



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: February 2012

What's On...

Sunday 5th February, 11am-noon
'Carpe Diem'

Service led by Harold Lorenzelli

Sunday 12th February, 11am-noon
'Contentment'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12th February, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion

Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 12th February, 2-3.00pm
Nia Technique

Class led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 19th February, 11am-noon
'Stop Looking

– Life is Here and Now!'

Service led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 19th February, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'

Singing Workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 21st February, 7-9.00pm
7 O'Clock Social:

Tea, cake, and chat – all welcome.

Sunday 26th February, 11am-noon
'The White Horse at Uffington'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 27th February, 7-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Tuesday 28th February, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:

'The Namesake' by Jhumpa Lahiri

Coming up in March...

Thursday 1st March, 7.00-9.00pm
'A Lent Study Group:

The Unreconciled'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 4th March, 12.45-2.30pm
'Life's Ultimate Questions'

Exploring the issues we care about...

A Message from our Minister: Multiple Meanings

Early February holds a cluster of religious festivals whose traditions and origins overlay one another in a rich complexity. The Christian festival of Candlemas commemorates the presentation of Jesus as a baby in the Temple, a ceremony which would have completed Mary's ritual



purification 40 days after child-birth. The name Candlemas refers to a church ceremony in which candles were blessed for the year ahead, a ritual which may hark back to the gospel reference to Jesus bringing the light of revelation to the world. Yet connections can also be made with earlier traditions. Candlemas falls on February 2nd and this marks one of the Celtic quarter days, falling as it does between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. This quarter day is known as Imbolc, a name that links this day to the lactating ewes of early spring. It also carries the name of the ancient Irish goddess Brighid, as St Bridget's Day.

Stories of Brighid abound and her many attributes are legendary. Brighid is the maiden / virgin aspect of the tri-partite goddess – of maiden, mother and crone. She is the keeper of the Sacred Fires and Holy Wells and it is said that the church of St Bridget in Kildare was built on the site of an ancient pagan temple where a sacred fire was kept burning for over a thousand years. There seems to have been an inter-weaving of the goddess Brighid with Saint Bridget, an early Christian who was consecrated as a bishop. The miracles associated with Bridget are often to do with healing and with domestic tasks. So generous was young Bridget, for example, that she gave away all her mother's butter to the poor and her family found that ever after, their butter stores were miraculously replenished.

At this time of year when we long for the return of spring it seems appropriate to celebrate candles and the promise of light that they bring us. And even though the idea of women needing purification after childbirth may seem archaic and repellent to many of us now, yet we perhaps still feel the urge to cleanse our homes as a way of welcoming in the spring time. We too may look at the plenty in our own homes and seek to give to those who do not have our good fortune.

One other Candlemas tradition relates to the weather. It is said that

If Candlemas Day is clear and bright, / winter will have another bite. /

If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain, / winter is gone and will not come again

At a recent service we explored the concept of truth (see pages 14-15).
Let's see how true this weather forecast will prove to be.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Spirituality in Film' by Veronica Needa * News from Iona Blair in South Africa *
'My Bible Reading is On The Map' by Sue Smith * Recent Library Acquisitions
* 'A Meditation and Mindfulness Course' by Carolyn Appleby * Fairtrade Fortnight *
Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel * 'Toothpaste for a Present!' by Gordon Deaville
* 'Can You Know This Is True?' sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
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

Church Membership



By now, all current members and friends of our congregation should have received their annual letter and form to fill in for membership. It's good practice to ask people to renew their membership in this way each year and we'd be grateful for your feedback on how our form feels to receive and fill in.

Many thanks to those who have already returned forms – we'd be grateful if you could get them back to us speedily if you haven't already done so – membership is a really valuable way to show that you support our congregation and are in accord with its liberal religious ethos. If you want to know more about what membership entails then do get in touch with me and have a chat.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



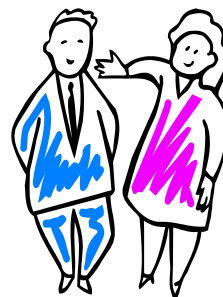
Crossword Clue...

The following clue was 10 across in the Guardian's cryptic crossword on 9th January:

CLUE: Nun oddly including it with song of religious group.
(9 letters)

Any ideas? The answer is on page 13 of this newsletter...

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

5 th February:	Gina Bayley
12 th February:	John Hands
19 th February:	Natasha Drennan
26 th February:	Ruth Okine

Coffee:

5 th February:	Margaret Darling
12 th February:	Ruth Okine
19 th February:	Jo Ridgers
26 th February:	David Darling

Greeting:

5 th February:	Sue Smith
12 th February:	Jane Blackall
19 th February:	Gina Bayley
26 th February:	Jo Ridgers

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



“The more dedicated we become to the practice of love, the more we come to understand that it is the poverty or richness of our love that defines our sense of what is real. We experience the self and the world in radically different ways when we are exiles living in isolation from others and when we are at home within a compassionate community of our kindred.

Ultimately, love reveals itself to us as more than a feeling, a psychological state, a sociological phenomenon, more than a bond that unites separate beings in friendship or sexual ecstasy, family, or community.

Whereas Descartes defined the pivotal certainty of modern objective-scientific mind with the phrase *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), the essence of the spiritual vision has always been *Amo ergo sum* (I love therefore I am).”

Sam Keen

Lent Study Group: ‘The Unreconciled’



Thursdays 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd March from 7 to 9pm in the library at Essex Church

Lent is traditionally a time for study and reflection and in these sessions we will utilise Bible study and other source materials for individual and group exploration. In a world that so often feels broken and divided how do we reconcile conflicting elements in ourselves and in the world in which we live? Our sessions will focus on:

**Self and Other
Wounds and Healing
Separation and Unity
Truth and Lies**

Each session will include ideas for us to consider further in the week ahead. Please contact Sarah Tinker on 020 7221 6514 or info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to book a place in this group. We'd ask you to commit to attending as many sessions as you can as both you and the group will benefit from our commitment. Everyone is welcome.

(With thanks to CTBI – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for use of their resource material.)

‘Life’s Ultimate Questions’



Workshop after the service at Essex Church on Sunday 4th March from 12.45 – 2.30pm

Inspired by some recent (lively!) theological conversations after our Sunday services we have decided to hold a series of afternoon workshops in which we can explore issues (maybe of a theological, philosophical, or ethical nature) that members of the congregation care about.

We would like to hear from you if there are any specific questions that you might like us to consider as a group in this or a future session. We would encourage you to focus on matters that are of concern to you – perhaps those that you have pondered for years and keep returning to, or which have a bearing on your daily life, rather than the usual ‘hot topics’ that get a frequent airing in the media – but whatever you are interested in please let us know (email secretary@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or jot your ideas down and give them to Jane on a Sunday morning).

