Monday 24th March, 7.00-8.30pm
'Alternatives' at St. James' Piccadilly
197 Piccadilly, London, Greater London W1J 9LL

In this talk, Jules Evans will describe how ancient philosophy saved his life, and how we can all use it to become happier, wiser and more resilient. Jules imagines a dream school, which assembles 12 of the greatest thinkers of the ancient world.

Each of these ancient philosophers teaches a technique we can use to transform ourselves and live better lives. Jules will outline these practical techniques that are used by real people today...

Jules Evans is a policy director at the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary, University of London. He is co-organiser of the London Philosophy Club, which is the biggest philosophy club in the world.

Online price: £12 (£8 Concession) / £15 (£10) on the door.
Visit www.alternatives.org.uk for information or to book.

Natasha is coordinating this outing so please let her know if you intend to come: tash_drennan@hotmail.com / 07551 250 049.

Foodbank Update



Thank you to everybody for their continuing contributions to our Foodbank collection. By the time this newsletter is published we will have taken our fourth car boot full of food to help those who find themselves struggling to feed themselves and their families.

The Trussell Trust runs foodbanks all round the country for people finding themselves in poverty. People have to be referred by a social worker or similar and generally are only given vouchers to use for up to three visits. At our local Foodbank in Chelsea they have a table laid out with odds and ends of food and drink that they can't put in the actual Foodbank for some reason. People can help themselves to things on that table for free and can also have a cup of tea and a slice of cake whilst they are there. I found it all quite heart-warming until I remembered that we didn't need Foodbanks until a few years ago. Are you as angry as I am that our welfare state provision is I suspect being eroded for ideological rather than financial reasons?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

A reminder of the wish-list of items:

- Milk (UHT or powdered)
- Sugar (500g)
- Fruit Juice (carton)
- Soup
- Pasta Sauces
- Sponge Pudding (tinned)
- Tomatoes (tinned)
- Cereals
- Rice Pudding (tinned)
- Tea Bags / Instant Coffee
- Instant Mash Potato
- Rice / Pasta
- Tinned Meat / Fish
- Tinned Fruit
- Jam
- Biscuits or Snack Bars

If you would like to donate any of these items please bring them along to church next time you come. The church committee will need to arrange regular transport of the food we collect so if you might be able to help with this then let Sarah or a committee member know.



'Death Café'

Sunday 2nd March, 1pm-4pm

Afternoon facilitated by Clare Slaney



At a Death Café people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death. A Death Café is a discussion group about death rather than a grief support or counselling session. The objective is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'. The Death Cafe model was developed by Jon Underwood and Sue Barsky Reid, based on the ideas of Bernard Crettaz.

Death Cafés are always offered:

- On a not for profit basis
- In an accessible, respectful and confidential space
- With no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action
- Alongside refreshing drinks and nourishing food – and cake!

The idea of hosting a Death Café has now spread quickly across the globe. By 2013 it was estimated that some 482 Death Cafés have been organised for over 3,000 participants in Europe, North America and Australasia. Death Café has no staff and is run on a purely voluntary basis by Jon Underwood in Hackney, East London. The first Death Café in the UK was offered in Jon's house in Hackney, East London in September 2011. It was facilitated by psychotherapist Sue Barsky Reid, Jon's mum, and was a wonderful occasion. They have gone on to offer Death Cafés in a range of places including funky cafés, people's houses, a yurt and the Royal Festival Hall.

And so we are offering a Death Café here in Essex Church from 1pm to 4pm on Sunday 2nd March. We'll provide drinks and snacks, bring your lunch, and come to the service earlier if you would like. We'd appreciate it if you could let us know if you plan to come for the afternoon by contacting Sarah our minister on info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

We're grateful to psychotherapist and counsellor Clare Slaney who will be facilitating the afternoon for us.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'A Sense of the Sacred' – February Workshop Report

Fifteen people came to this Sunday afternoon workshop – the latest of our 'Spiritual Life Skills' series – led by Jane Blackall and Kate Buchanan on 2nd February. Several of the workshop participants offer their reflections on the experience below.

It was obvious that Jane and Kate had put a lot of work into the preparation of this workshop but there was a delightful simplicity about the whole afternoon which seemed to resonate so beautifully with the subject matter. There was time for gentle reflection on our own individual experiences of the sacred as well as the opportunity to work with others in small groups. The afternoon concluded with an exercise based on the themes of: Family, Relationships, Religious Symbols, Passions, Nature and the Arts. We were all given free rein to explore these areas through music, poetry, artwork, art materials, postcards, drawing, painting and writing. We were free to explore the building, sit in the garden and we were even able to go out for a walk in the natural world if that was what was required. We were able to choose from a wonderful range of materials to ponder on the subject of the sacred.

