



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: October 2017

What's On...

Sunday 1st October, 11am-noon
'Generosity of a Window'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 4th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 5th October, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul: Giving and Receiving: The Way Life Flows'
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 8th October, 11am-noon
'Paying it Forward'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 8th October, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanovic

Wednesday 11th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 15th October, 11am-noon
'Sweet Charity?'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 15th October, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 15th October, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 18th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 19th October, 7 for 7.15pm
'Singing for the Spirit'
with Corrina Dolso

Sunday 22nd October, 11am-noon
'Sharing Who We Are'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
Includes a charity collection for the London Air Ambulance

Sunday 22nd October, 2-5pm
Inclusive Tea Dance: Jive!
Lesson led by Rachel Sparks

Wednesday 25th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 29th October, 11am-noon
'Grateful for Love'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
Don't forget the clocks go back!!!

Sunday 29th October, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation:
'Reaching Out'

Generosity

A Message from our Minister

It's been a bumper year for blackberries in the north of England, though not so bountiful down here in the south east, where lack of rain in early summer has left berries rather small and hard. But lack of rain doesn't seem to have affected the production of acorns and conkers. A bowl of them adorn my desk as I type, collecting them a habit from childhood. So shiny, lying on the grass in the park; irresistible still.



On the day I was picking up conkers beneath one of those majestic horse chestnut trees in Kensington Gardens, a toddler and his dad were similarly engaged. What pleasure. The conkers I found went into my pocket but the little one was handing his conkers to his dad with a chuckle of delight and then receiving them back with a sweetly spoken 'thank you'. Anyone who's spent times with toddlers knows that this particular game can run for quite a while. Youngsters love giving gifts. They love creating stories too. Have you ever used acorn cups as fairy cups or little hats? Surely an essential life experience, so we'll have some acorns in our harvest display for you to play with.

Our ministry theme for October is 'generosity' and it is indeed a generous topic, with many, perhaps too many, aspects to explore. Nature's exuberant generosity can generally be eaten or will rot down to nourish the earth and thus provide for future growth. Though I'll never forget what happened to our compost heap the year we emptied a bucketful of conkers on to it. But such generous provision can become more complex with us humans. Our stuffed rubbish bins and charity shops are testament to our sometimes excessive desires. The organisers of Earth Overshoot Day are committed to alerting us all to humanity's over-use of the world's resources. In 2017, we apparently had used a year's worth of resources by August 2nd. Another way of measuring over-consumption is called our carbon footprint. The last time I measured the environmental effect of my lifestyle, it showed that 3.2 planets would be required to sustain such a way of life for everyone. Since then, I've made some changes to my diet and use public transport more often. But my over-consumption is probably much as it was. So I do not have the right to preach at anyone on this topic. But perhaps we can all encourage one another this autumn to appreciate more and consume less. Would anyone care to join me in a conker giving game under a chestnut tree? Or meet up beneath sweet chestnut trees and collect their edible nuts? As we pass the chestnuts to one another let's smile and murmur 'thank you, thank you'. Gratitude and generosity seem to belong hand in hand.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Committee News * Film Reviews by Liz Tuckwell * Roy Clark Photography Exhibition * LGBTQ+ Inclusive Tea Dance: Jive! * Poems by John Hands, Brian Ellis, and Eliz Beel * Local & National Unitarian Events: What's On * London Playback Theatre returns in November * 'Singing for the Spirit' with Corrina Dolso * Update from 'Generation. Education. Period' Charity * Men's Group Plans * 'Unitarian Missionaries' sermon by Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

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



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

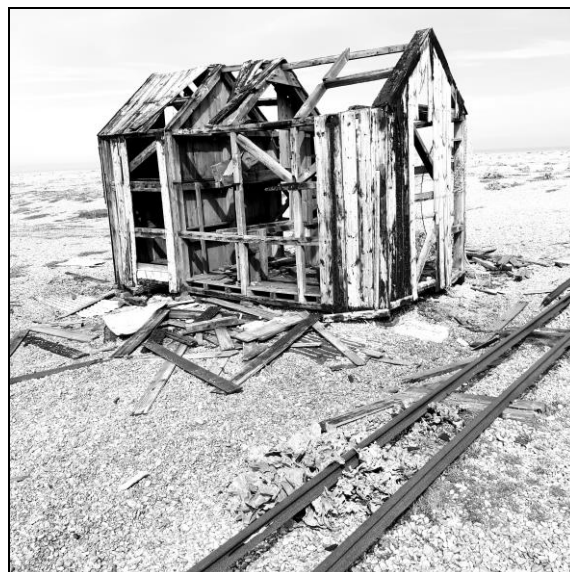
Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Needless to Say'