Jane Blackall and Sarah Tinker

Fairtrade Fortnight

27th February to 11th March 2012



A few years ago Essex Church committed itself to be a Fairtrade Church and part of that commitment involves us encouraging all our members and user groups to buy fair trade whenever we can.

In Fairtrade Fortnight there will be lots of publicity so it's a good time to spread the word and fill our cupboards with fairly traded products. Tea and coffee, biscuits, chocolate, bananas and T shirts – are all readily available now, so let's look out for more unusual products and bring them along to our service on 4th March.

Karen Armstrong Lecture



This photo shows Karen Armstrong in the splendour of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood at an event organised by the World Congress of Faiths (WCF). Ten of us attended from Essex Church and were particularly impressed by her answers to questions after her talk. You can read more about the evening in the 21st January edition of The Inquirer – copies are in the church foyer. Sitting next to Karen is Rabbi Jackie Tabick the current chair of WCF.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

7 O'clock Social Group



Tuesday 21st February 2012, 7.00-9.00pm

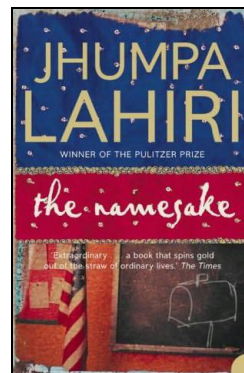
We are taking a bit of a break from the creativity group, and thought instead we would have a general tea, cake and chat group downstairs in the library at 7 o'clock on the third Tuesday of each month. We have committed to run this group until Easter and will review the situation at that point so do come along and support it if you want the group to continue.

Anyone is welcome to come along, bringing something to do (sewing, knitting, drawing, anything you like) or just bringing yourself. We will sit for a couple of hours just to chat and have a drink and a snack. We hope it will offer a nice warm space where anyone who wants to get to know others from the church a little better might like to pop in and talk, listen or just sit just as they choose.

Caroline Blair

Essex Church Reading Group

'The Namesake' by Jhumpa Lahiri



Tuesday 28th February 2012, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's February session will be based on 'The Namesake' by Jhumpa Lahiri. This book was suggested by Juliet Edwards and will be the 89th title discussed by the Essex Church reading group.

From a review on Amazon.co.uk:

"'The Namesake' is the story of a boy brought up Indian in America. 'When her grandmother learned of Ashima's pregnancy, she was particularly thrilled at the prospect of naming the family's first sahib. And so Ashima and Ashoke have agreed to put off the decision of what to name the baby until a letter comes!' For now, the label on his hospital cot reads simply BABY BOY GANGULI. But as time passes and still no letter arrives from India, American bureaucracy takes over and demands that 'baby boy Ganguli' be given a name. In a panic, his father decides to nickname him 'Gogol' – after his favourite writer. Brought up as an Indian in suburban America, Gogol Ganguli soon finds himself itching to cast off his awkward name, just as he longs to leave behind the inherited values of his Bengali parents. And so he sets off on his own path through life, a path strewn with conflicting loyalties, love and loss! Spanning three decades and crossing continents, Jhumpa Lahiri's much-anticipated first novel is a triumph of humane story-telling. Elegant, subtle and moving."

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

Small Group Communion



**Sunday 12th February at 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 library. 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 a team of volunteers will continue to take turns leading the small-group communion services so that we can experience different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

12th February – Jane Blackall
11th March – Tristan Jovanović
8th April – David Francis Darling

If you would like to find out more about this then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.



“Lent is one of those liturgical seasons to which many Unitarian Universalists give little significance, and yet it may be the most “UU” of all the seasons in the traditional church year. Its forty days signify a time for searching, exploring, pondering, evaluating, and taking stock of Life and one’s place in it. It is a time of learning, expanding, broadening and deepening – of planting a new insight or discovery in one’s daily living.

Lent is perhaps known as a time to give up something, to abstain from something – usually an indulgence of some kind. This is an idea which has some merit – for something new to take root and grow, we must first create and nurture a place where that may occur. We must consciously make room for the New, do a bit of mental/spiritual Spring-cleaning. For some, there already may be such a place waiting, even longing to be filled. For others, there may be so much filling them that it might be difficult, even painful, to let go of some things so an empty space can emerge.

Lent can be a time of opportunity – opportunity that in the days to come, as the daylight continues to lengthen and the Earth begins to thaw, there might be a corresponding lengthening of Light within and a melting of our resistance to the astonishment that is the Life in All.”

Daniel E. Budd

Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel



Have a look at our foyer notice board for the latest report from the Unitarian Penal Affairs Panel. This group is committed to raising awareness about our criminal justice system and highlighting both poor and good practice.

There's so much that could be improved in the way our society treats those it considers to be in the wrong. Research shows that more humane prison regimes reduce re-offending rates yet prisons in the UK become ever more crowded. A few years ago I was involved with a young man who'd been imprisoned in a Young Offenders Institution for knife crimes. He had struggled at school and could barely read and write. Yet when I asked him why he had not enrolled for classes he replied that the education programme was so over-subscribed that they were only taking prisoners who would be locked up for more than two years. An opportunity for him to improve himself was surely being missed there. He spent most of his days locked in a cell watching TV and playing on his Playstation.

If you would like to know more about the work of the Penal Affairs Panel then do have a look at their newsletter and perhaps enrol for their updates. Their webpage can be accessed via the Unitarians UK website and gives you the details on how to receive their emailed newsletter (see <http://bit.ly/unitarianPA>). You can also read their information packs on issues such as the treatment of drug addicts and asylum seekers, two groups who find themselves involved in our criminal justice system when other paths might be so much more effective.

And if you want to know more about an inspirational charity that tries to make a difference, I recommend the **Prison Phoenix Trust** that runs courses on yoga and meditation in prisons. Their recent newsletter included a letter from a prisoner explaining that their recent class was held in a prison toilet block because all other rooms were full. He ended his letter by saying that if you can meditate in a prison then you can meditate anywhere.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

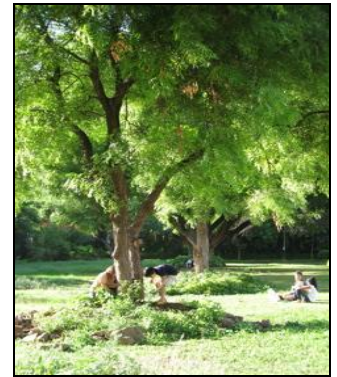




Toothpaste for a Present! How Come?

On Christmas Day I opened a present from my nephew, Andrew. It turned out to be a tube of toothpaste! It was a tube of NEEM Advance toothpaste, claimed to give complete dental care. For the past year Andrew has been an intern training in tropical agriculture on ECHO's Global Farm in Florida, USA. ECHO is *Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization*, whose Mission is to equip people with resources and skills to reduce hunger and improve the lives of the poor in sustainable ways. During that year, amongst others, one of the crops he tended was a NEEM tree. So the present was a little bit of him and very acceptable.