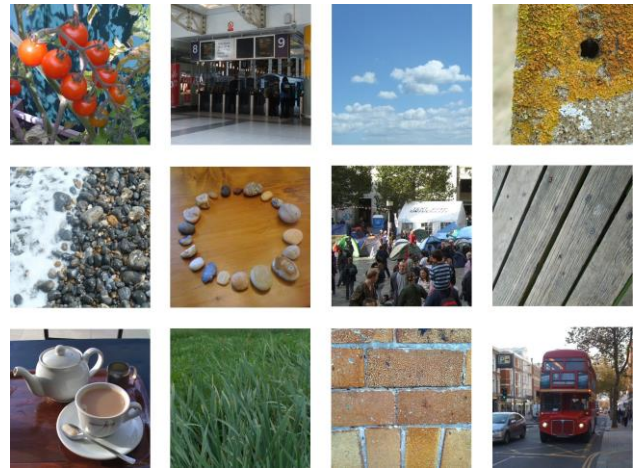
My favourite part of the afternoon was writing an answer to the following question: What, if anything, is sacred to me? I immediately thought of my first visit to Sennen Cove in Cornwall and wrote this:

Sitting
 Watching
 The vastness of the ocean
 A high, bright day
 A sense of oneness with the rest of the world
 It scares and soothes at the same time (strangely)
 Ebb and flow
 The tide coming in and going out - taking it all away.
 That, for me, is a truly sacred space.

Carol Sheppard

Someone told me sacred is something one cannot touch - a taboo. He was a taboo breaker. I disagreed but did not know the words to explain why. Years later I did: sacred to me is something that has to be approached with great subtlety if one is to notice its existence. If one tries to break it, it may not show up. Thank You for sharing more views on this during our half day meeting.

Pauliina Tuominen



It was well worth visiting my girlfriend in London this weekend, so I could attend this workshop. There are few opportunities to reflect on the sacred, yet it is central to the way I live my life. I enjoyed looking at how something may be sacred to someone yet not to me- football sprang to mind! We discussed how the same impulse to connect and feel inspiration is at work for a football fan in the same way as it is for me when I go to a Unitarian service! I also got the chance to write a couple of 'no-send letters which I used in my counselling session the next day- so the workshop was very practical too.

Julian Wood, Bristol

I found the workshop on the 'Sense of the Sacred' rewarding. I thought it had been well planned and I found the various activities and exercises stimulating. Regarding my own personal sense of the sacred I posited the following:-

- The Self as sacred; by the Self I mean a person's essence or spirit, which is sacred in that each individual is a unique creation.
- Thought as sacred; I have in mind reflective thought which, forming a closed loop as it were, brings a measure of harmony and composure.
- And finally, I regard the feminine as sacred.

The second half of the afternoon, which involved a number of tables on different themes (such as Religious Symbols, The Natural World, Passions, and Family and Relationships), encouraged me to think more creatively about the sacred from unique and unusual perspectives. I found myself drawn downstairs to the table on Music and the Arts, where I reflected on self-expression, the elevation of the mind and spirit, and the evocation of feeling through music, art and literature (namely, Arvo Pärt, Hokusai and Rumi).

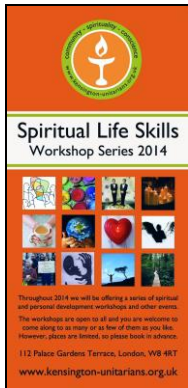
Everyone who attended had valuable and insightful contributions to make, responding both intellectually and emotionally, revealing that that which each of us holds to be sacred is deeply personal and reaches to the core.

Niall Doherty

Kate Buchanan adds: 'We really appreciated the rich reflections which came from our work together. We hope we gave everyone the opportunity to explore the sacred in their own way, something which can be so difficult to realise in our busy lives.'

‘Spiritual Life Skills’

A new workshop series for 2014
Hosted by Kensington Unitarians



Throughout 2014 we will be holding a series of ‘Spiritual Life Skills’ events here at Essex Church. Open to all, these groups will take many varied paths in exploring what it is to be human. The full programme is now available in our new leaflet. We strongly encourage you to **put the dates in your diary and book ASAP** as we will be advertising widely and places will be limited.

We would very much appreciate if you would help us spread the word about this series by taking copies of the special leaflet and recommending it to any friends who may be interested.

BOOK NOW!!!

‘Compassionate Communication’

**Saturday 5th April, 10.30am-4pm &
Sunday 6th April, 1pm-4pm (must attend both)**

Compassionate Communication is a practical exploration into how and why others hear us as they do, and how and why we hear others as we do. This understanding helps us choose differently in the way we listen and how we express ourselves; and so helps us toward a more compassionate and enriching understanding both of others and ourselves.

We are delighted to be joined by Jill and Richard Broadbent who will be offering their ‘Compassionate Communication’ training over a whole weekend this spring (this is a two-day course). Some long-standing members of the congregation will remember that the Broadbents led a six-week course with us back in the autumn of 2010. We cannot recommend this training highly enough, and would encourage members of the congregation to sign up, even if you took part in the previous course as there is always more to learn and considerable benefit to be had from practising with others.

There is a sliding scale of £20 / £40 / £60 for this training (pay what you can afford) which is a considerable saving on what you would pay to do an equivalent training course elsewhere. **We would appreciate it if you would sign up for this course as soon as possible so we can be sure it is viable.** Please book your place soon by emailing jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or contact Jane if you would like to know more.

Compassionate Communication: A Personal Recommendation



I was delighted to hear that Jill and Richard Broadbent are to return to the church and run a second Compassionate Communication course with us on the 5th / 6th April.

Having attended their previous course, I have found the model, often described as Non –Violent Communication by Marshall B Rosenberg, as both easy to understand and very helpful. The theories are clear and uncomplicated, but can have profound outcomes. In my case it helps me be more compassionate initially towards myself and then toward others. Generally I find non-judgmental listening difficult, but this model has helped to reframe how I see things.