Exhibition of Recent Work by Roy Clark



Venue: The Masbro Centre, London W14 OLR

When: 16th - 29th October 2017

Private View: Thursday 19th October
(RSVP) royclark@email.com

'Rumi Night'



A Concert based on Mystical Poetry
Sunday 29th October, 7-9pm at Essex Church

*"In the house of lovers, the music never stops, the walls
are made of songs & the floor dances"*

The Soveida Ensemble returns to the Kensington Unitarian Church for another night of mystical music. Allow the rhythms to transport you, while the love filled words of Rumi, and other spiritual masters, fill the air. The concert begins at 7pm and ends at 9pm, with a 20 minute refreshment break in the middle. Entry is by voluntary donation. All proceeds will go towards a human rights charity. Please reserve your seats online to secure a place: iccruminight.eventbrite.co.uk

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

1 st October:	Carole Grace
8 th October:	Heidi Ferid
15 th October:	Carole Grace
22 nd October:	Julia Alden
29 th October:	Alice Lambert

Coffee:

1 st October:	Kate Brown
8 th October:	Kate Brown
15 th October:	Veronica Needa
22 nd October:	Kate Brown
29 th October:	Helena Coope

Greeting:

1 st October:	Brian Ellis
8 th October:	Niall Doherty
15 th October:	??? (<i>can you help?</i>)
22 nd October:	Gina Bayley
29 th October:	Brian Ellis

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

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dances at Essex Church

Next: Sunday 22nd October, 2-5pm



Our tea dances are going from strength to strength. Save the date and join us for another tea dance with social dancing and actual tea and cake on October 22nd! Enjoy a gentle afternoon learning some basic social dancing steps with Rachel Sparks who can teach even the most left-footed people. There will be a jive lesson for complete beginners at 2.15pm and we'll have a few line dances as the afternoon progresses.

This is an inclusive event for anyone including LGBTQIA+ people and we ask that everyone is respectful to each other. The partnering at this tea dance is gender-neutral, meaning anyone can lead and anyone can follow, and we are completely body positive. We ask you not to wear high heels as we need to protect the floor! You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to raise money for our nominated charity, Diversity Role Models.

Tickets: £10 on the door
(free entry to members of Essex Church)

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

**Save the Dates: Sunday 11th February,
6th May, 23rd September, 9th December 2018**



Singing for the Spirit with Corrina Dolso

Thursdays 19th October, 16th November
from 7.15-8.15pm here at Essex Church



A time and space to find spiritual joy through singing together. In this candlelit hour we will join in simple repeated chants, rounds, and songs interspersed by silence and occasional readings. No singing experience is necessary. Please contact Corrina if you would like more details: corrina.dolso@btopenworld.com.

Corrina Dolso

London Playback Theatre

Returns to Essex Church
on Friday 17th November at 7.30pm

'Stories of Not Knowing...'



Tuning into the theme of this Sunday's service, we invite you to take this opportunity of exploring feelings, memories and stories around the times when we have not known something and then it became known.... what happened? Or perhaps we still don't know... how does that feel? Let's boldly go into this exploration of the unknown together.... (CUE music from Star Trek...)

London Playback Theatre is a multicultural team of highly experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators and therapists, who have been practising and performing together for many years. Through the spontaneity and vibrancy of improvisational techniques, we bring real stories to life which have been volunteered by the audience and inspired by the theme of an event.

**All welcome. Members of the congregation
of Essex Church free of charge.**

Thematic Ministry



Our theme in October will be 'generosity'. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas of ways to explore this month's theme and do get in touch if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer on a Sunday or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Our Sunday conversations will start again on 24th September and 29th October. Future themes: November – 'The Unknown', December – 'Hospitality' and January – 'Chance, Luck & Randomness'. Here are some ways you might choose to explore our theme for October.