The Neem tree - *Azadirachta Indica* - is an evergreen of the tropics and sub tropics. It may reach up to up to 15m tall under ideal conditions, and is reported to live up to 200 years. It has a short straight furrowed trunk, dark brown or grey in colour, with dense rounded crowns of pinnate leaves. It tolerates very high temperatures and rainfall as little as 45cm. It needs well drained soil, and still grows well in marginal soils up to 1500m above sea level. The tree's flowers have a very sweet jasmine or honey like scent between February and May, and profuse clusters of small white flowers, a good source of nectar for bees. After the flowers comes the fruit, green drupes turning golden yellow on ripening, in India in June, July or August. The fruits are about 1.5 cm long, edible and liked very much by African children. The tree bears fruit, usually after 3 to 5 years, producing about 50kg annually when mature. The kernels of these fruits yield about 45% Neem oil. The bark yields tannin and amber hued gum, used as a dye in textiles as well as the "traditional" medical usage.



The Benefits of Neem: Used in India for thousands of years, Neem is gaining recognition in the west for its many medicinal properties. Neem is said to be anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, antiviral, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory. It is said that the leaves can improve overall health and are beneficial in tackling several internal medical conditions. Hair and nails benefit from a topical application of Neem oil. With the use of my present I am discovering how teeth and gums benefit from toothpaste made with Neem oil. In India, I am told, the twigs from the tree are used as a toothbrush. I'm also told that Neem is high in Vitamin E, is nourishing and healing for the skin, and can heal or improve several conditions, including childhood eczema. That's an incredible number of uses of the leaves and other parts of the tree.

ECHO's Internship Programme: ECHO's internships are designed to serve both as a support to ECHO's mission and hands-on training in tropical horticulture or appropriate technologies. This is an outstanding opportunity for personal and professional development for those seriously considering service or other direct involvement with communities in developing countries. The programme provides an intense learning experience through active work involvement where most learning occurs through hands-on activities. Interns make a major contribution to ECHO's global mission and are exposed to various aspects of this mission. Interns are responsible for Global Village demonstrations and quickly develop basic skills in various areas such as horticulture, small-scale farming techniques, community development, animal husbandry, agroforestry, appropriate technologies, public speaking, and managing volunteers. Andrew had horticulture qualifications and experience before becoming an intern on ECHO's Global Farm, where he did very well and enjoyed every aspect of it. Whilst he was there Andrew met a lovely and talented young lady student/volunteer, Sulam from Peru, and they are now boy- and girl-friend. ECHO has a Neem tree, to demonstrate how it can be used to alleviate bad health in the world's poor, but its products are available to buy in this country. Google "the neem tree" and several suppliers will show up. As the 21st century unfolds the full potential of Neem is being realised around the world, partly thanks to ECHO's Global Farm, within the realms of Medicine, Pest Management and Environmental Protection. Unfortunately, in Europe progress is hindered by the weight of regulations.



To find out more about ECHO visit: www.echonet.org.

Gordon Deaville (who also consulted papers on the Web)

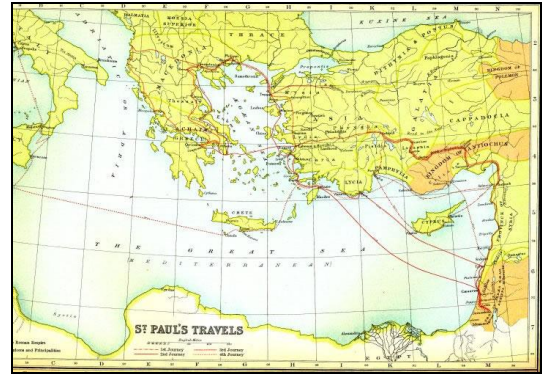


"Love is the energy at the centre of all life. It is the reality beneath our fears, the breath within the breath, the seed of all that grows. Loving ourselves, loving others, and loving God are inseparable, for all life is interconnected and sacred.

We become increasingly able to love as we integrate ourselves and become whole. Our wholeness is expressed in a lust for life and a capacity for joy, delight and adventure. Our wholeness gives birth to compassion, which Ram Dass describes as 'the tender opening of our hearts to pain and suffering.' For most people, the journey towards love requires that we penetrate the armour around our hearts, feel our grief, and open ourselves to all our feelings. In doing so we become more truly alive."

Charlotte Kasl

My Bible Reading is on the Map



I've read the Bible intermittently, throughout my life, since Sunday School. I struggle with most of it most of the time but have been helped by moving from the King James version to the New International Version, using various commentaries and other publications and visiting the British Museum. Browsing through a book shop near Westminster Cathedral brought me in touch with a selection of Bible Atlases. It had never occurred to me that such a publication would help my reading. Inevitably I chose to buy the cheapest on the shelf at £12.99 but more importantly the easiest to understand and I think for me the most readable.

This atlas "The One Stop Bible Atlas" by Nick Page has enthralled me more than any other aid to my bible reading. This book takes the reader through the history, geography and archaeology from Genesis to Revelations with lively text, full colour maps, photos and illustrations. This is a 2010 edition and the reader is reassured that the information includes the recent research.

Since travelling in Israel many years ago I have taken more notice of the place names in the bible and still get a thrill when I know I have actually been to the place I am reading about. Thanks to this atlas I now know, on the modern map, the journey Abraham took to Canaan and how the land of Canaan was first allocated to the Israelite tribes. British Museum locations such as Lachish and Kadesh Barnea, Dan, Sidon and Sheba I can locate and I have an illustration in my mind of Solomon's Jerusalem. Nazareth, Galilee, the second temple in Jesus' day are all mapped out and then finally Paul's journeys.

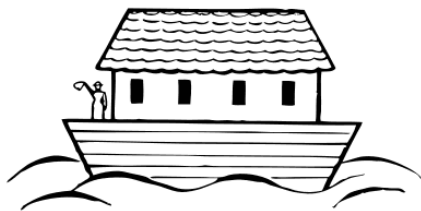
There is so much more in this atlas that I haven't mentioned but the bible now has a new dimension for me which has enhanced my reading and enjoyment of my "Desert Island" book choice. If anyone else has a bible atlas that they would recommend I would be very interested.

Sue Smith

SoFiC (Sea of Faith in the Churches) Day Conference

'Being Church – On a Rising Tide?'

10th March 2012 at Essex Church



Could we really prepare to move off from the place where we've been marooned for so long?

In what direction might we head?

This conference will investigate flotation and course setting on the Sea of Faith.