Two years ago, a day after a workshop with Jill and Richard, I walked into bedlam at London tube station. A young man had totally lost his temper and was violently kicking the door to gain entry to a ticket attendant. I approached him and asked if he was OK and then told him that I observed that he appeared very upset and wondered what had happened. The fact that I wanted to listen and had not judged him seemed to transform him. I could almost feel the anger evaporate, he seemed to deflate and regain his composure and eventually the outcome was positive. It could have been very different. I felt privileged, but also bemused that applying the model that I had practiced the day before could have such a profound impact.

This is a model that becomes more effective with practice. I am aware that some members of the church have already attended a workshop with Jill and Richard, if you are one of them I believe that you will get even more from the process the second time around. As a group we also have the on-going opportunity to develop our skills within the church community.

Jim Blair

Creativity Group

Second Thursday evening of each month
continuing 13th March from 7-9.00pm
(PLEASE NOTE: WE WILL BE IN THE LIBRARY)



I am very pleased to announce that our creativity group has just re-launched for a new start in 2014. This previously ran very successfully for 10 years (2002-2012) before taking a break in 2013 and was responsible for many of the art and craft creations that you will see around the church. This was the very first group that I started up here at Essex Church and so it has a particularly special place in my heart.

The plan is that we will meet once a month and will focus on a particular art or craft medium or a certain project for each quarter of the year so that we can go deeper into it over that three-month period. The provisional line-up is as follows:

January-March: Feltmaking

April-June: Photography

July-September: Printmaking

One of the particularly enjoyable features of the creativity group is the space it offers for fellowship and conversation while we are each working on our individual projects alongside one another. If you don't fancy the art or craft we are 'officially' focusing on then you are always welcome to bring along whatever you're working on and do your own art/craft whilst enjoying the good company of the group.

There were ten of us at the first session and we are keen to get a group of at least half a dozen people to commit to regularly attending the first six sessions to help get the group re-established. If you would be willing to support the group with your presence in this way I would be very pleased to hear from you (email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

Jane Blackall



'Philomena': A Response

Stephanie adds her own thoughts to Liz Tuckwell's review of the recent film 'Philomena' published in the last newsletter.

Having seen the film of the Magdalene Laundry some years ago, and the memorial to those unmarried mothers in Stephen's Green by the Unitarian Church in Dublin, I was aware of what those poor girls went through before I saw Philomena.

Even then, it hardly seemed possible that so much unkindness could have been visited on one family. I thought it was a portrayal of the experiences of several families.

But no. Others treated in exactly the same way have written their story – it tallies.

So how could anyone forgive the nuns, the perpetrators?

One possible explanation. When the pain becomes so unbearable, so intolerable, the realisation that the only person suffering from it is the victim. The nuns go about their lives oblivious. It makes sense to 'let go'. Surrender the anguish, the hatred, the self-pity. All totally justified. The choice is there. Hang on to those emotions that destroy; or let them go. For a minute, then two, five... and begin to live again.

Stephanie Saville

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 23rd March, 27th April,
25th May from 12.30 to 1.15pm

Please Note – now on fourth Sunday!



Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice.

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

We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

Greetings from South Carolina

The Unitarian Universalist congregation of Columbia (UUC) in South Carolina send their greetings to all of us here at Essex Church. I'm just back from spending a few weeks with them, thanks to the organisational skills of Lee Minghi, long-time member of UUC and regular visitor over many years here in London. It was really interesting to start getting to know another congregation in another part of the world. Religion certainly plays a far more important part in the lives of most South Carolinians than it does for most Londoners. Church buildings are prominent over there and some of their 'mega churches' even needed the police to direct the traffic coming into their parking lots on a Sunday morning! This was not the case with our Unitarian Universalist cousins but in their congregation too there was a remarkable sense of commitment and energy – described by one of them as a kind of liberal 'siege mentality' there in the 'Bible Belt' of America's Deep South. They have plenty to be concerned about. Whilst we were there, the South Carolina state legislature decreed that firearms could now legally be taken into bars. It's hard for me to imagine living in a place where over 40% of the population possess weapons and where, for example, there is no need to have a permit to buy a gun, nor any requirement to tell someone if you lose your gun. On the other hand, we were greeted with a gracious warmth and hospitality everywhere we went. People have time to talk and are keen to meet strangers.



Another striking feature for me was the on-going importance of the history of slavery and the campaign for civil rights in American society. This helped to put into context for me the great significance of Barack Obama having been elected as the first black President of the USA. Congregations in the States have to acknowledge their involvement in this history and I was moved to find this memorial in the churchyard of the UU congregation of Charleston. Built with some of the original bricks from their 18th century church building, an inscription on the granite base of the monument reads: "In memory of those enslaved workers who made these bricks and helped build our church." Slaves built the church, as they did most of the grand buildings in Charleston. They also dug the clay that made the bricks.

Mounted on the front of the monument is a wrought-iron sculpture of a bird looking over its back. The bird image on the front is a sankofa, a West African symbol from Ghana meaning "looking back in order to move forward." The top of the memorial is decorated with oyster shells, reflecting a Gullah tradition of marking burial sites with shells. The Gullah people are descendants of African slaves who live in the coastal South.



