



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: February 2011

## What's On in February:

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE: 'Tapestry of Life' (3/9)**

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February, 11am  
**"La Mer:  
Spirituality at the Seaside"**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
with Harold Lorenzelli singing

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30-2pm  
**Adult RE: 'Life Spirit'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE: 'Tapestry of Life' (4/9)**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30-4.15  
**'Who Needs Sacraments?'**  
Workshop led by Rev. Bill Darlison

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 11am  
**"Mighty Aphrodite"**  
Service led by Sarah Tinker with  
guest preacher Rev. Bill Darlison

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 12.15pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1.00pm  
**Congregational Soup Lunch**

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2-3.00pm  
**Nia Dance with Sonya Leite**

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February, 11am  
**"An Old Universalism  
for a New World"**  
Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30pm  
**Singing Workshop**  
Led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:** 'The Pursuit  
of Love' by Nancy Mitford

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February, 11am-3pm  
**Adult RE: 'Tapestry of Life' (5/9)**

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February, 11am  
**"Of Marble Lions  
and Imaginary Trees"**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30pm  
**Youngsters' Social at a Local Pub**

## A Message from our Minister: All Loved Up

I met a friend Kate a while back. We've known each other since we were in our twenties when I used to baby-sit for her children. She has four children, well four daughters to be precise. And they don't need babysitting anymore. They are all now young adults and when I asked Kate how they were, she smiled and said, 'Sarah, they're all loved up'. Clearly I don't listen to the right music or read the right magazines because I'd never heard this phrase 'all loved up' before – but it means what it sounds like – Kate's daughters are all passionately in love, romance is in the air.



Kate and I mused upon love and romance – their potential delights and pitfalls – for romantic love by its very nature is a romance, a fiction, depending to some extent on illusion in order to occur. In time such love has to transmute itself, perhaps into a more mature, realistic love for another human being or into disappointment when a real person stands before us, frail and flawed.

The Greek language has a number of words for love and separates romantic love from agape, the love that is at the centre of existence. What other types of love might we want to differentiate? How could we best name the feelings and behaviours connected with, for example, the love of parents for children, the love between friends, the love for a new lover and the love for a partner of many years? What about our love of music and the arts? And what about the natural world? How shall we best describe our love for the robin who greets us in the garden, the landscape that lifts our spirits? A few years ago I ran a workshop about love for a group of Unitarians and we spoke of the many loves in our lives. One person described with tears in his eyes how he had spent the previous day out in the Peak District, with a group of protestors fighting a proposal to build a quarry. They had built their protest camp up in the treetops and they were determined to bring the planning proposal to everyone's attention and to do all that they could to prevent the destruction of a unique landscape. That's a fierce kind of love that fights for what it believes to be right. But then love can be far from soft and sweet and slushy; love may be tough and demanding if it is any sort of love worth having.

This is love at its transformational level, love that may shake us and shock us but may also inspire us to be greater beings than we have hereto been. Perhaps most importantly, this transformational love shatters any illusion we might have about our separateness from the great sea of existence. This love is not a dualistic emotion; its essence is unity, oneness with all that is, not just with a love object, a chosen one, which then excludes all others. And yet such love may also encompass a seemingly opposite position – a reverence for the 'otherness' of that which is loved, a healthy awareness of, and appreciation of, difference and of the spaces between us – how delightfully paradoxical.

Happy Valentine's Day!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this month's newsletter...

\* Tributes to Doris Campbell \* 'Who Needs Sacraments?' with Bill Darlison \* 'How I Came to Essex Church' by Jonathan Frewin \* Walking Group Report \* Call for Participation in the 'This I Believe' Project \* A Poem by John Hands \* 'Sinfulness for Unitarians' by Sarah Tinker \* New Acquisitions for the Library \* 'Music Lifts Our Spirits' by Jo Cresswell \* Membership News \* and lots 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.



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"As wonderful as they usually are, friendships can, at times, be challenging, and uncomfortable and complex. But, in the end, friends are dear, reliable, generous, caring people who stick with us (and enjoy us) through the ups and downs (through the thick and thin) of our life's journey, and who constantly reassure us that we are OK, just as we come, in all our complex humanness.

Nineteenth-century poet, Percy Shelley, once observed, *"It's a sweet thing, friendship, a dear balm. A happy and auspicious bird of calm."* Friends are indeed a dear balm that soothe and reassure us through all our days. But we must never forget that friends don't just drop into our laps without effort or intentionality. They must be earned, nurtured, and cultivated. Almost 200 years ago, Unitarian bard, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wisely said, *"The only way to have a friend is to be one."*

The only way you will ever know the comforting, enlivening, saving blessing of friends is if you are regularly willing to extend yourself to others, and offer good people around you the full generosity and depth of your self. So, dear friends, refuse any of the "splendid, air-tight, isolations" which modern life offers you. Open yourselves regularly and generously to others. Cultivate and keep many friends, and be blessed, dear friends. Be blessed."

UU Minister. Rev. Scott W. Alexander

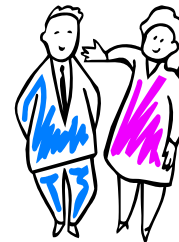
# Unitarian Annual Meetings

15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> April 2011 in Swansea

Every year, around Easter time, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches holds its Annual Meetings to which delegates from all congregations, fellowships, district associations and affiliated societies are invited. These meetings are commonly known as 'GA' within Unitarian circles. We are keen to encourage new people from our congregation to attend the event and get a wider view of the Unitarian denomination in the UK. Please speak to Sarah or a member of the committee if you are interested.

For more information see [www.unitarian.org.uk/ga](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/ga)

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

6 <sup>th</sup> February:	Maire Collins
13 <sup>th</sup> February:	Tristan Jovanović
20 <sup>th</sup> February:	Nicholas Holzapfel
27 <sup>th</sup> February:	John Marrow

### Coffee:

6 <sup>th</sup> February:	Sheila Prellberg
13 <sup>th</sup> February:	Caroline Blair
20 <sup>th</sup> February:	Sheila Prellberg
27 <sup>th</sup> February:	Kate Brown

### Greeting:

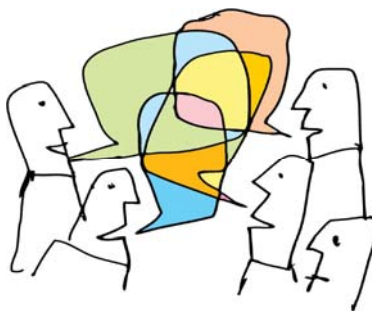
6 <sup>th</sup> February:	Diana Ward
13 <sup>th</sup> February:	Sue Smith
20 <sup>th</sup> February:	Jo Ridgers
27 <sup>th</sup> February:	?

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](mailto:rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

# 'This I Believe' Writing Project – Call for Participation



## An Invitation to All Members and Friends of the Essex Church Congregation

You may have read in the newsletter over the last six months or so that we are keen to encourage members and friends of the congregation to write short essays on their own personal beliefs for a congregational 'This I Believe' project. At the start of this New Year we are going to get a bit more serious about the idea! Everybody knows the power of a deadline to focus the mind...

We hope to produce a book compiling our essays which we will be able to share with the rest of the denomination (and the wider world!). Our aim is to put it together in time for a launch event in early April so that it will be ready to go on sale at the Unitarian General Assembly meetings in Swansea this spring.

Imagine how interesting it will be to read what everybody has to say... and what a worthwhile project it is to leave an account of your beliefs in writing for posterity. We realise that might seem like quite a daunting challenge but we are confident that it is one that many of our congregation members and friends are capable of rising to! It will certainly take a bit of time and effort to write your contribution, and we have come up with some guidelines for you to follow, in the hope that we can collectively come up with a finished publication that we can all be rightly proud of.

## Guidelines for your 'This I Believe' Submission

Ideally, we would like each person to write two items, each of which will serve a slightly different purpose. The first, a 'personal credo', will give an overview of all your beliefs. The second, a personal reflection which illustrates an aspect of your life philosophy, will hopefully be more anecdotal and as such will give more of a flavour of your personality.

### 1. Your Personal Credo (400-600 words)

This is a statement of what you believe. For example, you might like to say something about the nature of God, good and evil, your highest values, human nature, ethics, morality, sources of meaning and purpose, your relationship to religious tradition and/or spiritual practice, and why you are part of this Unitarian community. Or you might have other ideas! Please keep it positive though: speak for yourself and try to stick with writing about what you *do* believe rather than what you *don't*...