Speaker: Rev Canon Brian Mountford

Vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford and author of "Christian Atheist"

Sea of Faith in the Churches provides a meeting place for those SoF members – and their friends – who find themselves in the midst of or, more commonly, hovering on the edge of the Christian Church. The conference fee is £10 per person. Hot drinks will be available, but participants are asked to bring their own lunch. Please send a cheque (made out to 'Sea of Faith in the Churches') and S.A.E. to Peter Stribblehill, 9 Melbray Drive, Melton Mowbray, Leics., LE13 1JS, no later than 29 February.

New study class in London District for 2012:

'Fresh Approaches to the Bible'

**Starting Monday 20th February, 7.30pm
Golders Green Unitarians,
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London, NW11 8BS**

A monthly Bible-reading group is to begin in the London District in February. Organised by the London District Liberal Christian group, and led by its co-convenor Jim Corrigan, it will be held at Golders Green Unitarians.

The plan is to start with Luke's Gospel, reading it chapter by chapter, with space for reflective discussion. No specific Biblical knowledge is required, just a willingness to engage with the texts. All are welcome. Classes are to be held on the third Monday of each month.

The nearest underground station is Golders Green (Northern Line, Edgware branch), the church is 6 mins walk away. Walk from the station northwards up the Finchley Road, take the first turning to your left into Hoop Lane, and you will find the church about 60 metres along on the right.

If you require further information,
please contact Jim Corrigan on 020 8361 1843
or via email at: jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk

Unitarian Walking Goup for WorldPride



Saturday 7th July 2012

We have received an email from Shiobhan Joseph, a member of Newington Green Unitarians, who is trying to organise a Unitarian group for WorldPride which is in London this year. Why not put the date in your diary? She has set up a page on Facebook which you can join: <http://on.fb.me/UniWP12>

Shiobhan says: "This event is open to all LGBT identifying people as well as their supporters, so it isn't restricted and everyone can come along and march to celebrate hard won equality rights, as well as show support for those which we still fight for, as well as LGBT people in other countries who are yet to be allowed to live freely as themselves. We are talking about carrying not just the LGBT Unitarian banner, but also individual congregations' banners."



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms led by Sonya Leite

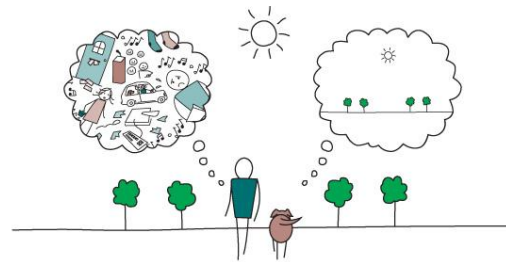
**Second Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 12th February, 11th March**

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 £8 (£5 to members of church congregation).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

A Meditation and Mindfulness Course



Mind Full, or Mindful?

There must be many reasons why people start meditating and take time to notice where they are in the present and truly attend to and concentrate on what they are doing. In my case, I needed to reduce my busyness and rest my body and mind more if I was to stop feeling so fatigued and unwell.

The City Lit, a government-funded adult education college in Holborn, runs a number of meditation and stress management courses. I happened to find this one just two days before it started in January.

Fourteen of us arrived as silent strangers and came out chatting. Duncan Steen, the tutor has been a Buddhist for twenty years and taught this subject for ten. He was gentle with us.

So far I have only been to the first class. In it we did a few practical exercises, some in pairs, such as talking about our previous experience. People with and without experience of meditating have joined. When it came to us all doing a body scan for about half an hour, I took the invitation to sit on a folding chair, with the back raised. However, some people lay down and some were cross-legged or maybe in the lotus position on a mat on the floor. It was recommended to sit upright, not leaning but anything goes. Duncan encouraged us to go for what one actually needs.

I came out of the class feeling a lot better than when I went in and although I have studied this subject before I learnt new things. So, newly energised I went home. Since then I have used the CD Duncan gave us of his recorded voice for my daily body scan and done my other recommended homework. It is the only way to really benefit from the course. On different days I choose a routine task and do it mindfully. I eat snacks and consume drinks noticing the sensations in my mouth. Next time I will start with smelling the food! Then I fill in my practice record. In addition, doing the body scan every day, when I need a rest has affected me in different ways. Sometimes I feel more alert afterwards, at other times I go sleepy. It would be ok to doze off. Try it!

Course FJF70 - Friday 24th February to 30th March
13.45-15.45 - £82/£48/£39

Course FJF19 - Monday 14th May to 25th June
17.25-19.25 - £110 for all

Enrol online at www.citylit.ac.uk or call 020 7831 7831.

Carolyn Appleby

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sunday 19th February, 18th March
12.30 to 1.15pm, at Essex Church



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

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

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

Unitarian General Assembly Meetings

3rd-6th April 2012, Keele University

Every year, around Easter time, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches holds its Annual Meetings to which delegates from congregations, fellowships, district associations and affiliated societies are invited. These meetings are commonly known as 'GA' within Unitarian circles.

The meetings are an opportunity to meet Unitarians from across the country, get a sense of the diversity within our denomination, and hear about the activities of other congregations and the national organisation. There will be lectures, business sessions where we discuss organisational matters and priorities, debates, worship, meetings of societies, and a social evening.

If you would like to know more about the possibility of attending please speak to Sarah or a member of the management committee as soon as possible as the deadline for bookings is 21st February.

For more information: www.unitarian.org.uk/ga

News from Iona in South Africa

Friend of Essex Church Iona Blair is living in a goat shed in the Klein Karoo area of South Africa with her partner Mark and dog Mali; they are working hard trying to reclaim some over-grazed farmland. She has just spent Christmas with Mark's family who normally live in Johannesburg.



Mali is having a splendid time bounding along the beach, and I am experiencing a bit of probing about being a vegan among a collective of keen meat and dairy eaters. So far I've managed to hold my ground and not get steaks on my plate. I did get a roast onion in the fire last night which was very nice with a salad from the farm and roast potato.

It is a pretty hot sun here but a cooling breeze and we have our bicycles so can go for adventures. I also brought quite a lot of crafting things and taught myself some decorative knot work yesterday using some white waxed string I think you sent me. It works very well so I've been collecting little shells with holes in to see if they will work in bracelets. My latest sock toy was a little black sheep with a white face sewn on - it went down a charm with baby Aiyana.

I am missing the farm being here- particularly as we face a barrage of keen questioning about our 'sustainability', life on the farm and how tough it must be - coming from family used to their city lives and immersed in mainstream economics... how can we live without a dishwasher, washing machine, refrigerator, how can I not drive? How can I live with no TV etc.?

But when I think of all the other kinds of luxury and wealth we have around us – abundance of free, unspoilt wilderness, natural beauty, a sky filled with stars, long days making things in the garden under the shade of a tree, cooking with solar ovens, our own dried fruit and learning how to make pickles and preserves and chutneys....we are free in ways not conceivable for a someone living and working in Johannesburg.