I was left with questions about our own society here in Britain. Much of our wealth, and our Victorian infrastructure, have their origins in colonialism, yet we don't seem to feel the collective shame of this past in the way that some white Americans do when thinking of slavery. Is this because of lack of awareness perhaps or because the countries we exploited are far away and relatively powerless even to this day? Indeed, the British were heavily involved in the slave trade and ran many of the plantations in America and the Caribbean. I'd be interested to hear what you think about this question – where is our shame about slavery and colonialism?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'The season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday (5th March), is an invitation to be honest with ourselves about the ways in which our lives, as lived, do not align with the love and compassion and wholeness of which we are all capable. It is an invitation to look at hard truths, to name our mistakes, and make a commitment to real, measurable change. And it's an invitation to do this not just for a few guilt-inducing moments, but over a significant period of time – a period of time which is culturally mythologised as being long enough to make real progress toward changing something. Lent means making room in our spiritual lives for humility, for self-emptying, for sinking in to what is deeper and wider than the individual self. Lent means turning away from arrogance and our persistent illusions that we are in control of it all, and turning toward a more authentic encounter with our humanity and with Life. The way to make Lent a meaningful time of reflection and growth is to really make a commitment to it.'

Rev. Ellen Cooper-Davis (Unitarian Universalist Minister)



Small Group Communion



**Sundays 9th March, 13th April, 11th May
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. These services are led by different members of the congregation. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we can experience a variety of different approaches. The line-up for the next couple of months is as follows:

9th March – Leader to be announced

13th April – Led by Sue Smith

11th May – Led by Tristan Jovanović

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



“Once I heard Dean Sperry in a lecture at the Harvard Divinity School say this: There had been times, he said, when he scarcely knew what he believed or whether he believed anything at all — times when he was baffled, confused and dismayed—as, no doubt everyone is sometimes. And at those times, he found great good in the Communion. For here was something which generations of people has said and done over the centuries. And somehow, regardless of doctrine, that gave him a thread of continuity, a kind of steadying. In that service, it was as if he felt himself one with the age-long movement of humanity, together, through thick and thin.”

W L McKinstry (from *uchristian.org*)



SimpleGifts Charity Evening

Thursday 6th March, from 7-9pm

At the Home of Jessica and Neil Smith
4 Maresfield Gardens London NW3 5SU

**Hosted by our patron the Lady Astor of Hever
and SimpleGifts Director, Rob Gregson.**

We hope you might join us for an evening of classical guitar, wine, nibbles and inspiration in support of the London charity, SimpleGifts: Unitarian Centre for Social Action. Come to learn about our innovative, progressive work in the diverse and challenging borough of Tower Hamlets, East London, inspired by Unitarian values and supported by your donations.

Come if you are keen to encourage early childhood development, literacy and emotional/physical health, elderly and immigrant social integration, and teenage ethics and leadership. SimpleGifts is on track to become a flagship social action arm of our liberal faith, active in London and across the UK. If you might be willing to support this groundbreaking work in the long term, financially and otherwise, we hope you will consider joining us on March 6!

Tickets are £25 pp at the door; space is limited so RSVP is essential. Please contact Rob Gregson to reserve tickets at: rob@simplegiftsucsa.org.uk or 07411280667 (texts welcome.) If you are unable to come but would like to make a contribution, please visit our website: www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk to use the PayPal feature on the "How to Help" page. Or cheques made out to "SimpleGifts" may be mailed to: SimpleGifts, 117 Mansford St. London E2 6LX. Thank you!

“The flood that devastates a town is not an “act of God”, even if the insurance companies find it useful to call it that. But the efforts people to make save lives, to risk their own lives for a person who might be a total stranger to them, and the determination to rebuild their community after the flood waters have receded, *do* qualify as acts of God.”

Harold S. Kushner



'How Free is Free Will? Coping with Our Broken New Year's Resolutions'

Sermon by David Francis Darling
(delivered to Oxford Unitarians on 12th January)

January 12th, 12 days into the New Year. Are you still keeping your New Year resolutions? Or are you like the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who confessed recently that he never makes New Year resolutions because he knows that he will never keep them!

That reminds me of a cynical old Anglo-Catholic priest I knew in Wes London who on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday invited his congregation to make their confession before the start of Lent but he said to them "Don't tell me that you won't do it again, because you will!" Though when I complained to my spiritual director that I always seemed to confess the same sins he beamed at me and said "That's wonderful my dear man, it's when you start confessing new ones that you have to start worrying"

For those of us that have rejected the traditional Christian method of starting again, New Year provides a secular alternative. We have this strange belief that as the year moves from one to the next we can change, we can start again. We believe that we are rational human beings who are in control of the choices we make. We believe in free will. And when we break our resolutions we convince ourselves that we freely chose to do it. We convince ourselves that it was a silly idea, the time is not quite right, I didn't realise that X was going to happen. We become like a friend of mine who said "Giving up cigarettes is easy; I've done it hundreds of times!"