- Do you remember a time when someone was generous to you and you felt good about it? How did you feel? What helped you to feel able to accept their generosity?
- Do you remember a time when you were generous to someone else and felt good about the experience? What encouraged you to be generous?
- Do you remember a time when either giving or receiving did not go well? What did you learn about generosity and / or about yourself from that experience?
- In the month ahead do something differently, to break up your usual ways of behaving. If you never give to someone begging in the street, be generous for a change. If you always buy a copy of The Big Issue then see how it feels not to buy a copy. Or if you've never bought The Big Issue buy two copies and give one away. Is your first reaction to any request a 'yes' or a 'no'? Pay attention this month to your fixed ways of being or your ideas that life 'should' be a certain way.
- Author Linda R Harper explores how we may give with an expectation of something in return. She describes this 'outcome-based giving' as stemming from 'traders, martyrs and controllers' and says that we all have something of each in us. Traders give but expect something back, keeping a tally in every relationship. Martyrs ignore their personal needs in order to please others; but can then feel annoyed when their sacrifices go unnoticed. Controllers give but want certain results in return and may feel like failures when the world isn't changed by their efforts. Harper suggests instead that we give freely, joyously, with no expectations. Spend time exploring your inner trader, martyr and controller. Is there some 'outcome-based giving' in your life that you would like to end?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 15th October, 19th November**

Midweek class on Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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

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

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops

**Sunday 15th October and 19th November
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm (no class in December)**



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

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

Update on 'Generation Education Period' Project

Last winter the Essex Unitarian Community gave generously to Generation Education Period (GEP) project which is run by Lotus Education Fund Ltd (an Australian registered charity). This was a project that was born out of working with young girls in a wellness workshop on reproductive health, anti-trafficking and self-identity building that I participated in, in rural Laos. We found that these girls knew very little about the menstruation process and missed extensive school because of their periods.

The project has gone from producing 100 GEP kits in 2016 to 3200 in 2017. This has been possible by the input from many sources, small and large. Not only have many menstruation packs been produced, but they have been produced by training girls and women and thus, giving employment and agency opportunities to local communities. Providing GEP sanitary kits restores dignity to the daily lives of women and girls in rural Laos. This greatly impacts educational opportunities and leads to better outcomes for women and girls, in turn improving the wellbeing of entire communities.

If you would like to see how your funds are impacting on wellbeing for girls and women in rural Laos please email Jane Blackall (jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) who can forward you a copy of our newsletter.

Julia Alden

Congratulations to Lewisham and Southend Unitarians



Congratulations to Unitarian communities in Southend and Lewisham for their recent anniversary celebrations. Southend were celebrating 40 years of their new building, opened the same year as our very own Essex Church. And Lewisham were celebrating the 120th anniversary of the founding of their congregation.

Inclusive Communion

Sunday 8th October and 12th November at 12.30pm



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. Tristan Jovanović will lead in October. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane or Tristan.

Billion Stars: One Planet



When the crankshaft goes down and takes the piston with it
You could say – there's a new possibility: or when
The crankshaft rises up and brings the piston with it – here's
Another possibility! But if the pistons revolve and no one
Ever stops to consider those who will
Breathe in oil and spit out pollution – here you may exclaim
"If there's no oil, then there'll always be electricity; and
If there's no electricity then - back to wind and sail or
Basic pedalling – there's always a way for the dedicated optimist."
Surely – you can add – "when Gaia starts sending back its 3D survey
Of the billion stars and their trillion planets surely
Surely to God there'll be one on which someone, somewhere
Is bound to be saying: 'when their piston came up
It was their one opportunity to change direction – but they
Blew it forever – and now there they are, a handful of survivors
Blaming us – their stars!"

John Hands

Unitarian What's On List

Hastings' 150th Anniversary

Sunday 1st October 2017, 2.00-4.00pm
South Terrace, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 1SA

You are invited to attend a special afternoon to celebrate this significant milestone in the history of Hastings Unitarian Church. There will be an organ recital by Stephen Page at 2pm, which will be followed by the Anniversary Service at 3pm, led by Stephen Crowther with an address by Rev. Ashley Hills. This will be followed by afternoon tea. RSVP to Stephen Crowther if you wish to attend: srcrowther52@hotmail.com.

Unitarian Theology Conference

Friday 13th and Saturday 14th October 2017
Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel, City Square, Leeds LS1 5EB

All are welcome to attend this two-day conference. Friday's proceedings run from 11.30am-5.45pm and are on the theme of 'God', with talks from Ant Howe, Lewis Connolly, and our own Jane Blackall. Saturday will be 'on Unitarianism' with talks from Ann Peart, Justin Meggit, and Stephen Lingwood. There'll be breaks for tea and meals. No entry charge, no need to book a place. Donations to cover costs will be welcomed.