A booklet called 'Kensington Quest', containing statements of belief by members of the congregation, was published by the church back in 1987 as an outcome of a 'Building Your Own Theology' course. We envisage this element to be along the same lines these 'statements of belief' and hope that it will give a similar snapshot of the diversity of beliefs in our congregation... and the commonalities that unite us. If you would like to look at the original for inspiration there is a copy of 'Kensington Quest' in the library or you can download a copy from the church website (under 'Library and Publications').

### 2. A Personal Reflection on an Aspect of your Life (400-600 words)

This is inspired by the 'This I Believe' project which engages people from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing essays about the values that guide their daily lives. Choose one definite belief or conviction that is important to you and which guides your actions and name it in a sentence or two. In this piece you can expand on this particular aspect of your personal philosophy and illustrate it with an example showing how this belief has played out in your everyday life. In this element it is important to make the essay about you, to speak in the first person, so that it is identifiably your voice. For guidance you can read sample 'This I Believe' essays online at [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org).

Your total submission should be around 800-1000 words. It would be preferable to receive it in electronic form but we will accept (legible!) handwritten contributions too. If you find that you are only able to write one of the two elements, of course it would still be welcome, but we do encourage you to have a go at writing both. If you need help with the project please do speak to Jane or Sarah and we'll see what we can do.

## Final Deadline for Submissions: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Please contact Jane or Sarah for more information: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) / [sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

## Essex Church Creativity Group 'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 7.00-9.00pm



### Changes to the Creativity Group

Regular members of the creativity group have recently considered the plans for the future sessions and decided to try a change to the group starting in the New Year.

Instead of having a specific organised activity every month, which takes quite a lot of planning, we have decided that (most months) participants will simply be invited to bring their own art and craft projects along and enjoy the support and fellowship of the group. We are still intending to offer a specific activity once a quarter and will work on projects for the church from time to time.

## Congregational Lunch

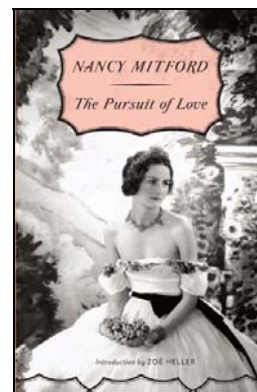
After the service on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2011



We will be having a congregational lunch after the service and small-group communion on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February.

This time we will be trying something slightly different to our usual potluck meals by having a somewhat simpler soup-and-bread lunch. If you would be willing to help with the preparation of this meal please get in touch with Sarah or Caroline to offer your assistance.

## Essex Church Reading Group 'The Pursuit of Love' by Nancy Mitford



Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's January session will be based on 'The Pursuit of Love' by Nancy Mitford. This was chosen by Michaela von Britzke

Information from the Guardian:

*"I read The Pursuit of Love as a child, mystified and delighted by the spirited Radletts and their terrifying father, and have returned to it at least once a year ever since. It is a darker book than I first realised, the superficial lightness concealing a faint and beguiling pessimism about love's pursuit and its consequences. Linda Radlett, the intensely English heroine, is the most beautiful of an eccentric aristocratic family closely modelled on Nancy Mitford's own. The children spend most of their days tucked up in the airing cupboard – the only warm place in their vast house – learning the rudiments of sex from Ducks and Duck Breeding and squabbling over the exact nature of Oscar Wilde's crimes. Linda bolts into a serious of wildly unsuitable liaisons before falling at last for the endearingly wicked Fabrice, a French duke. The story's genius lies in its wicked humour, which remains relentlessly uplifting even as the Blitz begin to smash all the hopes of that pre-war arcadia. Not everyone will warm to Mitford's bright, brittle tone: she prefers the bon mot to the bleeding heart and Linda's abandoned child gets short shrift. With the advent of war her acute ability to poke fun achieves a kind of perfection. The lacerating ironies of the very posh have never seemed so life affirming."*

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

[www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html)



## Walking Group: January in Regents Park

Our small but enthusiastic walking group had a slightly ominous start to the walk as it was cold, bleak and wet, and half the train lines seemed to be closed. Juliet even had to contend with a vomiting cat before she could join us. In spite of all these blows of fate, we met at Baker St and strode off into Regents Park. We were not the only intrepid travellers by any means, and were accompanied on our walk by a steady stream of skaters, scooter-ers, dog walkers, joggers and photographers. My normal ability to get lost anywhere, any time was thwarted by the fact that there were maps every couple of hundred yards. Almost as soon as we entered the park we were able to watch a stand-off between a heron and a swan – no blows were struck, and we decided to call it a draw. Later on, by passing London Zoo, we were able to see parrots, flamingos, giraffes and okapis, animals which would be been frankly surprising in any other London park. We also ran into an old friend of Essex Church: Salah Hajjaj, our former Sunday school teacher, who was there coaching young footballers.

On the other side of the park our momentum carried us to the top of Primrose Hill, where we reminisced about the twilight barking in One Hundred and One Dalmatians; we also rather unexpectedly watched two men having an alfresco boxing match. Inspired by the fact that there is a cafe in Regents Park called The Honest Sausage, we all but ran back down the hill, back past the zoo and into the main park. January is a tough month for gardeners, but the fountains were still picturesque and the gardeners had done their best with beds of violas and ornamental cabbages. These pleasant displays even slowed down our stampede towards The Honest Sausage, but not for long. The sausages were indeed honest, and the cafe developed the wholesome, steamy atmosphere of good hot food and drinks on a cold day. Only the regretful realization that we were occupying almost every chair stirred us back into action. Considering that the famous rose gardens were mere stick gardens, we thought the park still provided a good day out. We would like to invite any other intrepid walkers to join us for our next walk [on Easter Saturday], when we hope it will be warmer, dryer and more spring-like.

Caroline Blair



"When I was 16, my Uncle Bob got me over a particularly bad "teenaged girl" stretch by saying, "Don't worry about what people you don't like think about you, worry about what the people you like think of you." For more than 50 years I have tried to live in a way will make me the kind of person that the people I like will like.

The payoff for trying to live in a way that is worthy of my highest ideals (*emphasis on trying*) is that I have met and been friends with so many wonderful people who were also trying to live by their highest ideals. I know that through the years we have often been a blessing to each other. When I lean toward the good, the good leans toward me."

From a UU sermon by Ilona Forgeng

## Music Lifts Our Spirits



There's little I like better than to sit in my favourite chair of an evening and listen to favourite piece of music. So I guess I wasn't too surprised when I read in The Guardian that music apparently evokes the same feelings in us as food and drugs. But what a lovely, and healthy, food or drug music is! The news article asked, "Ever had goose bumps or felt euphoric chills when listening to a piece of music? If so, your brain is reacting to the music in the same way as it would to some delicious food or a psychoactive drug." (The Guardian, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011)

This is based on research from McGill University in Montreal where they've been experimenting on the release of the brain's 'reward chemical' – dopamine. Participants chose instrumental pieces of music that gave them that tingly feeling of delight and at the top of the list for classical music came Barber's Adagio for Strings, one of my top listens.

Even in the pop and dance, trance and techno genres, the remix of Barber's piece came top of most people's choices. It is wonderfully calming.

I have a collection of baroque pieces that I love to listen to – four CDs that are both restful and uplifting. I wonder what music you most like to listen to? Perhaps we can add music CDs to the 'what's on our spiritual bookshelf' section of the newsletter.

Jo Cresswell

## Warden's Column

### What's Happening in Our Busy Building



This time last year, most of the building had been closed due to the discovery of asbestos in some light-fittings. This year's crisis is the breakdown of the office computer. As with the asbestos, losing the computer means previously simple things have to be done in a roundabout and tiring way - which is why I'm patiently tapping this column into my phone. I remember last year it seemed like we'd never get the building back, but then suddenly one day we had - not just access through the front door - but beautiful new ceilings and lightfittings too: so I'm hoping I'll soon be looking back on our computer sufferings as merely the birthpangs of a better way of doing things.

After the blessed quiet of New Year, the building is already bustling again - last night we had a psychology lecture downstairs, Tai Chi in the Hall and Beit Klal synagogue celebrating Tu B'Shvat in the Church. We're so busy nowadays that I routinely tell new enquirers that we don't have any space at evenings or weekends and fitting in special events like the Jewish festivals or the nursery Christmas concert has become a real headache.