So am I really free to choose what I do or am I like St Paul who complained in his letter to the Christians in Rome "I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want to do and I do the very thing that I hate"

In our reading from Alexander McCall Smith he stated his belief that "We are what we are because we are who we are and who we are is usually not the result of choice on our part but is the result of factors outside our control. These include the fact of birth: in so many cases the bed in which we are born determines well-nigh every major aspect of our lives – our views, our choices, our concerns. We may create ourselves to some extent – life would be bleak if we had no chance to do that – but the shape of our life is often determined by an external factor such as geography and the sheer accident of being born into a particular society at a particular time"

Later in the same chapter McCall Smith acknowledges that his personal reflections of the notion of responsibility seemed to lead him into an uncomfortably determinist position. This could be a bleak view indeed were it not that his determinist stance leads him to a compassionate approach to the behaviour of others and himself and his belief, already stated, that we may create ourselves to some extent – life would be bleak if we had no chance to do that.



Compassion both for ourselves and others can flow from a deeper understanding of why we and others behave as we do, though there can be a danger that we can find explanations for our own dysfunctional behaviour but are less keen to see why others behave as they do.

And compassion growing out of understanding can enable us to change, to create or rather re-create ourselves.

In our reading from Thomas Merton he invites us to see that "there is a need of effort, deepening change and transformation" and I'm sure that he is not alone in saying "I do have past to break with, an accumulation of inertia, waste, wrong, foolishness, rot, junk, a great need of clarification, of mindfulness"

One of the greatest fears of preachers is that someone will remember something you said years ago and challenge you with it. Though it's also comforting to know that someone has remembered something you said!

It happened to me a few years ago and to make matters worse the person who remembered was a Bishop. I went back to Scotland a few years after I had moved to England and met the said Bishop who had been one of my tutors at college. He greeted me warmly and then said "I've never forgotten something you said in a sermon and it has always stayed with me – you said "God loves you as you are but he loves you too much to leave you that way"

Now I'm sure that I pinched that phrase from someone else and my theological understanding has changed a bit over the years but I still like the phrase because it helps me to cope with the tension between determinism and a belief in change and personal responsibility. If you don't believe in God you could equally valuably say "I believe and accept myself as I am but I believe in myself too much to stay that way"

It is, however, important to get the order right. It's no good, I believe, saying that from the 1st January 2014 I will be more grateful, less irritable, give up smoking, eat less, take more exercise or whatever it is unless I first of all have some understanding of why I do or don't do those things already. It is when I have gained that compassionate insight that I can explore my heart's deepest desire and look at strategies to help me achieve them.

'How Free is Free Will?' by David Francis Darling *(continued)*

In Buddhism the recognition that the mess of our lives, the dung of our lives, can be used to develop our full potential, Our Buddhahood, is symbolised by the lotus flower. On the surface of the water it is a beautiful delicate flower but it grows in a muddy swamp. No swamp, no flower! Fortunately for the lotus flower it just grows in the swamp, we on the other hand have to do a bit of work on our swamp, on the manure of our lives but with the right understanding we can turn swamps into places of new growth.

One man who did this in a dramatic way was the Austrian Jewish Psychiatrist Victor Frankl who was incarcerated in Auschwitz and lost his whole family including his young wife and his parents in the holocaust. The tragic events of his life could have crushed him or left him embittered but it didn't. In his classic work "Man's search for Meaning" he describes how he coped with life in the camps and of his passion to continue his work as a psychotherapist after the war. He eventually died at the age of 92 in 1997. Frankl founded what has been described as the third Viennese School of Psychotherapy after Freud and Adler, namely the school of logotherapy that focuses on Man's search for meaning in life or rather what meaning I can give to my life.

Let me quote a short extract from "Man's Search for Meaning":

"...the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. To put the question in general terms would be comparable to the question posed to a chess champion: "Tell me, Master, what is the best move in the world?" There simply is no such thing as the best or even a good move apart from a particular situation in a game and the particular personality of one's opponent. The same holds for human existence. One should not search for an abstract meaning of life.



Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed. Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of life is, but rather he must recognise that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life: and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible."

(Man's Search for Meaning, Victor E. Frankl, 2011 Rider, Random House Group)

So how free is free will and is there any point in making New Year resolutions? I would suggest that part of our desire to make resolutions is based on our conviction that we can change, that we can choose how we react to the events and circumstances of our lives. So yes, I believe I have free will, but it is a free will tempered by who I am - and the more I understand who I am the freer I will be - but it won't happen overnight, even on the 31st December.

And of course, you are free to disagree with me.

A Message from Meredith



To the whole community of Kensington Unitarians: I just wanted to say how fortunate, grateful and lucky I feel having found you all. I may have said this before, but I knew from that first service back in September, that I'd found a home away from home.

These last five months have been a time for self-reflection (Twelve Steps to Spiritual Health course), service (Simple Gifts and their old and new neighbours lunches) fun (outings like the Esterhazy Singers carol service, Christmas Eve dinner at Hafez restaurant, and the holiday art bazaar) and communion with tea and biscuits every Sunday after worship.

Thanks to everyone for making Essex Church a place of warmth, love, friendship and thought. Anytime any of you find yourselves in California please look me up. I live near the beach, Disneyland, hiking, skiing, surfing and we have an extra bedroom and a dog that loves company! Sarah has my contact info.