Iona Blair

Healing the World

'Forgiveness, Compassion, Oneness'



Wednesday 1st February, 12:30-5pm
London Central Mosque
146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG

UN World Interfaith Harmony Week:
UK Opening Event

*"There will be no peace in the world
until there is peace among religions."*

An interfaith experience co-sponsored by the International Association for Religious Freedom, Religions for Peace, United Religions Initiative, and the World Congress of Faiths (WCF).

Speaking from their own tradition:

Rabbi Jackie Tabick, Rev Peter Owen Jones,
and Imam Abduljalil Sajid,
Yann Lovelock (*Buddhist*), Ajit Singh MBE (*Sikh*)
and Kiran Bali MBE (*Hindu*)

There is no charge to attend this event.

Those coming are asked to register with
Admin@worldfaiths.org
or dvd.horner@googlemail.com.

For further information contact Richard Boeke:
r.boeke@virgin.net 01403 257 801

WCF Website: www.worldfaiths.org

Warden's Column



I spent a large part of this morning ordering supplies – first from Viking Direct and then from SUMA Wholefoods – so I thought it might be interesting to say something about the things we buy most regularly.

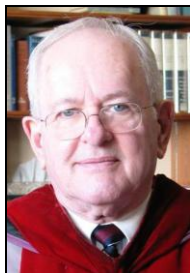
In terms of office supplies, far and away the frontrunner is ink-cartridges. This is to be expected though, since we replaced the bulky photocopier that used to live in the office with a much more compact but versatile printer/copier/scanner. For that reason, we also get through a fair amount of A4 paper (recycled of course :-)) and we still occasionally use some A3 paper in the old printer.

Then we use a lot of A4 envelopes (for posting the newsletter) and large 2nd class stamps (for the same reason). We get through rather fewer smaller envelopes and ordinary 2nd class stamps – mainly for invoices and sending cheques. From time to time we also need to order: flipchart pads, bluetak, markers, tape and post-its – but we use all of those much more slowly.

From our other main supplier SUMA, a wholefoods co-operative, we buy the tea, coffee and biscuits served after the Sunday services – all fairtrade. We also buy biodegradable binbags, washing up liquid and huge stacks of recycled toilet paper (kept in the understairs cupboard). They also do a very nice liquid handsoap – Gitana, our cleaner, says people use more than twice as much soap since we switched to it.

Most of our other cleaning supplies are just bought retail: Gitana favours Domestos bleach, Viakal (against limescale), Flash and various Mr Muscle products. The other main thing I buy for the Church (and by far the most satisfying) is flowers – which generally come from the Saturday farmers market behind the Waterstones bookshop. We're definitely not wholly ethical in our purchasing – balancing convenience and efficacy against moral principles – but we are prepared to pay a little more for a product that is fairer to workers and less damaging to the environment and it feels good to be able to afford to do that.

Jenny Moy



"Lent is... a time to clear away the mess, the debris, to gather up and to restore. Lent is soul-work, or it should be. It is a season to remove the dead twigs and leaves strewn about the ground of our being and to let the warmth of the sun get at those crusty patches of coldness which blemish the soul. Its purpose is to get to the core of the self.

We modern folks have never taken much to Lent. Maybe it is because if we see something that is messed up we are apt to believe it is ruined. Somehow we are led to believe that the intrinsic value of a thing is not worth the time and skill for its restoration. That work we are apt to call drudgery.

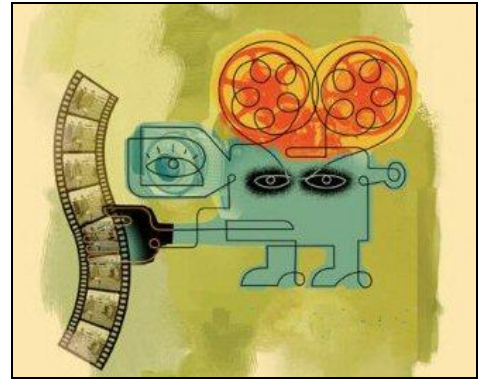
Lent, however, affirms the intrinsic value of each soul. And if you affirm its value too, its supreme beauty and worth at the core, then you can see the necessity for the discipline for its care. Then this discipline, like picking up twigs and bundling them, can be done with whistling and humming. It means getting at the worth of the self, sorting out what is dead and gone by nurturing what is left and to come. It means centering in on the most important and clearing it away from the debris of dull routine and habit. The work of human restoration, like earth's restoration, should not be a time of gloom, but of whistling and humming."

Bruce M. Clary

Spirituality in Film

There are some films which I can see again and again and again, and there are some films which I will make a point to watch on my own at a cinema. I bring a box of tissues, and a plastic bag (for after the tissues have been used!).

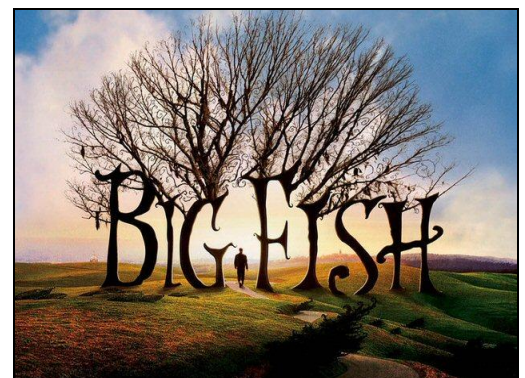
Field of Dreams (1989) was one such film. It was a Chinese New Year's Day, and I decided that this would be a treat to myself that wet afternoon in London. The story is of a farmer in Iowa (Kevin Costner) who hears a voice speaking to him in his cornfield. "If you build it, he will come..." He has a vision of a baseball field and a deep conviction that he must follow this invitation. He does so, and creates a magical space where significant figures from the other world can visit and play out their love of baseball. Of course there are challenges that must be overcome, and important reconciliations. Even now as I recall the final image, I am weeping. It is night-time, the camera pulls out and upwards above the farm, and the incongruous baseball field within miles and miles of cornfields is lit up ready for a game. And we see the headlights of a long long long line of cars snaking their way towards his homestead because they too have been drawn to come to this place of magic and meeting.



Groundhog Day (1993) is another such film. Bill Murray is a thoroughly unpalatable egocentric person who must relive one day in his life again and again and again. He can choose different actions during that day, and he will meet the same people that day, but he must endure the consequences of his behaviour. Even attempting suicide many times, he must again wake up to live the same day. Eventually he makes choices which generate a deeply satisfying experience within a loving appreciative community of people. And the cycle is broken. Within the frame of this very silly comedy, we meet the concept of reincarnation and samsara. For me this is a deeply spiritual film.