It's lovely to see the building so well used though - and looking so good: the only part that hasn't been redecorated now is the main church space and that's on the agenda as soon as we can be confident we've got the leaking roof under control.

Other changes in the air are the search for a new Treasurer to take over from Juliet at the end of December. As I deal with a lot of payments as well as collecting money from hirers and banking, I've worked closely with Juliet for the past few years and I know how diligent she's been in taking care of the Church's money. We realise that whoever becomes Treasurer in the future may have less time available and so we're looking into the possibility of getting the book-keeping done professionally leaving the Treasurer with the more interesting tasks - we've found a small company that specialises in charities and would send us monthly reports.

For some reason, I have a really positive feeling about 2011 - so I hope all its crises will bring opportunities too and I look forward too some exciting surprises as well as the good things I'm already expecting.

Jenny Moy

## Small Group Communion



**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30pm  
Downstairs 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 church library. A number of members of the congregation expressed interest in having a regular opportunity for communion here so, since the autumn, we have been experimenting with services led by a variety of different people, and we have been very encouraged by the experience so far.

We hope that different people will take turns to lead the small-group communion services so that we can experience a number of different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

**13<sup>th</sup> February** – David Francis Darling

**13<sup>th</sup> March** – Jane Blackall

**10<sup>th</sup> April** – Tristan Jovanović

**8<sup>th</sup> May** – John Hands and Sarah Tinker

If you would like to find out more about these small-group communions then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.



“When we invite friends for a meal, we do much more than offer them food for their bodies. We offer friendship, fellowship, good conversation, intimacy, and closeness...”

The table is one of the most intimate places in our lives. It is there that we give ourselves to one another. When we say, ‘Take some more, let me serve you another plate, let me pour you another glass, don’t be shy, enjoy it,’ we say a lot more than our words express. We invite our friends to become part of our lives. We want them to be nurtured by the same food and drink that nurture us. We desire communion...

Strange as it may sound, the table is the place where we want to become food for one another. Every meal can become a time of growing communion with one another.”

**Henri Nouwen**

## Membership of Essex Church



We have just sent out a new style of membership renewal letter to all members and friends of Kensington Unitarians. It tells you the information we already have listed for you and we ask you simply to check that there has been no change of details and then return your form to the church office or to one of our staff or committee members.

You may have noticed the new photo board that Jane Blackall has painstakingly created for us in the foyer. It has delightful photos of many of us, in alphabetical order. But within a few days one or two of the carefully placed mug shots had slipped. We stick them back up again and then another one falls down. I’m using this as a new form of meditation - if your photo falls out of place I send you a loving thought.

Sticking the photos back up again has set me musing about names. As a congregation we cover 19 of the letters of the alphabet. Perhaps our evangelising mission this year could be to encourage anyone to join us whose name begins with a letter we have not yet covered. If you meet a Xerxes or Xavier, a Zak or a Queenie on your travels - do invite them to join us here at Essex Church one Sunday morning!

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Dates for your Diary

### Some Forthcoming Events at Essex Church

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March: London District Quarterly & AGM**

**Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 3.00 pm**

**Alister Hardy Society Talk:**

*‘A Journey to the Centre’* by Margaret Rizza

More details from John Franklin: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May: Essex Church Congregational AGM**

A Unitarian event you might be interested in:

# FOY Conference

29<sup>th</sup> April - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011

at the Barnes Close, Chadwich,  
Malthouse Lane, Bromsgrove, B61 0RA

## 'Anthropology in a Digital Age'



This year's study subject will focus on the influence of technology on our daily lives. Has technology affected our behaviour? For many the answer has to be a resounding YES! For example, the Mobile Phone in its various guises makes instant communication possible, but does it make us better people?

What about those who have little or no access to the digital world due to socio-economic, political, physical and sensory barriers? How does the technological revolution benefit them?

Also there are the inevitable positives and negatives - the latter should not be overlooked; the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, etc have their darker sides. Caught up in the challenge and excitement of the 'new' are we abnegating our responsibilities?

In addition during the weekend there will be free time for local walks, visits, worship/meditation and other activities. Cost for adults: £158.

Contact David Warhurst for information:  
telephone 01609 882442 or email  
hazndaz@warhurstfamily.co.uk



Dates for your Diary - Forthcoming Event at Essex Church:

# A Taste of Taize

Thursdays 31<sup>st</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> April, 7-9pm



A chance to learn more about the ecumenical community of Taizé in France (on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March) and to experience a typical Taizé act of worship with singing and silence followed by food (on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April). It would be ideal if you could come to both of these sessions but this is not essential.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

# Spitfire Women



"Gloria! Gloria in excelsis deo!"

As the Latin words dive through the trees and  
Light off the Heath, like squadrons of querulous starlings – now  
Virtually extinct, my ageing heart rises with them  
In the glory of the music; no longer straightened, no longer  
Ponderous within me. I want to gambol like a swallow  
(not yet in season)

Like a man-made bird – say a Spitfire – also  
Virtually extinct; and those young men and women now sickened  
Nearly sightless and ageing who once sprang into them and  
Rolled over and over like young cubs in the forest  
Soared like swallows, dived like seagulls  
To drive away the crooked-cross black squadrons  
Streaming towards us, determined to make the best and brightest  
In this land – and their children, (among whom I too crouched)  
As extinct as Saxon thanes.

"Gloria! Gloria! In excelcis deo!"

The words, the music, the choir, the keen air above Cambridge  
Still ours to exult in, to rejoice in, to give out from hearts we  
Refuse to let age, like our bodies, in which we still feel  
Crimson and undeterred – and soaring – and exulting!

John Hands



# Memories of Doris Campbell

1st September 1946 – 25th November 2010

## Tribute from Doris' service at the crematorium in December:

Doris lived her life well and appreciated so much about being alive. Doris loved to host parties – she was naturally hospitable, a great provider of lovely meals, an excellent cook. So much of what Doris turned her hand to had a certain style and sense of order and beauty. Her lovely flat that she was so glad to have and that she made so beautiful, the stained glass work that she turned her hand to in recent years; her appearance that she took great pride in – always being so well turned out with colours matching and everything 'just so'.



Her way of being in the world was so distinctively Doris. And there was no messing with Doris, was there? She created such a sense of order in her life and would not tolerate chaos or sloppiness in others. I suspect she was a really good social worker with a strong desire to help others and the ability to draw clear boundaries for those she worked with. She was a truly good friend and could be relied to offer a helping hand when it was needed. She placed importance on personal exploration and through psycho drama classes and through her involvement in the church and the School of Philosophy she had learnt to understand herself and others better. Life was not always easy for Doris but she had made a real effort to work through some difficult issues in recent weeks, months and years. She had much to be proud of in life, but perhaps her greatest achievement was in completing her degree at the age of 44.

Like all of us Doris had some difficult aspects of her character – some of us will perhaps not forget being on the receiving end of her sharp tongue – yet we could always sense the love beneath the sharpness. And I personally will never forget the huge amounts of practical help she gave both to me and many others when we were facing difficult times. I watched with admiration the bravery Doris showed in facing her illness and treatment and her heartfelt and well expressed appreciation of the care she received from the health service. When I remember Doris I remember her love of life – going to classical concerts, visiting art galleries and Kew Gardens, having fun with people – eating fish and chips together, walking in the park to look at the spring bulbs. I wonder what your memories are?

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

A special pleasure for me was to find that Doris liked classical music and enjoyed ballet and opera. I think we went to a prom concert together in 2007, but in 2008 it felt as though we went wild and with her friend Iran we booked for 10 prom concerts. We had a marvellous time taking particular pleasure in sitting behind the orchestra on the percussion side. The more action there was the better and on one night during a Messiaen piece an enthusiastic young man at the gongs struck the small one so hard it jumped off the stand. One of the programmes we found deeply moving was a concert performance of Messiaen's opera "St Francis of Assisi". Doris's birthday on 1st September was celebrated by our taking a box. This was especially enjoyable as one is able to take in refreshments. We had champagne and strawberries during the interval, celebrating in style and then listening to the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Sometimes we met before the performance and picnicked across the road in Kensington Gardens. I remember it as a very happy summer – why go on holiday when you could have such a great time in London? By the following year Doris's health was not so good and she was troubled by a cough and having to control it during the concerts, which she did. We celebrated her birthday in a box once again. Doris lived from day to day and over long experience of illness had learned that she might feel dreadful one day but the next she might have more energy. So in the spring of 2010 although Iran and I had our doubts, the three of us met up and over a meal went through the proms prospectus marking off our "yes definitely" and "maybe". Doris and Iran were particularly keen to book for the Mahler concerts. By the time July, August and September came, as you know, Doris was very ill but even when she was in Trinity hospice she was still hoping that she would recover her health sufficiently to attend some of the concerts. Sadly it wasn't to be.