Reflections on 'Twelve Years a Slave'

The film '12 Years a Slave' tells the story of Solomon Northup - a musician and free black man living in New York who, during a visit to Washington, is drugged, kidnapped and sold into slavery. The role of Solomon is played by Chiwetel Ejiofor and, although it sounds somewhat of a cliché to say this, the actor demonstrates a tour de force of acting ability and quite literally turns in the performance of a lifetime. After his enslavement, Solomon is forced to hide his true identity and somehow contain and control the justifiable anger and indignity he feels at having to live his life in such changed and reduced circumstances. As an actor, Chiwetel demonstrates immense skill at showing us, the audience, the two distinct faces of the man he has to become in order to endure his ordeal. He cannot reveal himself, he cannot speak the truth, he is forced to subjugate himself but, all the while, he shows his absolute belief in the power of justice and his insistence on living, not merely surviving.

Once Solomon is sold into slavery, he comes up against two very different Masters. The first character, William Ford, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, is shown treating Solomon with a kind of respect and admiration. Indeed, after Solomon played a violin to drown out the agonising screams of a mother being forcibly separated from her children during the slave auction, Ford makes the gift of a violin to him. There is a sense that Solomon feels valued and respected by this man but as another character says to him, "He is still a slaver." And, after an incident where Solomon finally loses control and turns on the cruelly sadistic overseer of the Plantation, Ford is unable to help in any other way than selling Solomon on to another Master.

This man Epps, played by Michael Fassbender, is a monster - sadistically brutal and full of self-loathing. According to his belief, the slaves on his plantation are his property and he is free to treat them however he sees fit. However, Fassbender skillfully portrays the human being beneath the monster. Drowning in alcoholism and no less vicious towards his wife, albeit verbally rather than physically, Epps is consumed both by his love for a young slave called Patsy, Lupita Nyong'o, and the absolute revulsion he feels about that love. How is it humanly possible to love the very thing that you so despise and brutalise. The 'relationship' between these two characters culminates in the most vicious beating of Patsy with Epps goading Solomon on to beat the young woman before finishing the job himself. Epps attempts to turn Solomon into the same kind of man as himself and, on some level, he achieves this but he ultimately cannot destroy Solomon's true character.

The film is undoubtedly an unflinching look at the subject of slavery. It forces you to watch and acknowledge the atrocities that took place. It is neither the comfortable, cosy version of slavery as depicted in the film 'Gone with the Wind' or the racist justification of white supremacy as shown in DW Griffiths' 'The Birth of a Nation'. Nor is it the cartoonish take on black revenge and retribution offered up by Quentin Tarantino's 'Django Unchained'. In contrast it is an extremely uncomfortable, hard and deeply challenging watch and although Solomon's story ends with his eventual release from captivity and return to his family, there is no doubt left in anyone's mind that Solomon cannot have been anything other than deeply scarred by his experiences. And as the figure of 29 million people currently living in enslavement shows, it is not an issue that has been either resolved or eradicated in the modern world. Indeed, the director of the film, Steve McQueen, has been quoted as saying that part of his reason for bringing this story to the screen was to remind us that we are all here on this planet for such a very short time - five minutes, it seems, and then we are gone - that it is vital that we just try and do something (no matter how small) to make a difference.

Carol Sheppard

One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'Wonder'



**Friday 14th March 2014
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church**

The gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary.

Information from One Light: 'Come and enjoy as we gather for deep healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come help us create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long - with silence, music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved eternal self, your family, children and friends'

***This event is free. Donations for expenses are welcome.
Any surplus will go to Essex Unitarian Church***

For further information contact Interfaith Reverends Pamela Ramsden 07966 478 980 / Kathryn Reynolds 07976 739 286

Future Meetings: 11th April – Modern Life, 9th May – Present Moment, 13th June – Appreciation, 11th July – The Soul

108 Sun Salutations

This yoga marathon event took place at Essex Church in January and raised over £2000 for the DEC Philippines Appeal. We thought you would enjoy seeing these great photographs of our building being put to such good use!



Many more pictures can be seen at www.luboshorvat.com

Good Cause Collection of the Month

Red Cross - Syria Crisis



Collection on Sunday 23rd March

The horrific humanitarian situation in Syria has forced millions to leave their homes. With each passing day, more lives are lost and more families are torn apart. For those who have been able to flee, the battle for survival is far from over. The Red Cross movement is supporting more than 4 million people affected by the conflict each month, with vital aid such as food, blankets and clean water. However, up to 9 million remain in desperate need. Help us reach more people and save more lives.

For more information visit: www.redcross.org.uk

Previous Charity Collections:

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

December – SimpleGifts Unitarian Centre for Social Action – £582.59 + Gift Aid (total from two collections)

Jan – West London Churches Homeless Concern – £129.51

A London Lecture which may be of interest to you:

'Is There a Language of Peace?'



Friday 28th March 2014, 7-8pm
British Museum, BP Lecture Theatre

Is there a language of peace? That is the question Palestinian lawyer, award-winning writer and political activist Raja Shehadeh asks in this year's lecture in memory of Edward Said. He will reflect on the categories and modes of representation – legal and cultural – that confine today's Palestinians and the steps that need to be taken to move from the language of suffering and oppression to a new one of liberation and peace.

Tickets £12 (Members/Concessions £8)

For information and tickets visit: www.britishmuseum.org

‘Comfort and Cheer’

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 19th January 2014

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

(Sarah gave this address in church in January but its message probably has some relevance at any time of year...)