I decided I must see *Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) on New Year's Day as a kind of ritual to mark the beginning of that year. I had recently re-read the Lord of the Rings to prepare myself for the film. I had a big cold, so the tissues were doubly necessary. Squashed between strangers in the packed cinema, I wept from beginning to end. It was as if this film spoke to my core life purpose. That Frodo accepts his fate, that there are companions who vow to join him. Frodo slips away from the others in the fellowship, because he knows that he must take the path to the cracks of doom alone. It is his destiny and he must follow its call. And Sam, dear Sam, will not allow him to do this on his own. Sam has given his word, and he must accompany, take care and protect his master to the very end. Oh oh oh.... What is it that so moves me about this relationship? I am both servant and master in my own story of destiny and purpose. Devotion - this word and all it means carries such a vital resonance for me. Synonyms = zeal, ardour. Yes this is my natural being. And I do listen and follow the call of something deep within me on a journey less travelled.

I saw *Big Fish* (2003) with a friend. We were both crying at the end. Neither of us had anticipated this and without tissues this time we were challenged to find ways to dry our eyes and dripping noses! The story is ultimately about reconciliation between parent and child. The fabulous stories of journeys and adventures, told to the child by his charismatic parent, are disbelieved when the child is grown up. These impossible characters, larger than life, extraordinary happenings – circus, giants, witches, werewolves – life as a huge adventure and discovery cannot be true. Well it IS true. Life IS – or can be if you choose it – a HUGE adventure and magical mystery tour. And love is the anchor. Love brings us all back home.



Veronica Needa

February Newsletter

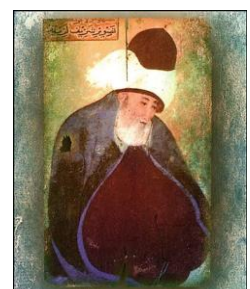


The deadline for the next issue is **Sunday 12th February**. Please send your contributions (articles, poems, news, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member by that date.

Thank you!!!

"Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."

Rumi



Multifaith Calendar

✠ **2nd February – The Presentation of the Lord (RC) / The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Anglican) – Christian**
The presentation of Jesus in the Temple at a few weeks old, as recorded in Luke's gospel, is celebrated today. The day is often known as Candlemas from the tradition of congregations holding lighted candles during the celebration in church.

☪ **5th 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.

☸ **8th 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.

✡ **8th February – Tu B'Shevat – Jewish**
Tu B'Shevat is a minor festival celebrating the New Year for trees. Jewish tradition marks the 15th of Shevat as the day when the sap in the trees begins to rise heralding the spring. It is customary to plant trees and eat fruit from Israel.

☸ **20th February – Mahashivratri (Great Shiva Night) – Hindu**
Every night of the new moon is dedicated to Shiva but this one is particularly important, being the night on which Shiva is said to perform the cosmic dance from creation to destruction. Many Hindus will fast and prayers are focused on Shiva.

✠ **21st February – Shrove Tuesday – Christian**
This is the day before the start of Lent. Traditionally, it is a day for repentance and absolution in preparation ('shrive' means to receive or make confession). Pancakes were originally made to use up rich foods, such as butter and eggs, before Lent. In some places people celebrate Mardi Gras by holding carnivals.

✠ **22nd February – Ash Wednesday – Christian**
Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent, the forty days (not counting Sundays) that lead up to Easter. Some churches hold special services where believers are marked with a cross of ash to show their desire to correct the wrongs in their lives.

✠ **22nd February - 7th April – Lent – Christian**
Lent is a time of fasting and discipline in preparation for Easter. As early as the second century CE many Christians were to be found spending time fasting before Easter; this was probably connected to remembering the forty days Jesus spent fasting at the start of his ministry. The word comes from the Old English for Spring and is related to the word 'lengthen'.

☸ **23rd 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.

✠ **27th February - 14th April – First Day of Lent / The Great Fast – Orthodox Christian**
Eastern Churches start Lent on the Monday before the first Sunday of Lent, and as many Eastern Orthodox Churches still use the Julian calendar the dates of the whole Lenten period can differ from the Western Churches. The Lenten fast involves abstinence from meat, fish and dairy products until Easter.

One Light Spiritual Gatherings: 'Spiritual Contentment'



**Friday 10th February 2012
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church**

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

Come and experience deep inner spiritual contentment with us, as we gather in healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come and help us to create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long – with music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none.

Bring your beloved eternal self, your family,
children and friends. All, all are welcome.

These events are free.
Donations for expenses are welcome.
Any surplus will go to Childline

For further information contact service hosts:
Rev. Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980
Rev. Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'

A London event you might be interested in:

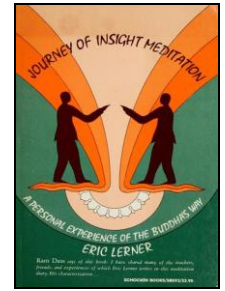
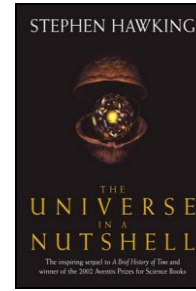
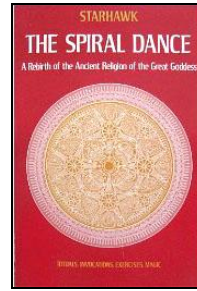
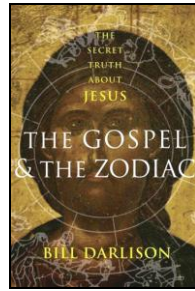
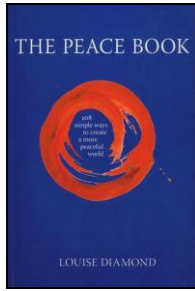
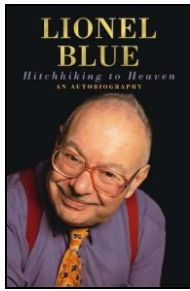
LGBT History Month: 'Queer Question Time'

**Wednesday 1st February, 6.00-9.30pm
Southwark Council, Atrium,
160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TZ**

The evening will open with refreshments and a performance from the Pink Singers, London's LGBT community choir. This will be followed by 'Queer Question Time' at 7.30pm: an hour long public debate that promises to be 'convivial but edgy', with a panel of LGBT commentators including Bob Ballard, Claire Harvey, Dave Merchant, and Peter Tatchell. Submit your questions before the night to askqqt@gmail.com

Admission is free but advance booking is strongly advised. To book contact Helen Laker on 020 7525 0848 or Helen.Laker@southwark.gov.uk.

Recent Essex Church Library Acquisitions



The following books have been added to our congregational library recently. Most are from Patricia Walker-Hesson's personal collection but in addition we are grateful for donations from Gina Bayley, Jane Blackall, Caroline Blair, Jo Cresswell, Rev Bill Darlison, Will Lyons and Sheila Ramage of Notting Hill Books. 'The Story of Essex Hall' by Mortimer Rowe contains much of interest about the history of Essex Street Chapel, our predecessor congregation based just off The Strand in central London (where Unitarian HQ is still located today). If you would like to borrow any title, please enter the details in the library loans book provided.