Unitarian Women's Group:

'Our Stories'

20th – 22nd October 2017
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

A weekend of interactive sessions on Unitarian women in history, placing ourselves in the story and a look at the UWG itself and its development over the course of nearly four decades. Serious and hilarious by turns and always warm and friendly. Led by Ann Peart and Celia Midgley. Accommodation costs start from £124 with supplements for ensuite or single occupancy. A UWG conference fee of £10 is also applicable. For more information and conference registration contact Margaret Robinson: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com or 01642 782219

Findhorn Unitarian Experience Week:

27th January to 3rd February 2018

A unique opportunity to be part of a Findhorn Experience Week in good company with other Unitarians. The total cost of the week is £660 plus travel costs but there may well be possibilities of subsidies. If this week interests you, do talk to Sarah soon for more information. Findhorn is a community that places spirituality at the centre of all activities and it's an inspiring adventure in living in attunement with one another and with the environment. 'Love in action' is their approach to all tasks, with the option of joining in with daily Taize chanting and meditation sessions.

FUSE: Festival of

Unitarianism in the South East

16th-18th February 2018 - Horsley Estate, Surrey

The 2018 Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) promises to be a weekend filled with great opportunities to deepen your Unitarian experience, find time for your soul, meet lots of new people, enjoy good food, sing with great music, and relax in beautiful surroundings! Rev. Jim Robinson, former minister at Hampstead, will be the keynote speaker. Save the dates and keep an eye out for booking which opens soon.

Summer Poetry and Contemporary Haikus

Candles of Love

I light these candles
to find Love or Hope, reassuring me:
that as I can expect.
Maybe, I am still to find
that same source, as always, before,
of these candles, still,
spreading their meditational
graces and blessings.

Ah, sorrows or aspirations
may take flight, as if mere birds of omen:
but not, at least, from the Paradise
I am still hoping to find existence of.

Haiku

No.1
I was learning:
I learnt-----
Now I realise:
the fool,
knowing's ongoing.

No.2
Muddled, sad I was;
Onto correct version!
Smiles now I have;
postscript.

No. 3
Unravel the kingdom
as a ball of wool;
makes better sense now:
wispy clouds
floating by.

No.4
Wise old bird?
forget it, mate.
Blacked eyes and
a weary smile
will do, thanks.

No 5.
Long night's passed:
Asleep, still?
Awaken now!
daylight blushes.

Elizabeth L. Beel (copyright)
Great Hucklow August 24th 2017

Warden's Column



The school summer holidays are a quiet time at the church & I was able to negotiate some additional time away to join a dance project in the South of France - not exactly holiday, as I was still dealing with email, invoicing, accounts etc. while I was there, but definitely a break.

The photo above is of a piece choreographed by Carey Jeffries, who also did the paintings in the background. She was drawing during the performance too. The dancers are Ben Julian, Mara Natterer, Melody Sacco and Fabienne Menjuq. The photograph was taken by Emanuelle Latour.

Along with 5 other people, we'd rented an old comb-making factory in the village of St Colombe sur l'Hers for two months. Our intention was "to live together and to co-create an events and education centre around movement, arts, improvisation and sustainable living" (quote taken from our living-arts-base website). This was a follow-up project to the one at the Spanish monastery I joined on my 3 months sabbatical leave last year.

The performance in the photo took place at the end of our two month residency. We also ran workshops on dancing in nature and intensives on performance interventions in public spaces & improvised singing.

I enjoyed the creativity - but I enjoyed the nature even more. The factory had a river running right past it and was a short walk away from a very beautiful lake (Lac Montbel). The wildlife was amazing - red squirrels and dragonflies everywhere and I also saw an owl, a stag beetle and both land & water snakes.

I've been back for a few weeks now, but I still feel I'm walking with a bounce in my step: full of good summer memories - very grateful to the church for giving me the chance to have that experience.

Some members of the group are currently negotiating renting a big old house with a dance studio in Spain for the winter (www.artequi.de) so if that works out I may join them for a few weeks in our next quiet period (Christmas / New Year).

Meanwhile, I'm also very much enjoying being back in London. It's a great privilege to be able to live in spaces full of so much creativity and to have a big and beautiful space in your own home where you can dance and sing.

Jenny Moy

A New Men's Group

I am looking for some support in developing and running another men's group at Essex Church.

The previous men's group provided space for men to share their experiences, hopes, and fears. It was a most special regular get-together. We met every month for two hours on Tuesday evenings at church.