We have my mum to thank for the title of this address – comfort and cheer. Her memory has almost gone – she doesn’t really know now who I am or who she is – and yet like so many people with memory loss, music brings her to life. Whenever I go to visit her we sing together and she will often remember more of the words than I do. And so it was this last Christmas as we worked our way through our repertoire of carols, ending with God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen. Its last line is, “O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, o tidings of comfort and joy”, which we sang with gusto. It was time to go and my mum, who can so often look completely blank, this once strong and intelligent woman who worked as a college lecturer and brought up five children, she turned to me and said quite clearly, in a voice that sounded like my mum of old, “Comfort and cheer Sarah, that’s what we need more of, comfort and cheer”.

So comfort and cheer it is that I’m exploring today. And it’s a good day to be exploring such a theme because if you believe some newspapers then tomorrow is Blue Monday, so called because it’s supposed to be the most depressing day of the year.

Here’s an amusing description of this – written in a Guardian article by psychologist Dr Dean Burnett:

“January is a depressing time for many. The weather’s awful, you get less daylight than a stunted dandelion and your body is struggling to cope with the withdrawal of the depression-alleviating calorific foods, such as chocolate, of the hedonistic festive period. January is one long post-Christmas hangover.

So there are many reasons why someone may feel particularly “down” during January. But every year, much of the media become fixated on a specific day – the third Monday in January – as the most depressing of the year. It has become known as Blue Monday.

This silly claim comes from a ludicrous equation that calculates “debt”, “motivation”, “weather”, “need to take action” and other arbitrary variables that are impossible to quantify and largely incompatible.

True clinical depression (as opposed to a post-Christmas slump) is a far more complex condition that is affected by many factors, chronic and temporary, internal and external. What is extremely unlikely (i.e. impossible) is that there is a reliable set of external factors that cause depression in an entire population at the same time every year.

But that doesn’t stop the equation from popping up every year. Its creator, Dr Cliff Arnall, devised it for a travel firm. He has since admitted that it is meaningless”

You can read more of this entertaining piece by Dean Burnett at <http://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2012/jan/16/blue-monday-depressing-day-pseudoscience>



OK, so there is no Blue Monday but I think we can justifiably complain about the weather this winter – no crisp cold spells, little sun, and far too much rain. No wonder we might feel a bit gloomy and not just on the 19th January. A look at the mind body and spirit shelves in our local book shop reveals that what is sometimes called the ‘science of happiness’ is clearly a growth area amongst psychologists. Many studies have been completed in the last few years into what makes people happy.

One of my favourite studies was reported on TV a few years ago. The researchers worked with a group of people who described themselves as ‘unhappy’. For six months the group was taken through an endless array of tests and experiences. They were taken to see doctors who gave them assorted drugs and then scanned their brains. These scans showed that happiness can be seen in the brain. When we have a pleasurable experience our brain releases chemicals called endorphins, a sort of natural morphine, that helps us relax and feel good and which enhances the workings of our immune system. Putting it simply, when we feel happy it is because our bodies are producing endorphins and when we produce endorphins, we feel happy – a delight filled cycle of feeling good occurs.

But experiments show that you don’t even have to have an experience in order for endorphin production to start - you simply have to imagine it. You could experiment now if you wish, close your eyes and think about something or someone that you really like, something that delights you and gives you pleasure. Spend a moment now thinking about these pleasurable thoughts, breathing deeply, imagine yourself perhaps enjoying what it is you are imagining. Be aware of your bodily sensations as you think of something that makes you happy.

If we had some medical equipment here now it’s likely that we would be able to show how in just a short space of time we will have increased the blood flow in our brain and body and will have released endorphins that will have a variety of positive physical effects. If you’re interested in finding out more about endorphins and how to encourage their production, William Bloom has written a very helpful book called *The Endorphin Effect* which I can recommend.

Going back to the scientists who worked with the group of unhappy people for six months, at the end of the experiment they revealed the activity that was most likely to make people happy. I wonder what you might guess that to be? What might be the one activity most guaranteed to make most people happy? *(In the service people shouted out guesses such as gardening, singing, having a cuddle).*

'Comfort and Cheer'

Sermon by Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

According to these researchers it turned out to be Scottish country dancing! Apparently Scottish country dancing has all the right ingredients for happiness – it makes you laugh, it involves vigorous exercise, you dance to music and music is renowned for its ability to lift the spirits, it involves contact with other people – both physical touch and the delight of other people's company – and it doesn't have negative after effects – so long as you don't trip over someone in the midst of dancing the Gay Gordons that is.

So if you want to feel happier try dancing – but for comfort – well comfort is not necessarily about happiness is it. Sometimes being comforted can be about accepting how we are, just as we are, accepting our situation as it is right now, sinking into it and into the present moment, even if the present moment is not an easy one.

Playwright Dennis Potter gave several interviews shortly before he died and his words were then gathered together in a collection called *Seeing The Blossom: Two Interviews And A Lecture*. What he's describing here is the intensity of his experience of being alive, knowing that life is finite:

"... at this season, the blossom is out in full now, there in the west early. It's a plum tree, it looks like apple blossom but it's white, and looking at it, instead of saying "Oh that's nice blossom" ... last week looking at it through the window when I'm writing, I see it is the whitest, frothiest, blossomest blossom that there ever could be, and I can see it. Things are both more trivial than they ever were, and more important than they ever were, and the difference between the trivial and the important doesn't seem to matter. But the nowness of everything is absolutely wondrous, and if people could see that, you know. There's no way of telling you; you have to experience it, but the glory of it, if you like, the comfort of it, the reassurance ... not that I'm interested in reassuring people - bummer that. The fact is, if you see the present tense, boy do you see it! And boy can you celebrate it."