**Juliet Edwards**

Like many of us at Essex Church, I never knew Doris 100% well. During the time I knew her she was always a 'cancer survivor' who was not out of the wood yet. But apart from the very occasional comment about the craft activities she had learned via her cancer support group, you would never have known. She was more human dynamo than wilting flower. It is Doris's laugh that I remember best. She was a notoriously plain speaker, and I can hear her very clearly saying, "You can't **do** that!" – then, just when she might have seemed a bit intimidating, she would burst into joyous laughter and disarm the whole situation. Long after she had been diagnosed with her last illness she continued to participate in activities, including energetic hikes, with friends from the church. Trudging across a field you would hear gales of laughter behind or in front of you, and would think what a good time the people walking next to Doris must be having.

**Caroline Blair**



Hello dear Doris. As I write this I'm picturing you sitting in your flat telling me about your day. It's been a good day, you're smiling that unforgettable smile, wearing that unforgettable lipstick and wearing colours I wouldn't put together - though I might just do that now, in celebration/memory, appreciation and celebration of you!

At the end of 2006 Essex Church held a Silent Auction to raise funds for the new toilets. I didn't know what I could offer but with a bit of help from Juliet decided to donate some hours of my time for spring cleaning and ironing since I really do enjoy both (weird I know!!) You chose to pay for some ironing (which you detested doing) and that's how our friendship began really. After my charitable giving I continued to work for you, occasionally, initially doing your mountain (I'm not kidding readers, it was piled in a basket by her bed and came a third of the way up the wall! Scary even for an ironing-o-phile like me!) Latterly I did some spring (and autumn) cleaning. You needed the help and I needed the money. It was a humbling time for me from which I learned invaluable lessons so thank-you for making it such a pleasant environment to learn in. We clicked into place didn't we? During that year or so of this collaboration we talked a lot, listened a lot and ate a lot! You made lunch for me and I experienced your enormous Doris-portions and some chiding with "...is that all you're having?!"

I love your cosy, neat, very ordered, colourful and compact flat; your creative use of space and your obvious gratitude and contentment with living where you lived, close to the hub of Victoria with all the shops, theatres and transport with spitting distance. The heart of London. Your heart was in that flat wasn't it? You chose to go back there from Trinity Hospice in the last few months of your life even though you knew you could be choosing isolation because you wanted to die in your own, loved surroundings. You said you wanted to be able to see your treasured possessions, to hear the sounds of Westminster Cathedral and the communal heating belting out sweltering heat in the winter knowing you wouldn't be cold. Everyone else peeled off layers of winter clothing after climbing those stairs and stepping into the 'Campbell Sauna' but the most important thing was that you were happy. Those stairs! It's impossible to write about you without mentioning those stairs! I have such mixed feelings about never having to climb them again. OMG Doris! How did you do it all those years? I guess your body would've got used to them; 'known' them. They certainly kept you fit and kept you trim given all that food you consumed daily until your last months when you hardly ate at all - except that day I brought you a take-away from your favourite Chinese Restaurant in Strutton Ground. It gave me such pleasure to be able to get that for you. It must've been a week or so before you breathed your last breath. It was cold that day, I was wearing several layers topped by my down-filled Puffa jacket. I queued in the packed restaurant that busy lunchtime listening to you giving me your order on my mobile as I moved around the island of food. (The memory of that still makes me laugh out loud!) Then I hurried the 10 minute walk to the million steps up to your flat. I did my usual deep breath at the bottom and then began my chant and assent. I found those steps such a challenge that I devised a way of coping by having a contest with myself. I counted as I climbed. ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR! - ONE! TWO! THREE! FOUR! - ONE TWO..... etc all the way to the top 20 times plus two more all the way to the top. Then I'd stand on the top step catching my breath, heart pounding. Who needs a gym with this daily workout?! Not you Doris!

That day one of your carers answered the door as I stood there huffing and puffing carrying the take-away container wrapped in my thermal scarf. The flat was its usual sauna temperature so I began peeling off my layers of winter warmth. You sat in your posh, comfy, black leather reclining armchair looking at me with that usual Doris, bemused and pitying half smile on your face. Was there any sympathy? Absolutely not!! Your look spoke volumes at my whimper of "...those stairs." Just before you died I was proud to announce to you that I could do all of those steps ONE! TWO! THREE!! FOUR times 20 plus two in one minute precisely! I was proud of myself but you remained unimpressed after 20 years of doing it every day. You ate that meal with such relish. All of it! Every last morsel! A little later you were sick but you didn't care at all because it had tasted sooooo nice you said. There was no pity for yourself, no sadness, just "Oh well never mind, it tasted delicious so I don't regret it.

It was such a privilege and pleasure to spend some of your last few weeks going through your photographs. A drawer full of envelopes and the albums going back 40+ years. So delightful to watch you as you remembered the people and place in the pictures. So heart-warming to witness your pleasure and great for me to feel so useful. We laughed a lot during those last hours Doris. Thank-you for trusting me with your memories. What will I remember about you? What do I miss? What do I appreciate about you.... and not?! Your colours, your smile and your forthright, 'don't beat about the bush' comments and judgements of that which you didn't understand/agree with and your utter conviction that your way is the right way! I used all of my well-honed listening and reflecting skills to challenge the ones I just couldn't agree with. You helped me to challenge my own tendency to do the same... so thank you! Rest in peace dear you. Your courage was a beacon. Lots of love dear Doris.

**Jo Ridgers**

I first met Doris in about 1993 when she joined the Psychodrama group of which I was already a member. Psychodrama is a form of group therapy in which various structures and techniques are used to enable the participants, if they wish, to replay emotional problems, and in so doing to come to understand them more fully. Shortly after joining the group Doris told us she had been diagnosed as having a malignancy, and that she would need to embark upon a course of treatment in order to remove this. At that point she wept, and I think we all wept with her. From that time on, Doris told us from time to time how things were going with her, and showed such a great deal of courage and strength in dealing with her situation, in a way which I can only say, speaking for myself, left me awed and humbled.

After treatment Doris did at first make a noticeable improvement. She joined fully in the activities of the group. I think I should say these are not always solemn or intense, and can involve a good deal of fun and laughter. Soon Doris's laughter, an outburst of merriment and joyfulness, often echoed around the group, as I am sure many of us here can still hear the way her laughter could be heard in this church. It was truly a delight to hear.



Sometime during the mid nineties, as I had told the group a little about this church, and Unitarianism, Doris asked me more about it, and decided to come along and see for herself. She did not take long to settle in with us, and soon she was playing an active part in the activities of the church, and joined the Management Committee. However, after a time, we became aware that Doris's cancer had returned, and that she would need further treatment, which sadly, soon became ongoing.

Over this period of time Doris got to know my wife Heidi, who had also joined the Church, and together we became close friends. She came to our parties, including most Christmas or New Year celebrations, made friends with some of our friends, and became a regular part of our lives. Her qualities and attributes as a person delighted us, and were all part of her striking presence as a most unusual and courageous woman. We both shared similar unfashionable Left-Wing views about politics and society, and quite often enjoyed ranting together over what we saw as the mendacity of politicians – not all I should say, on the Other Side!

Doris was always honest and direct, but she could be tactful when she saw there was a need for this. But quite often she did not avoid saying straight out what she felt needed saying, however uncomfortable some of those she knew might find this now and again. Doris had little patience with shilly-shallying. We always found her most kind and generous. She loved to give gifts, and she had a flair for giving her friends presents, or making food, which was especially appropriate for what she knew they liked and would enjoy. She introduced both Heidi and I to the gentle art of mango-eating, and I doubt I shall ever enjoy them again, remembering those delicious ones she brought to our social gatherings. And I know I shall never eat home-made soup again as Doris made it. In her last months she could only give her Carers instructions – minute and painstaking instructions I should say – about the precise nature of the ingredients, the order in which they had to be added to the soup, and the exact length of time it had to be on the stove in order for it to give us a perfect taste and aroma.