We seek to particularly explore how it is to be a man in this world we share. I am also interested in hearing from those who would like to attend the meetings to share and have fun. Please contact me on:

jim_blair_rhino@hotmail.com / 07734 511 921

James Blair

New Radio Programme: 'Living with the Gods'



This new Radio Four series presented by Neil MacGregor, former Director of the British Museum, starts on 23rd October 2017 at 9.45am with a repeat at 7.45pm. A 30 part series, it will also be available to listen to on BBC iPlayer. It's an exploration of the role and expression of beliefs in lives and communities through time and around the world and a linked exhibition on this theme, opens at the British Museum on 2nd November 2017.

Neil MacGregor says: "Questions of faith have, in recent decades, moved to the centre of the global political stage - an unexpected return to a centuries-old pattern. But what are the connections between structures of belief, and the structures of society? In this series, using objects from the British Museum, and talking to experts from many disciplines, we try to explore some of these questions, looking at communities from deep history to the present day, in Europe and around the world"

Across the series, the focus moves from daily and weekly practices, festivals, pilgrimages and sacrifices, to power struggles and political battles between beliefs, and between faiths and states. The series explores the idea that homo sapiens is also homo religiosus. If there's interest we could organise a trip to the exhibition in November and a discussion group about the issues raised by the series.

Good Cause Collection of the Month
London Air Ambulance
Collection on Sunday 22nd October



On average, five people every 24 hours in London are so seriously injured that they need advanced life-saving medical treatment on scene, before they reach hospital. With your help our advanced trauma doctor and paramedic can be by their side within minutes to perform medical procedures normally only found in the hospital Emergency Department, giving them the best possible chance of survival and recovery. London's Air Ambulance has provided pre-hospital care in London for 28 years and our dedicated teams have helped more than 36,000 patients.

For more info: londonsairambulance.co.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

July – **Action for Disability** – £212.18

Collections for Grenfell Tower – £391.28

August – **Send a Child to Hucklow** – £124.74

Horses in Syon Park

by the lane
 two horses graze
 'look they're always
 in that field'
 we say

they raise heads
 dark eyes passive
 ears alert
 querying our voices
 'more people
 back and fore
 not much to do'
 their quiet thought

a gentle nuzzle
 and wave of tail
 return them to
 new green pleasures
 in their pasture

Brian Ellis

Church Committee News



The committee last met on August 31st and will next meet on Thursday October 12th. Do let a committee member know if you have matters you'd like to raise. We were glad to welcome our warden Jenny back after her summer with a dance community in France. Gratitude to her stand-in Arda was expressed and a gift agreed. We were also pleased to hear of Gitana's return after an extended holiday back home in Lithuania with family.

The summer has seen progress on a number of building improvements but also some frustration at jobs not yet completed and builders needing to be chased. We're hoping for early autumn progress with the roof repairs, the side external door locks and the heating controls. Have you noticed that the side passageway and back wall now have newly boarded pipework, painted black and looking very smart?

Thanks go to Brian Ellis who has been steadily working on improvements both indoors and out. Thanks to his efforts we have a shiny, water-proof side door step and much more space in the garden shed. Several more trips to the tip are apparently planned for the weeks ahead.

We're encouraging more church members to take out a standing order as a way of supporting our activities, as an alternative to Sunday collections. We're also seeking contributions for the Swaziland Education Project as each year we donate £1,000 to SOS Villages to pay for the education of two teenage girls, Patience and Fortunate. Can you help us reach this goal before Christmas? Cheques can be made payable to Essex Church and given to our warden or minister (marked Education Project). And would someone like to sponsor another colour edition of the newsletter – the December / January issue? The additional cost is around £100 and we've had lots of positive feedback about our previous two colour issues.

Thanks to Sarah, Brian and Carole for organising such a successful summer poetry evening. With a simple format, people seemed to enjoy reading favourite summer poems to one another, and discovering new favourites for the first time. Would anyone like to organise another similar evening?

Apologies for the state of the library carpet. We have a carpet cleaner if anyone has time and energy to take on the job but it's a dispiriting task as it gets dirty again so quickly. We'll need to seek professional advice when we choose the next carpet so that it won't show spills. We're still hoping someone will volunteer to look after our tablecloths. Candle wax removal tips and a free iron are available.

Film Reviews: 'Dunkirk' and 'Wind River'

Recently I saw two films in two days, Dunkirk and Wind River.

I had heard people say how good Dunkirk was. I thought it was a good film but not a great film. It was excellent at showing how terrifying it must have been, waiting on the beach, hoping for a miracle, and the photography was magnificent. However, I thought occasionally the story got a little disjointed and I lost track of some of the minor characters. What happened to the young Frenchman?