So seeking comfort at this level allows us to be real. It's not about escaping from reality, or avoidance of reality, but more about embracing it, in the present moment. Most of us are only too aware of the negative, addictive ways we sometimes comfort and soothe ourselves – with food or alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs, too long spent in front of a TV perhaps or



even with tough exercise regimes. Only we can sense when a chosen activity is a positive act of comforting ourselves and when it is an addictive hole we are trapped in. Perhaps the most useful test is if we are mindful of what we are doing, if we are consciously enjoying the drink, the food, the cigarette, the run. This is Dennis Potter's 'seeing the present tense' and when we are conscious in the moment then life is real, whatever we are choosing to do at that moment.

A few quick conversations over the last week created this list of things that comfort people – I wonder if any of these help to comfort you. You might want to jot down some of your own sources of comfort and cheer:

- Listening to music or singing
- Appreciating the natural world, getting outside and breathing fresh air
- Holding someone's hand for a while or asking for a hug
- Stroking the cat
- Cooking something really tasty
- Talking to a dear friend
- Watching a favourite film again
- Curling up with a good book to read by the fire

Let's tell each other over a cup of tea after the service what else comforts us and brings us cheer in life. Colette Lafia writes that the "The more we cultivate comfort in our own lives, the more readily and freely we can bring these gifts to others." And I would add to that – that the more we accept our need for comfort in life the more we can reach out to seek it in healthy ways, knowing that we are all in this mysterious thing called life together. May that be a source of comfort and cheer to us all, however bad the weather.

Next Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the April issue of the newsletter is Sunday 16th March. Please send your contributions to our newsletter editor, Jane Blackall, ASAP: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

We would be particularly interested if any newcomers to the congregation would write a 'How I Came to Essex Church' article to introduce themselves. If you have any other ideas for items we might run in future please do get in touch.

'Whether you are conscious of it or not, it's in your power to increase other people's joy, satisfaction and safety through simple acts of kindness. A thoughtful word, a smile or acknowledgment, giving something that's needed, listening with care, extending your patience, expressing your concern appreciatively, ordinary courtesies, refraining from criticism or outbursts, acknowledging someone else's point of view or legitimate needs, making time for someone who is struggling, assuming the best: that power is worth everything.'

Stephanie Dowrick

Sunday Services at Essex Church

2nd March, 11am – ‘Still Moving’

Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Meditation and spiritual practices often focus on thinking and being still. But what about those of us who can't sit still? By bringing the stillness into our movement, we can re-member our bodies and our minds.

**9th March, 11am –
‘Women Inspiring Change’**

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Today we will mark International Women's Day and find inspiration from women throughout the ages who have transformed their societies.

**16th March, 11am –
‘Standing on the Side of Love’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How can we use love as the place from which to confront oppression and injustice?

23rd March, 11am – ‘We Shall Overcome’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A celebration of folk music and its spiritual connections, to honour the work of Pete Seeger as a musician and social campaigner.

30th March, 11am – ‘Reckoning Up’

Service led by Rev. Bill Darlison and Sarah Tinker

Our service will examine the ways we evaluate the people and things who/which are important in our lives. Bill is President of our Unitarian General Assembly and after the service he will join us for a 'bring your own sandwich' lunch and a chat about his insights on religion today. All welcome.



**FOY Conference - 2nd to 5th May 2014
At the Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

The War on Drugs

Do we need a new approach?



**Does the current justice system contribute to a
reduction in drug abuse or an increase?**

What are the alternatives?

The War on Drugs will be the study subject for this Conference. We will be addressing many questions including "Is the War on Drugs:

- Causing deforestation
- Undermining Human Rights
- Costing too high a price
- Creating crime & enriching criminals?"

We will be led in our discussions by David Barrie CBE, Chair of "Make Justice Work" and members of the Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel. We will also be looking at how we can make a difference as individuals, as members of The Foy Society and as members of our other communities local, national and international. During the weekend there will also be free time for local walks, visits, worship/meditation and other activities. Foy AGM is also scheduled to take place.

The Conference begins on Friday evening and ends with lunch on Monday. Registration starts at 7 pm on Friday evening, with a buffet supper available.

Standard adult rate for this long weekend is £180. There is a special half-price rate for people aged 17-35.

**If you would like a copy of the booking form
please email Jane or contact the organisers.**

General Conference enquiries should be made to the
Conference Secretary, Joan Partington:
Phone 01228 670 565, Mobile 07729 142 642
email: partingtons@gmail.com.

The Foy Society is a fellowship of women and men who, in a spirit of free inquiry, seek to understand the nature of present issues and problems - political, social and religious. It was founded in 1924 as The 'Fellowship of Youth'. In 1957 it became known as the Foy Society as it had gradually taken on the role of an inter-generational group. Most of our members are Unitarians. You are welcome to join and participate, whatever your religious background.