BANCROFT, Anne	Weavers of wisdom: women mystics of the twentieth century. 1987.
BENDER, Sue	Plain and simple: a woman's journey to the Amish. Harper, 1989.
BLUE, Lionel	Hitchhiking to heaven: an autobiography. Hodder, 2005.
BOWMAN, Meg	Reading for women's programs. Hot Flash Press, 1984.
BRAGG, Melvyn	The book of books: the radical impact of the King James Bible. 2011.
BURCKHARDT, T.	An introduction to Sufism. Crucible/Thorsons, 1990.
CHETWYND, Tom	A dictionary of sacred myth: the language of your soul. Unwin, 1986.
DARLISON, Bill	The gospel and the zodiac: the secret truth about Jesus. Duckworth, 2007.
DIAMOND, Louise	The peace book: 108 simple ways to create a more peaceful world. 2001.
DICKSON, Anne	The mirror within: a new look at sexuality. Quartet Books, 1985.
DICKSON, Anne	A woman in your own right. Quartet Books, 1982.
FRANKL, Viktor	Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy. 1984.
FRAZER, J.G.	The golden bough: a study in magic and religion. Macmillan, 1980.
HAWKING, Stephen	The universe in a nutshell. Bantam Press, 2001.
LAZREG, Marnia	The eloquence of silence: Algerian women in question. Routledge, 1994.
LERNER, Eric	Journey of insight meditation: a personal experience of the Buddha's Way. Turnstone Books, 1978.
MARIECHILD, D.	Mother wit: a feminist guide to psychic development. 1981.
MOYO, Dambisa	Dead aid: why aid makes things worse. Penguin Books, 2010.
RAINWATER, J.	Self-therapy: a guide to becoming your own therapist. Crucible, 1989.
REED, Cliff	Unitarian? What's that? Lindsey Press, 1999. [A good introduction]
ROWE, Mortimer	The story of Essex Hall. Lindsey Press, 1959. [See comment above]
RUETHER, R. R.	Women healing earth: Third World women on ecology, feminism and religion. SCM Press, 1996.
RUMI (1207-1273)	Selected poems, translated by Coleman Banks. Penguin Books, 2004
SMITH, Huston	The world's religions: our great wisdom traditions. Harper, 1991.
STARHAWK	The spiral dance: a rebirth of the ancient religion of the great goddess.
TOLLE, Eckhart	Guardians of being. Hay House UK, 2009.
TOWLER, Solata	Tales from the Tao; inspirational teachings. Watkins, 2005.
UNITARIAN WORSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE	Crying out loud: an anthology of poetry and prose on women's spiritual insight and experience. 1987.
VAN DER MEER	The role of beliefs in the natural sciences. University Press, 1996.
WALKER, Barbara	Women's rituals: a sourcebook. Harper & Row, 1990.
WOLKSTEIN, D.	Inanna queen of heaven and earth: her stories and hymns. 1983.
WRIGHT, Conrad	American Unitarianism 1805-1865. Boston, 1989.

Do we get an indirect mention in Lionel Blue's autobiography?
On page 267 we read of meetings "sometimes at a friendly Unitarian church". It would be nice to think so.

Howard Hague (Hon. Librarian)

Solution to the Crossword Clue (from page 2)

nun oddly including it = un-it ---- n
 song = aria
 answer = unit+aria+n ... Unitarian!

"If you always imagine God in the same way, no matter how true and beautiful it may be, you will not be able to receive the gift of the new ways he has ready for you."

Carlos Valles

'Can You Know This Is True?'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 15th January 2012

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

There are so many things to give thanks for in life but when I'm making my own gratitude list quite high on that list is gratitude for the fact that I've had very little to do with the justice system. I've not been arrested, I had good enough reasons not to sit on a jury when I was called to do so, and I've never had to give evidence as a witness in a court of law. Do you think you'd be a reliable witness? Years ago when I was working as a teacher I was asked to observe a history lesson. The lesson was all about the unreliability of witnesses and the difficulty of reaching a consensus about what really happened just a few minutes ago, never mind times past long ago.

The teacher, unbeknownst to me and the class, had arranged for a fellow teacher to come bursting into the room at some point and start arguing about some issue, some wrong that the first teacher had allegedly committed. When this happened it was a real shock - especially as the angry teacher who stormed into the room at one point was so annoyed that he picked up a pencil case from the desk and waved it in a threatening manner, before shouting an unpleasant threat and marching out of the room, slamming the door as he went. The first teacher apologised to us all for what had just happened then went on teaching the lesson as before. It was a good ten minutes before she stopped and asked us to write down what we had witnessed earlier. What had been said, what had been done, what was the angry teacher wearing? When we all read out our replies the point of the lesson was obvious – even just ten minutes after an incident, that we had all witnessed closely, our accounts of what had happened varied greatly. And what was most noticeable to me was that we all believed our varying accounts to be true. He was wearing a tweed jacket. No, it was made of denim. He made a physical threat. No, he simply picked up his own pencil case that the other teacher had taken without asking. And so on.

Psychologists have much to say about the ways we humans remember events and how very easy it is to implant false memories in someone's mind. A recent experiment found that up to 50% of us could be convinced that we have had an experience when we really have not. In a study called, 'A picture is worth a thousand lies', Kimberley Wade and colleagues used a doctored photograph of a fictitious balloon flight to implant false memories (Wade, Garry, Read & Lindsay, 2002). When shown a faked photo of themselves as a child on a hot air balloon trip with family members – half of the people questioned started to remember that they'd been on that trip.

We humans are easily fooled and few of us prove to be reliable witnesses when put to the test. And if we struggle to give accurate accounts of dramatic events and can be convinced by a photograph that our own memory is false then we have to question our ability to witness accurately our own lives, or the lives of others.



Our lives are indeed patchworks of stories and interpretations and much of the personal growth and development work that is so popular today revolves around the search for these stories and their source. *Who told you that you were no good at*? Fill in the gap here for yourself – for most of us have been told at some point, or have told ourselves, that we cannot, or can, do certain things. Families share such stories when they label one child the quick one, or the sporty one, or the artistic one, or the funny one, or the clumsy one. Teachers and friends add to the picture and by the time most of us are adults we have a pretty clear and usually quite fixed idea of who we are. And we do the same for those around us. Our friends, our partners, our parents or children, our neighbours, our politicians – it is part of human nature to think that we know who these people truly are. We treasure our judgements of them - we hold them as truth.