I could say so much more about our dear friend Doris, but I would like to end with paying my own tribute to what I believe was Doris's most important and endearing attribute. And this was the depth of her concern for other people. Above all other of her qualities Doris was a Carer. She began her life's work as a nurse, and then later studied and gained, whilst still at work, a degree in Social Science. She became a Social Worker, and took on some of the most burdensome and stressful work of this much undervalued profession. This work to her was more than just an occupation – it was a vocation, her life's calling, and she carried it out till she could do it no more. In his book about Victorian and early 20th Century village life by Ronald Blythe, there is a village nurse who told him: *'People must have help when they need it – what else matters?'* If Doris had heard this quotation I know she would have agreed with every word of it.

**John Hands**



I met Doris at Summer School a few years ago. I had arrived very early and noticed that I was allocated to share a room with Doris. I expected a middle aged, very English woman, probably dressed in tweeds to arrive. So Doris was a lovely surprise for me. She was warm, friendly and a rock of good sense. I felt totally at home with Doris from the beginning. At summer school we did some work with Fimo (clay). Everyone made something and the following day we were given a piece of someone else's work. I was lucky, I was given the piece made by Doris and I still have it and I treasure it. She was a wonderful lovely person. I feel blessed to have met her.

**Rev. Bridget Spain (Dublin Unitarians)**

# Essex Church Committee News



- Jane and Jenny have spent a lot of time trying to devise the perfect arrangement for the chairs for Sunday services. We need everyone to have a good view, for late-comers to feel comfortable coming in, and for people to be able to access the candles without any problem during the candles of joy and concern. We are grateful to them for all the trouble they have gone to, and hope everyone is happy with the final result.
- The library is nearly finished, with just a couple of jobs still to be completed. It looks very pleasant now (do go down and check if you haven't already done so). Some of Doris's books have been presented to the library and will be marked with a bookplate. We have also had recent donations from Betty and Tristan for which we are grateful.
- Various repairs have been done, including the wash basins, and all the blown lightbulbs have been replaced by our intrepid warden.
- The photoboard looks very nice in the foyer, though a couple of the photographs need re-fixing.
- The church is offering bursaries towards the cost of attending summer school (20th-27th August in lovely Derbyshire) if anyone is interested in going, but is held back by the cost. Please ask Jane or Caroline for details, or visit the Hucklow summer school website: [www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk/programme.html](http://www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk/programme.html)
- The Church is no longer in the Congestion Charge zone; makes no difference on Sundays, but may be of interest to anyone visiting during the week.

**Caroline Blair**

*The Next Meeting of the Essex Church Management Committee is at 7pm on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March.*

"Thomas Merton wrote, "Suddenly there comes a point when religion becomes laughable. Then you decide that, nevertheless, you are religious." I'm with Merton on this one. I affirm my religiosity even when it's laughable – especially when it's laughable. And I'll let my laughter be my guide out of despair and into hope. I will continue to delight and be grateful for the surprising ways that hope springs up in strange places. Even in church. The church is that institution whose primary purpose is to help people, maintain hope in their lives. When people have no hope, they discover hope together. When they've searched and searched and cannot discover hope, they create hope together. May it be so."

**UU Minister Rev. Robert Hardies**



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

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
13<sup>th</sup> February, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 10<sup>th</sup> April**

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 members). **Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674**

## 'Finding Our Voice'

**Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall**

**Sundays 20<sup>th</sup> February, 27<sup>th</sup> March  
& 17<sup>th</sup> April 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.

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

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

# Multifaith Calendar

## ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Candlemas – Christian

Candlemas commemorates the ritual purification of Mary, 40 days after the birth of her son Jesus. This day also marks the ritual presentation of the baby Jesus to God in the Temple at Jerusalem. The festival is called Candlemas because this was the day that all the Church's candles for the year were blessed.

## ☸ 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Imbolc – Pagan/Wiccan

Imbolc was one of the cornerstones of the Celtic calendar. For them the success of the new farming season was of great importance. As winter stores of food were getting low Imbolc rituals were performed to harness divine energy that would ensure a steady supply of food until the harvest six months later. Like many Celtic festivals, the Imbolc celebrations centred around the lighting of fires. Fire was perhaps more important for this festival than others as it was also the holy day of Brigid (also known as Bride, Brigit, Brid), the Goddess of fire, healing and fertility. The lighting of fires celebrated the increasing power of the Sun over the coming months.

## ☸ 8<sup>th</sup> February – Parinirvana – Buddhist

Mahayanists mark the final passing away from this world of Gotama Buddha at Kushinagara, India, at the age of 80. Pure Land Buddhists refer to it as Nirvana Day.

## ☸ 8<sup>th</sup> February – Vasanta Panchami / Saraswati Puja – Hindu

Widely celebrated in India, and by Hindus around the world, this festival is usually linked with Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and learning. Yellow is a predominant colour in the celebrations, to indicate the onset of spring and because of its associations with Saraswati.

## ☸ 16<sup>th</sup> February – The Prophet

### Muhammad's (pbuh) Birthday / Mawlid an-Nabi – Muslim

The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) Birthday is celebrated on the 12th of Rabi al-Awwal, the third month of the Muslim calendar. In the UK Muslims celebrate at the mosque. Processions are held in some cities in the Muslim world, and in some countries the celebration starts with readings from the Qur'an, followed by poetry and songs in praise of the Prophet.

## ☸ 18<sup>th</sup> February – Magha Puja – Buddhist

This day commemorates the occasion when the Buddha predicted his death and recited a summary of his teachings and a code of discipline (which monks are expected to recite every fortnight) to 1,250 enlightened followers on the full moon of Magha. The day is observed with meditation, chanting and listening to sermons.

## ☸ 18<sup>th</sup> February – Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna – Hindu

Sri Ramakrishna, Hindu teacher and mystic was born in 1833, and founded the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Vedanta movement. Swami Vivekananda, his disciple, formalised his teachings into a philosophical structure.

# Who Needs Sacraments?

## A Workshop for All-Comers Led by Rev. Bill Darlison

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30-4.30pm  
Here at Essex Church



In this workshop the Rev Bill Darlison will introduce sacraments and symbols that could breathe new life into our worship and rites of passage services, based on his ministry at Dublin Unitarian Church. The aim is that participants should feel empowered to begin using these in their own congregations.

### Programme:

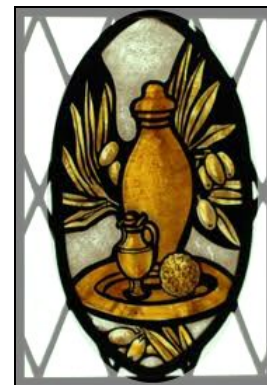
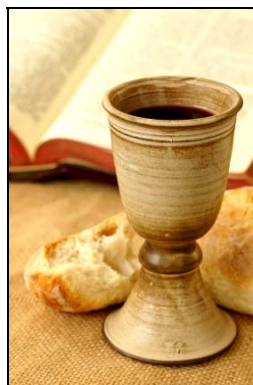
12.30 pm – Arrivals, tea and lunch  
*(please bring a packed lunch)*

1.30 pm – Workshop begins

4.15 pm – Tea and departures

*Organised by: London and SE District  
Liberal Christian Affinity Group.*

*Further information: Jim Corrigan – 020 8361 1843*





## How I Came to Essex Church

I've never been what you might describe as particularly religious - in fact one of my earlier memories is of being unable to accept the conventional churchy description of the world. In particular, the logic of there being multiple gods and religions for the people on one planet, each with their own entirely different stories of creation, simply didn't stack up!

So for a while in my teenage years I tried describing myself as an atheist. But that concept also never quite worked, and I suppose I would say today that I'm an agnostic enquirer, who is still intrigued by big unanswered questions about the origins of life, the universe and everything.

I was fortunate enough to attend a Quaker school, and when I lived last year for a short time within walking distance of the nascent Stoke Newington meeting, I started attending, and soon realised how much I missed, and actually quite enjoyed the silence. I'm also a fan of the democratic nature of a Quaker meeting, which offers everyone a chance to speak when moved to do so. A few years ago, when dealing with a particularly stressful time at work, I also discovered the benefits of meditation, and continue to practice when I get a chance.