No German soldiers are shown. I understand this was an artistic decision to heighten the sense of impending doom and terror but it does concern me that Germans are being portrayed as the faceless, evil enemy. I remember a conversation with Gisela, a German woman who used to come to our church. I commented so many Hollywood films had Brits as the baddie. Gisela retorted, 'You try being German.'

Out of the 338,226 men who escaped, 139,997 were either French, Polish or Belgian but the film only shows the evacuation of the British soldiers. There has been criticism that the vital role of the French army in protecting the British evacuation was hardly shown. I liked that the film didn't glorify war. One of the plotlines (SPOILER) is a teenager, George, who jumps on one of the small boats going to rescue the soldiers, clearly thinking it will be a big adventure. Unfortunately, he is accidentally badly injured by a distraught soldier and dies without having done anything heroic or actually having helped in the evacuation.



Wind River is a murder mystery and a very gripping film, again with breath-taking photography. All the actors are excellent. I found it interesting that the lead character, Cory Lambert, Jeremy Renner is a white actor although in terms of the plot, he could easily have been Native American. I felt uncomfortable about this. Clearly, the box office was dictating but I thought it lessened the impact of the film's message. However, I did discover that the writer-director, Taylor Sheridan insisted on hiring Native American actors for the Native American roles. (By the way, I thought that Native American was an acceptable term, but researched how Native Americans prefer to be called and their first preference is by their specific nation or tribe. The Wind River reservation is home to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes.)

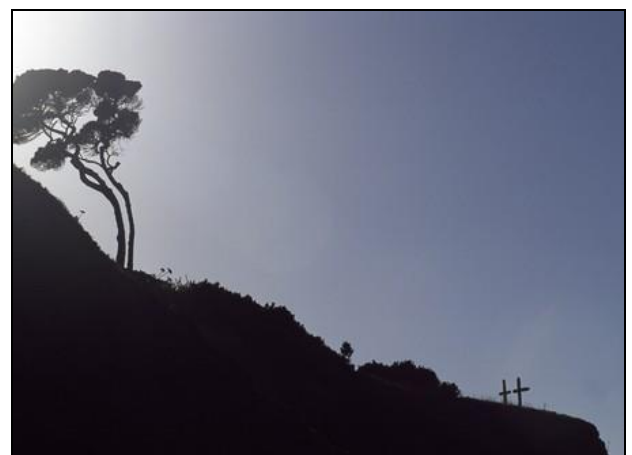
Wind River also has the theme of violence but it is violence against women, in this case, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho women, the theme of the effects of deprivation and discrimination on a minority population in one of the richest countries in the world, and the theme of living with grief. I was shocked by a statement at the end of the film, "While missing person statistics are compiled for every other demographic, none exist for Native American women." I found that hard to believe and researched it on the internet. It's true, due to bureaucracy and indifference on the part of the national agencies and is only just now starting to be tackled.

Liz Tuckwell

The Flower that Springs from the Ruins of War

The flower that springs from the ruins of war
Is an inspiration
The moss that thrusts through cracks in the wall
Is courage made manifest
The rock that lies in the bed of the stream
Is patience incarnate
The tree that waves above the desolate landscape
Is fortitude in flower.
Listen to the wind, observe the flowers, pay attention
To the rushing of waters.
In observation is joy, in attention is growth,
In listening is peace.
Power without harm is given to him who harbours no designs
on the myriad creatures.

John Hands



'Reflections on Some Unitarian Missionaries'

by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Adapted from service on Sunday 17th September.

The service is also available online as a podcast.

It makes me shudder. The word missionary. Does it you? It's unfair I know. The truth is that much positive work throughout the world has been done by missionaries over many centuries. Many life-saving projects are being run by missionaries to this day. But we also are aware of the dreadful damage that has been inflicted on so many indigenous peoples when western religious groups sent missionaries to 'save their souls'. The connections between religion and colonialism do not show our species in a positive light. European rulers sought new lands, rich with resources, to boost their economic status back home. Religious leaders helped to subjugate the people who lived in those lands, attempting to destroy their faith, their way of life, their very connection with the land on which they lived. It's a truly shameful part of human history and its reverberations live on to this day in world politics and world injustice.