But can we really know that this is true? This is one of the questions asked by an inspirational woman called Byron Katie who leads sessions around the world on a method of inquiry called The Work. Her own life experiences led her to that question. In her 30s she was gripped by a major depression and for several years was barely able to crawl from her bed. In the depths of her despair she came to a realisation that it was her thoughts that were troubling her rather than the reality. When she thought that something should be different from how it was (*"my husband should love me more", "my children should appreciate me"*) she suffered and when she didn't believe these thoughts she felt peace. She realised that what had been causing her depression was not the world around her, but what she *believed* about the world around her. Our attempt to find happiness is often backwards – we hopelessly try to change the world to match our thoughts about how it should be when we can instead question these thoughts and meet reality as it is.

Byron Katie's method then is a "way to identify and question the thoughts that cause all the suffering in the world. It is a way to find peace with yourself and with the world." The problem that she identified in human thinking is the way we struggle with what is. We find it hard to accept reality. Katie describes this as a bit like trying to teach a cat to bark. You can try all day to teach that cat but in the end it's going to look up at you and go 'miaow'. "Wanting reality to be different is hopeless," says Katie.

'Can You Know This Is True?'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

I wonder if you have any of these sorts of thoughts? *People shouldn't drop litter. The government should be kinder to poor people. There shouldn't be wars, I should be ... thinner, more popular, more intelligent, younger, healthier, happier, richer, more successful* – you fill in the gap. On the card you were given earlier you'll find the four questions that form the basis of this method of inquiry. You take a statement such as these – a statement that may well include a should or an ought – and question it.

Is it true?

Can you absolutely know that it's true?

How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?

Who would you be without that thought?

Finally Katie suggests we experiment by turning the thought around; by saying the opposite we may well experience a sense of peace, a feeling of lightning up, of humour even.

There are some handouts about The Work if you want to explore this further and an excellent website to explore (www.thework.com) where you can download worksheets and a booklet to help you make your own inquiries. This method of course has ancient origins. Old Socrates standing in the market place of Athens was renowned for his methods of inquiry – using what later became known as the Socratic method of questioning. People would come to him, it is said, with one question and leave with dozens more to ponder.

And I think Socrates would be intrigued by our post modern society that continues to prize truth with a capital T yet is painfully aware of the plurality of truths that exist in our world today. Going back to history teaching for example, children are now taught that truth is often relative, that history tends to be written by the more powerful, by the victors in any battle. Truth in this sense does not exist – we cannot find it. Rather there are 'truths' and these multiple truths are created by language, by societies, by individuals, by cultures. All we can then say is that this is 'true for you'.

This sort of inquiry is the stuff of philosophy classes and we could, and probably will, spend the rest of our lives exploring the nature of truth, one way or another. I've come to think that yes truth is relative, but that exploring the nature of truth – both my own and other people's, is an important spiritual practice, and that such practices can take us to a deeper level of truth – beyond hope, beyond fear, beyond any need to be 'right'. It is then too simple to say that there is no one truth. Better perhaps just to keep exploring and questioning – both alone and in conversation with other people – with humility and ever open minds. This is the spiritual path of Zen Buddhism and Sufism and contemplative Christianity – a paradoxical path that encourages us to unlearn all that we think we know, all that we hold dear, all that seemingly identifies us, in order to search within for a sense of a deeper truth, a wisdom that is there to be discovered when we let go of our minds and their ever busy theories and ideologies – releasing that oh so human and oh so desperate need to find the answer and for that to be the right answer. And at this deep level of inquiry I come to believe the possibility that perhaps "you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free". Amen.

Welcoming Babies at Essex Church



Congratulations to assorted families after the recent ceremonies held here at Essex Church to welcome their children to the world. In this photo taken after our service on December 11th are members and friends of the Pritchard and Mahamdallie families who gathered with the congregation to celebrate Mike and Yasmin's children Hugh and Martha. Our best wishes go to them and also to the Forbes and Bologan families, who travelled so far to be together and celebrate the birth of Anatol and Jess's first child. All the guests remarked on how beautiful the church looked with its Christmas lights twinkling brightly. Thanks to Jenny our warden for bringing us such festive cheer.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday Services at Essex Church

5th February, 11am –
“Carpe Diem”

Service led by Harold Lorenzelli

Our very own Harold, church trustee and long-standing stalwart of the choir, will be leading the first service in February. Harold promises a look at why it's important to make the most of today.

12th February, 11am –
“Contentment”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With life so often filled with yearnings and dissatisfactions, where shall we find contentment? This service will help us to explore some sources of peace and satisfaction, whatever our circumstances.

12.30pm - **Small-Group Communion**,
led by Jane Blackall (lasting ~30 minutes)

19th February, 11am –
“Stop Looking – Life is Here and Now!”

Service led by David Francis Darling

This service grew out of seeing the musical *Pippin*, that tells the tale of a young man looking for his purpose in life, only to discover that the extraordinary is to be found in ordinary everyday events and relationships.

26th February, 11am –
“The White Horse at Uffington”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Cut into the Wiltshire chalk hillside in the Bronze Age, this remarkable figure tells us of the importance of horses for humans. In this service we will celebrate the relationship between humans and horses and consider their spiritual significance in ancient times.

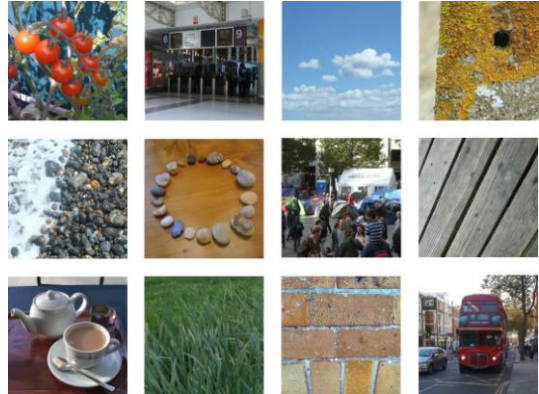


Hucklow Summer School 2012

For Personal and Leadership Development

‘Sacred Living’

Encountering the Holy in the Everyday



18th-25th August 2012
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Theme talks by a team of speakers:

Bill Darlison, Sue Woolley,
Danny Crosby, Kate McKenna, Margaret Kirk

A Choice of Four Engagement Groups:

'A Conscious Life' - Rita Woditsch and Linda Hart
'Living With Meaning' - Jef Jones and Kate McKenna
'Hello... and Goodbye' - Michael Dadson and Ned Prideaux
'Bright Lights' - Lindy Latham and Kate Buchanan

For more information and an application form visit
www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk

Basic cost: £440 (adult in shared room)
Applications are due by 16th April 2012.

“Life is what it is,
you cannot change it,
but you can change yourself.”

Hazrat Inayat Khan

“Open your heart to contain all of the things of the world,
Cleanse your heart to receive the beauty of the world,
Calm your heart to comment on the conflicts of the world,
Devote your heart to observing the affairs of the world,
Then you will grow to conquer all changes in the world.”

Feng Wu (Taiwan 1986)

Quotes sent in by Diana Ward