We moved back into Westbourne Grove last summer, and I was sad to lose the easy access to a local Quaker meeting. But my partner had previously pointed out that there was a Unitarian meeting nearby, and after some research and a few enquiries, I realised that given my background, and the structure of a Unitarian service, it might be a perfect fit. Funnily enough, I also discovered that the Essex Church building was first used on my actual birthday, back in 1977!

In fact, my first visit came in the midst of a minor dispute with my partner. I can't even remember now what the (of course trivial) issue we were arguing over was actually about. But I remember saying that by going along to the service that day, with a bit of luck I might learn how to be a better husband.

As it turned out, the whole service was dedicated to a couple who were celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary! I am sorry that I've since forgotten their names [*John Hands and Heidi Ferid*], but it was a very moving, and thoroughly enjoyable celebration, and at the end, I took the opportunity to ask if the couple had any tips for a long-lasting marriage. The man paused for a second, then said "This is a second marriage for both of us, so we know a bit about these things... firstly, don't just follow your parents' example about how to relate to your partner. Secondly, don't try to impose your will on your spouse. And thirdly, LISTEN." I then asked his partner the same question. Her advice was simply "Keep on talking".

In fact, those simple pieces of complementary wisdom have proved to be a useful and helpful reference point in the weeks and months that have passed since. I'm sure my relationship with my partner has benefited as well.

Now, if only I was able to make more time to come along to the meetings - as I've only managed to make it along once, since! But it is comforting to know that the welcoming environment of Essex Church is there if I ever need it.

Jonathan Frewin

An Open Meeting of the Alister Hardy Society:

## What Near-Death Experiences can teach us about Everyday Life

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, 3.00pm at Essex Church

A talk by Dr. Ornella Coraza. Ornella will be exploring the phenomenon of the near-death experiences in a way that goes beyond Western-style thinking. She will introduce us to Japanese perspectives on death and life and present a way through the current dualist model of mind and body and concepts. Such an approach to human existence serves as a ground for a better understanding of both an individual and universal aspect of human beings and shows us how to enhance the meaning and quality of our lives. Ornella Corazza studied the near-death experience for her PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and at the University of Tokyo. She is currently a lead researcher and lecturer at University of Hertfordshire and Kig's College, where she is responsible for a Europe-wide research project in the field of public health. She is author of 'Near-Death Experiences: Exploring the Mind-Body-Connection' (2008) amongst other publications.

Admission: £6.00 at the door. Coffee, tea and biscuits at 2.30pm. Website: [www.alisterhardysociety.org](http://www.alisterhardysociety.org)

## Ethics, Ecology and the Interdependent Web



**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February, 10am – 3.30pm**  
**Croydon Unitarian Church**

This event will feature Rev. Peter Owen Jones (of BBC "Around the World in 80 Faiths"), Vinod Kapashi (Jain), Datuk Leslie Davidson, a world recognized expert on Palm Oil. (Datuk is an honour similar to Knighthood). Other speakers from Environmental Groups are invited. Davidson, a Ditchling Unitarian, has written a book of insight and humour on his work in developing Palm Oil Plantations in Sabah, Borneo. He will be signing copies for those who wish to buy.

*There will be a "Bring and Share" lunch. Coffee, Tea and Juice will be provided. £5 donation requested.*

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings

*(Previously 'Universal Spiritual Gatherings')*

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February, 6.30-8.15pm**  
**Held at Essex Church**



*The gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.*

*"You must love yourself before you love another. By accepting yourself and fully being what you are, your simple presence can make others happy."*

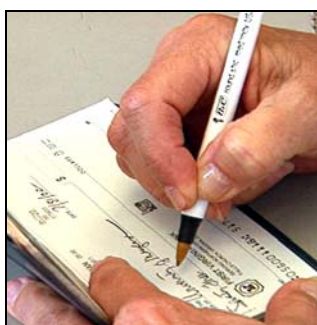
Peaceful and Joyous connection with the Divine, the One Light at the Heart of All through music, meditation and inspiration from many spiritual traditions. Bring your beloved self, your family, children and friends. All are welcome

**For further information contact service hosts:**

Reverend Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980

Reverend Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

*'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'*



## A New Church Treasurer

At the meeting of the management committee in December, Juliet gave notice that she would be stepping down as church treasurer with effect from 31 December 2011. She has been our much appreciated treasurer for several years and in this time, under her careful watch, our church finances have reached a very healthy state. The committee has discussed the situation in some detail.



Already our warden Jenny works closely with Juliet over church finances and does quite a lot of the paperwork, such as spreadsheets and preparing cheques for signing. We are now exploring the possibility of using an outside book-keeping service to take over more of these every day financial tasks.

Nevertheless it is of course vital that we have a designated church treasurer to oversee our finances and report to the committee and congregation. This is a great opportunity for someone to participate in the running of our community and does not require any particular skills or experiences, just a willingness to get more involved. The new Treasurer can learn alongside Juliet until the end of the year and she will continue to help after the handover as requested. If any member of the congregation feels they might be interested in taking on this role, or would like to know more about our church finances, please have a word with Juliet or Sarah.

**Howard Hague**

## Adult RE: 'Life Spirit'



**Sundays 30<sup>th</sup> January  
and 6<sup>th</sup> February from 12.30-2.00pm**

This DVD based course has been created by our District Minister the Rev David Usher (*pictured*) is another way to encourage people to explore their spiritual lives. The whole course of 12 DVDs can be found online at present and accessed for free (see <http://go.podia.net/?c=1445>).

We are going to try two of its sessions after our Sunday services in January and February so do bring along a sandwich and join us on Sunday January 30<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February from 12.45 pm to 2pm.

The course is based partly upon conversations between David Usher and Father Adrian Smith, a well known writer and group facilitator on contemporary spirituality. Do join us as we trial these useful and interesting course materials.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Newsletter Deadline

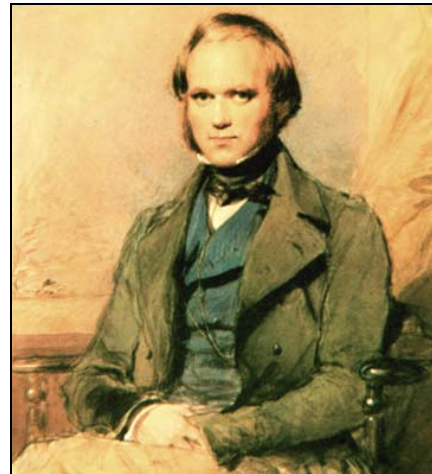


The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member before that date.

**Thank you!!!**

*A London lecture which you might be interested in:*

## Would Darwin get a Job in Science Today?



**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011, 6.30-7.30pm  
UCL Anatomy Building, Gower Street WC1E 6BT**

Join us for an evening of light-hearted discussion and debate as we investigate how science has changed over the past two hundred years. Moving from a time of gentleman naturalists with the means to explore and describe, experiment and invent to an era of funding applications and directed research, we ask whether things have got better.

With a lively panel of leading field zoologists, science historians and laboratory scientists we air the issues behind the changing disciplines. Should they be funded to explore with no specific question in mind beyond discovery? Are expensive expeditions better than computer-based research? Has science gone to the dogs? Where have all the polymaths gone?

Speakers: evolutionary biologist Dr Anjali Goswami (UCL Genetics, Evolution and the Environment and UCL Earth Sciences); science historian Dr Joe Cain (UCL Science and Technology Studies) and evolutionary geneticist Prof Mark Thomas (UCL Genetics, Evolution and the Environment).

## Those Winter Sundays

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labour in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

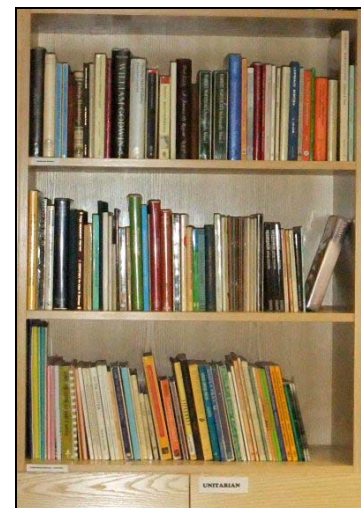
speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

**Robert Hayden**



# Recent Library Acquisitions

Our congregational library has recently been reorganised, following the installation of the lovely new shelving – if you haven't seen it yet, pop down the stairs to have a look! The following titles have recently been added to stock and are available for loan. If you wish to borrow any item, please enter the details in the library loans book on the shelves.