So excuse me as I share a few stories of specifically Unitarian missionary work. This is not a 'look at us, we're better than the rest of them'. We know that some of our current Unitarian resources stem from wealth built on the slave trade and colonialism, as is the case with so many institutions here in Britain. But in the Victorian era, our Unitarian forebears did engage in some really positive missionary activity right here in England. Their stories are part of our faith heritage and I'd like to share them with you. And then let's see if their work can guide us now.

We'll be hearing about two missions and one man: the 'domestic mission', the 'van mission' and the Rev Robert Spears. If you look at the front of today's order of service you'll see a photo of a Unitarian van mission. These vans were taken around the country, outdoor services were held, bringing people the message of Unitarian Christianity – a loving faith that accepted all, that emphasised people's potential for good rather than any inherent sinfulness; a faith that encouraged people to engage actively in their own faith journey through education – learning to read, studying Bible texts. Thanks to the Rev Dr David Steers' very interesting blog (velvethummingbee) I found this description of the van mission's work in the early 20th century, written by another Rev – TP Spedding (who may well be standing up ready to preach in this photo):

'The mission has now held over three thousand meetings, gathered nine hundred and fifty thousand people, reached half as many more in one way or another, and indirectly had to do with the holding of hundreds of outdoor meetings, chiefly conducted by ministers who are familiar with Van methods. We have distributed a million and a-half of pamphlets and leaflets, sold hundreds of books, kept in touch with correspondents all over the land, maintained a free lending library, found out lonely Unitarians, added members to the churches, tested likely and unlikely seed-plots for district societies...'

Don't be too put off by the serious faces – remember how in those days you had to stand still for a good few seconds to have a photo taken – and look carefully at the background – historians are trying to trace the town in which this photo was taken. I'll tell you later of places that have already been suggested.



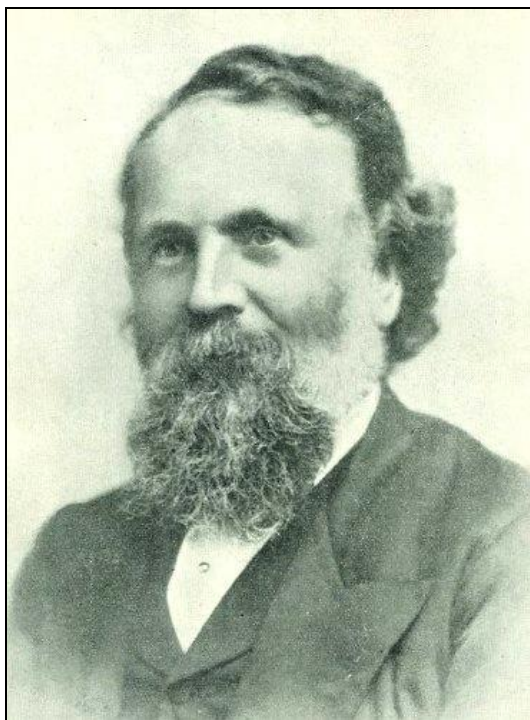
What's known as the 'domestic mission' came earlier, in the 1850s, a Unitarian response to the social problems of their day. Interesting to realise that despite our image of Victorian England as deeply religious, the 1851 census showed that only half the population attended church regularly. The Unitarian domestic mission took faith to people in their homes and their workplaces. And rather than focusing on matters of belief they focused on practicalities – helping to improve living conditions – paying attention to hygiene – providing places to wash clothes and bodies – improving access to education, encouraging savings schemes to help people when working hours were cut or jobs lost. Unitarians established reading rooms and offered educational opportunities to adults as well as children. This is the kind of missionary work I like. It's not saying that our faith is true and we want to save your soul by making you believe what we believe. No, it's a very different message. It's a message based on the knowledge that our world is an unfair world. Basic resources of life are not distributed justly. We recognise that some have more and some have less. We want to share resources more fairly with you. We want everyone to have access to the tools needed for growing human potential. We want everyone to have that metaphorical good soil in which to put down strong roots and grow healthy plants.

And that is the message that guided the work of the Rev Robert Spears, a Victorian character if ever there was one. Historian Alan Ruston rightly describes him as a '19th century Unitarian dynamo' – I recommend Alan's book – *A Unitarian Historical Miscellany*, which is full of fascinating accounts of Unitarian communities and individuals. There should be a copy in the library or do borrow mine. A few weeks ago, four of us Kensington Unitarians went on an outing to visit Southend Unitarians who were celebrating the 40th anniversary of their new building. On the wall we saw a plaque remembering Robert Spears – who founded the Southend congregation back in 1898. And it turns out he founded this congregation too – or at least the Kensington element of us, in 1867. A man of remarkable energy and drive, listen to Robert Spears' own description of his achievements:

'I have not simply founded or recovered to life a dozen churches, and established nine Sunday Schools ... but I could tell how, with the help of God, I have been the means of sorrows lessened, of joys heightened, of lives made more bright and pure, of hearts made more strong, homes made happier, and of gratitude expressed a thousand times for our gospel of Unitarianism.'