## Meditational and other material from the UUA in Boston:

BEARD, Margaret L.	Listening for our song. Collected Meditations Vol 4. 2002
BENARD, Mary	How we are called: a meditation anthology. 2003
BENARD, Mary	Singing in the night. Collected Meditations Vol. 5. 2004
HILL, Robert L.	The complete guide to small group ministry. 2003
LOCKWOOD, Jeffrey	A guest of the world: meditations. 2006
McKEEMAN, Gordon B	Out of the ordinary: meditations. 2000
MERRITT, Barbara	Amethyst beach: meditations. 2007
MILLSPAUGH, John	A people so bold: theology and ministry for Unitarian Universalists. 2010 (inc Thandeka, Morales)
MURFIN, Patrick	We build temples in the head; side by side we gather. 2004
MONTGOMERY, K	Day of promise. Collected Meditations Vol. 1. 2000
OWEN-TOWLE, Tom	Growing a beloved community: twelve hallmarks of a healthy congregation. 2004
SEABURG, Carl	The communion book (UUA Ministers Association). 1993
SEARL, Edward	Bless this child: a treasury of poems, quotations and readings to celebrate birth. 2006
SEARL, Edward	We pledge our hearts: a treasury of poems, quotations and readings to celebrate love and marriage.
SHAFFER, Nancy	Instructions in joy: meditations. 2002
SHICK, Stephen M.	Consider the lilies: meditations. 2004
WELLEMAYER, Mary	Admire the moon: meditations. 2005

## Recent donations to the library by members of the congregation:

A number of books have been given to the church from Doris Campbell's personal collection. In addition we are grateful for donations from: Jane Blackall, Betty Evans and Tristan Jovanović.

ALEXANDER, Scott W.	Everyday spiritual practice: simple pathways for enriching your life. Boston, UUA, 1999
ARMSTRONG, Karen	The spiral staircase: a memoir. Harper, 2005
AXAM, Nicholas	Heresy saved me: a Unitarian in the 21st century. ( <i>The author's spiritual journey to Unitarianism</i> )
BORGENICHT, David	Native American wisdom. Running Press, 1994 ( <i>miniature book</i> )
DARLISON, Bill	The penultimate truth and other incitements. Dublin, 2000
DAWES, J. et al	The quest: exploring a sense of soul. O Books, 2005
GEORGE, Mike	Learn to find inner peace: discover your true self, manage your anxieties and emotions. 2003
JUNG, Carl G.	Man and his symbols. Picador (Pan Books), 1978
JUNG, Carl G.	The undiscovered self. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1896
KORNFIELD, Jack	A path with heart: a guide through the perils and promises of spiritual life. Rider, 1994
KUBLER-ROSS, E	Life lessons: how our mortality can teach us about life and living. London, Simon & Schuster, 2001
LESTER, Art	Seeing with your ears: spirituality for those who can't believe. IUniverse, Inc., 2003
MULLER, Wayne	Sabbath: finding rest, renewal and delight in our busy lives. Bantam Books, 1999
NOUWEN, Henri J.M.	Can you drink the cup? Ave Maria Press, revised ed., 2006
NOUWEN, Henri J.M.	The Genesee diary: report from a Trappist monastery. 1989
NOUWEN, Henri J.M.	The way of the heart: desert spirituality and contemporary ministry. HarperCollins, 1981
OLIVER, Mary	New and selected poems. Vol 1. Boston, Beacon Press, 1992
OLIVER, Mary	Wild geese: selected poems. Bloodaxe Books, 2004
REED, Cliff	Unitarian? What's that? Questions and answers about a liberal religious alternative. Lindsey Press.
RINPOCHE, Sogyal	The Tibetan book of living and dying. Revised ed. Rider, 2002
RUMI	The essential Rumi. Translated by Coleman Barks et al. Castle Books, 1997
RUMI	The illustrated Rumi: a treasury of wisdom from the poet of the soul. (Philip Dunn et al). Harper, 2000
RUMI	Whispers of the beloved: quatrains. Thorsons, 1999
SHAH, Shabibi	Where do I belong? From Kabul to London – a refugee's life. 2nd edition. Longstone Books, 2008
SINGING THE LIVING TRADITION (Hymn Book).	Beacon Press (UUA), 1993
WEIL, Pierre	The art of living in peace: towards a new peace consciousness. Findhorn, 1994 (pub. by Unesco).

Howard Hague, Hon. Librarian

# Sinfulness for Unitarians

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2011



I don't know if any of you have heard about this - that one day, apparently, God was looking down at the earth and saw all the terrible evil that was being committed by humanity. So God decided to send an angel down to find out what was going on. Were things as bad as they seemed? On returning to heaven the angel told God that the situation on Earth was indeed pretty dreadful. The angel estimated that 95% was bad and 5% was good. God thought for a little while and then decided to send down another angel to get another point of view. (Another point of view? Clearly God does have Unitarian tendencies!) So, when this angel returned he confirmed that Earth was in terrible decline – he estimated that 95% of humanity was well and truly bad and a mere 5% was good. God thought about what to do and decided to send a letter to the 5% of people who were good with a little pep-talk, something to encourage them, something to help them to keep on the straight and narrow path.

And do you know what the letter said?...

... Oh! You didn't get that letter either? (*from JokeEmail.com*)

Sin and evil are not words often heard in Unitarian services; even in the Victorian era when sin was a particularly common topic for preachers to focus upon, Unitarians apparently tended to avoid it – preferring to preach a more hopeful view of human existence. This little, but remarkably helpful, book 'Unitarian What's That?', written by Cliff Reed our minister in Ipswich, explains our current position well I think –

*"Generally speaking though Unitarians share a positive view of human nature and human potential. While not being blind to human weakness and our capacity for evil, we do not see human beings as inherently depraved or corrupt. We have little time for the doctrines of 'original sin' and inherited guilt. Rather we see human beings as having inherent and equal worth."*

Cliff Reed mentions original sin and no address on this topic of sinfulness could fail to mention this concept. We all know the story - of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, disobeying God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and through their disobedience being banished from the garden, condemned to a life of suffering that would end in death. This powerful myth is of course originally from the Hebrew Scriptures and I've sometime wondered about the different interpretations of this myth made within Judaism and Christianity. Karen Armstrong points out in her book on Genesis that the later Hebrew Scriptures do not particularly dwell on this original sin and states that *"the Jewish tradition has laid no particular blame on either Adam or Eve for the human plight. The writer was more concerned to depict the timeless human predicament: Adam is simply 'everyman'. Eve and the serpent are both aspects of humanity. .... Sin is simply a fact of life, not an unmanageable catastrophe. By plucking the fruit, human beings become conscious of their capacity for good as well as for evil."* (p.29 Karen Armstrong, In The Beginning 1996)

So what happened to Christianity? What gave us the idea that we were sinful, bad to the core, and, there was not much we could do about it? In the reading from Elaine Pagels' book that we heard earlier on, St Augustine of Hippo is clearly cast in the role of the bad guy. And today is not the day to start defending him. Suffice to say, in my view Augustine had many fine qualities as a theologian, not least of which are his descriptions of God as love. But in his grappling with the thorny issues that face all of humanity - *Why do we suffer so? Why is life so hard? Why do we die?* - Augustine was very much a product of his age.

He lived from 354-430 C.E., and was the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. He lived at a time when philosophers generally were pursuing an ascetic path; he was far from alone in thinking that bodily desires were a human weakness. There were many reasons for this, but one clear cause was the early Christian Church's need to set itself apart from, and morally superior to, the pagan beliefs that were still prevalent at this time. Augustine transformed thinking on freedom, sin, sex and redemption for all future generations of Christians. And how did Augustine achieve this? He decided after great amounts of study and contemplation that Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden corrupted humanity's whole nature; that Adam's guilt and his punishment were passed on to all of his descendants, all of humanity. According to Augustine all human beings are born in a state of sin; sin is then passed on to each generation through the act of sexual intercourse. Humanity is, therefore, inevitably pre-disposed towards sinfulness, towards evil acts. We do not have free will in this. Only the grace of God and the salvation offered through Christ can save us.

Now we may not agree with this but I would suggest that this concept, which eventually became enshrined as the doctrine of original sin by the early church, – this concept has had a profound and largely negative effect on western civilisation and therefore on the history of our world.

But if Augustine of Hippo had not lived and had not chosen to explore the meaning of original sin would someone else have come up with the same ideas? Possibly they would. Scholar Elaine Pagels suggests in her book that the reason the early Christians embraced the doctrine with as much enthusiasm as they did was partly psychological – that when we humans try to make sense of the terrible sufferings we may face in life - we would rather feel guilty than helpless in the face of these difficulties. The other key reason for this doctrine's acceptance was, Pagels explains, that in making people helpless it helped to assert the authority of the Roman emperors over their subjects. Original sin helps to maintain the political status quo. If we are all inherently bad then we must be told what to do, we must obey – obey the rulers of the church, obey the rulers of the state.

(continued on opposite page)

## Sinfulness for Unitarians – Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

But not everybody agreed with Augustine. One English monk, Pelagius, who deserves a whole service to explore his interesting ideas; Pelagius disagreed with Augustine at a fundamental level. He asked why God would create humanity in his own divine image and yet allow us to be evil at our very core. Pelagius argued that we humans have free will and so have the choice of how to behave. We are not being punished by the existence of death – rather death is part of the natural order. And we are not led into depravity by the sexual act – for sex is again part of the natural order of existence. Pelagius' views held sway for a while in the early church but were eventually deemed to be heretical and original sin, as a concept, was here to stay.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that evil exists. Sin, however we define it, exists. We humans have the capacity to do truly terrible things to one another and to our world and to the whole of creation. If we stop for a moment and think – of evil acts and evil people – we could all quite quickly come up with a lengthy list... *(pause for a while)*.

Now I am sure that some of the people committing some of these dreadful acts knew that what they were doing was so terribly wrong – but I think it is worth remembering how often it is that people who commit evil acts genuinely believe that they are doing the right thing. We have a frightening human capacity to justify our behaviour. Simone Weil puts it well when she writes that “evil, when we are in its power, is not felt as evil but as necessary or even a duty.”

I wonder if you remember when you first became aware of what happened in Europe during the Holocaust of World War Two? I remember my shock, my disbelief and then slow understanding of some of the Holocaust's horrors. I also remember exploring the issues of the cold blooded cruelty and the systematic annihilation of fellow human beings in my own mind, hardly daring at times to read just what depths of depravity we humans can sink to. And I remember at some point having to ask myself ‘what part might I have played in this ghastly time if I had had the misfortune to be alive then; would I have had the courage to stand up against its injustices?’ Such self examination for most of us probably brings the answer that we cannot know how we would have behaved, followed by an acknowledgement that in the wrong circumstances at the wrong time many of us would have at the least condoned evil acts, or committed them ourselves. As the quotation from Alexander Solzhenitsyn on the front of today's order of service says:

*“If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”*

The potential for evil, for sinfulness, lies well and truly within each and every one of us.

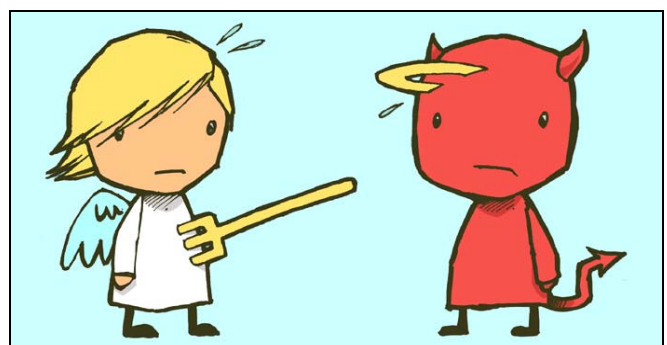
I spoke earlier of the hopefulness of Victorians generally and Unitarians in particular. It was an era in which the phrase ‘onwards and upwards for ever’ gave a sense of society's optimism, a belief that great advances in health and engineering and education would help to make this a better world for everyone. Such optimism was seriously challenged by the world wars of the 20th century and by the revealing of the damage caused by colonialism. Modern media makes it hard for us to avoid the painful realities of humanity's capacity for wrong-doing, which some may describe as sin.

But what do we mean by sin? The word itself comes from the Greek archery term meaning to miss the mark, to fall short in some way. We may see sin as separation perhaps – separation from aspects of ourselves, separation from others, separation from that which we hold to be divine. The antidote for sin could then be described as being in right relationship – right relationship with ourselves, with others, with God and with the environment in which we live. Instead of pushing away that which we dislike – we bring it towards us – embrace it, understand it, make it part of us in some way.

If we all have the potential to do wrong then there is a clear need for self reflection and self awareness, to know and understand ourselves better so that we might better avoid the pitfalls of existence that can lead us to harm our world, others and ourselves. To engage in such self examination requires an acknowledgement of our frailty and our brokenness. The German mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart expresses this beautifully when he writes that

*“The shell must be cracked apart, if what is in it is to come out. For if you want the kernel, you must break the shell.”*

And to help us in honestly facing up to our failings there is great value, I think, to be found in rituals of confession and in seeking forgiveness – structures that support us in opening our shells and exploring within. Such explorations may bring interesting insights about the duality, and perhaps the inevitability, of the existence of good and evil. The Hindu sage Ramakrishna, when asked why is there evil in the world replied, ‘to thicken the plot.’ The existence of evil, the human potential to behave very badly - this gives us something to work on. It is both the backdrop against which our human lives are played and the very script which we write within our hearts. How we shape the plot, given the wonderfully scary gift of free will that we have – well, that is the very stuff of life, and what a gift that is.



# Hucklow Summer School

20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August 2011

Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

## Walking the Talk: Living a Life of Greater Integrity



The core purpose of Hucklow Summer School is religious education: we focus on matters of religion and spirituality and intend to draw out and develop the potential of all participants. We aim to provide a balanced programme, offering a rich mix of activities for both the heart and head, and a variety of optional sessions showcasing a range of worthwhile activities which participants might “take home” and try out in their own congregations and communities. We also ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for relaxed fellowship and fun during the week.

### Theme Talks will be given by a team of speakers:

Rev. Gillian Peel, Jim Corrigan, Rev. Linda Hart,  
Jef Jones and Rev. Sarah Tinker

### There will be a choice of Engagement Groups:

#### ‘The Web of Life: Seeing and Acting Differently’

led by Margaret Kirk and Kate Buchanan

#### ‘Practising Peace in Daily Life’

led by Jane Blackall and Jef Jones

#### ‘Giving’

led by Caroline Blair and Rita Woditsch

#### ‘Working With Others’

led by Mel Prideaux and Winnie Gordon

**Applications are due by 21<sup>st</sup> April 2011**

For more information and to download a booking form:

**[www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk](http://www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk)**

*For more information speak to Caroline or Jane  
or telephone Mel Prideaux on 01924 781 020.*

# Sunday Services at Essex Church



## 6<sup>th</sup> February, 11am – “La Mer: Spirituality at the Seaside”

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
with Harold Lorenzelli singing**

How does the imagery of seas and oceans shape our spiritual search and expression? A day at the seaside may never be quite the same after this service!

## 13<sup>th</sup> February, 11am – “Mighty Aphrodite”

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
with guest preacher Rev. Bill Darlison**

In this service we will be joined by guest preacher Rev. Bill Darlison who was until recently the minister with Dublin Unitarians. Bill will be asking ‘Are the old deities dead or do we still need to pay them homage?’

12.15pm - **Small-Group Communion**,  
led by David Francis Darling (lasting ~30 minutes)

## 20<sup>th</sup> February, 11am – “An Old Universalism for A New World”

**Service led by Tristan Jovanović**

Our very own Tristan Jovanović will be leading worship at Essex Church on 20<sup>th</sup> February. In this service we will be exploring the incorporation of the forgotten side of liberal faith into our way of peace, freedom, reason and tolerance.

## 27<sup>th</sup> February, 11am – “Of Marble Lions and Imaginary Trees”

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Our religious tradition has long resisted Creedal formulas and dogmatic statements of faith. Far more important than formal Creeds to us is the recognition of our common humanity and the shared vision of a world where justice, peace, and equity might still be summoned. Today we will be considering the connection between vision and faith.