What comes across when I read of Spears' work is his conviction that life *can* be improved and that if you see a need you might as well roll up your sleeves and do something about it. He, like many other Unitarians, was concerned at the poor levels of education offered to girls – so he asked wealthy people for money and

'Reflections on Some Unitarian Missionaries' (continued)



opened a school for girls in Highgate – Channing School – still there to this day and still with Unitarian connections. He saw the levels of poverty in parts of east London and set up congregations to make a difference in people's lives, and in particular to offer educational and savings opportunities. There's much more to tell of Spears and his strong, Biblically based faith. But what he, and those who worked on domestic and van missions, show us is the creative power we humans possess – when we focus on the needs of others as well as ourselves, when we see the problems of our time and get involved rather than back away, when we believe we personally can make a difference and when we recognise an essential truth – that what we do for others, we do also for ourselves – because we are all in this together. That's the kind of missionary work worthy of us all. So, what shall we do? And what might our 21st century mission need to be?

References:

'velvethummingbee blog' by Rev Dr David Steers
velvethummingbee.wordpress.com

'On The Side of Liberty: A Unitarian Historical Miscellany'
by Alan Ruston

'Unitarianism' by George Chrystides

Identifying the Town in the Photo

David Steers mentions that Chesterfield, Northwich and Burslem have been considered but probably discounted. Malton and Wrexham are also possibilities. Attention has focused on the shop name of Scales, probably a Yorkshire name, of a firm of boot manufacturers. They had branches in Leeds, Armthorpe in Doncaster and Malton.

World Congress of Faiths Younghusband Lecture 2017

'Rehumanising Public Space?'

**Thursday 16th November 2017, 6.30-8.30pm
Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, W1T 4BE**

Can a renewed interest in religion, belief and spirituality contribute to political and civic regeneration? Are we living in a postsecular society or an age of radical new ethics? And where is the modern 'public square'? Chris Baker, professor of Religion and Public Life at Goldsmiths, will speak on the theme and Rabbi Tony Bayfield, professor of Jewish Theology and Thought at Leo Baeck College, will respond. In the interests of maximising dialogue there will be buzz groups for sharing views, and a plenary discussion. There will be a retiring collection in support of the World Congress of Faiths, which works to increase spiritual understanding through cooperation and dialogue for the benefit of society.

To book your place: www.wcf-yhl2017.eventbrite.co.uk
Enquiries: E: jenny@worldfaiths.org T: 01223 781781

The John Macmurray Fellowship Seminar

'Hope in a Divided World' Macmurray's Vision for Universal Community

**Saturday 14th October, 10am-4pm
Here at Essex Church**

"Why do we simply watch our social system going to pieces before our eyes? ... Because we are afraid, afraid of one another, afraid of ourselves, afraid of the consequences of any decisive action. ... Our dilemma lies in the fact that the more we try to defend ourselves the more we destroy ourselves by isolating our selves more and more from one another. ... There is only one way in which we can escape from the dilemma, and that is by destroying the fear that is at the root of it." – John Macmurray, 1932

"No civilisation has ever been created or sustained except by a religion. Our own was created and sustained by the Christian religion. Because it was a limited and dogmatic form of Christianity, its strength is gone out of it and our civilisation is crumbling in war and revolution. A new civilisation has to be created—a world civilisation. The people of the world have to be united in one human fellowship. It cannot be done by political pacts or business contrivances. It cannot be done by science; because it is a religious task; and only religion, in the nature of things, can accomplish it." – John Macmurray, 1945

Cost: £15 (£7.50 for unwaged)
For more information see: johnmacmurray.org

Services at Essex Church in October



Sunday 1st October, 11am – ‘Generosity of a Window’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

We express and experience generosity in all sorts of ways. Join us in celebration of all we receive and give in life.

Sunday 8th October, 11am – ‘Paying it Forward’

Service led by Jeannene Powell

In this service we'll be exploring the concept of "Paying it forward" and the impact it can have on communities and the world.

Sunday 15th October, 11am ‘Sweet Charity?’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

An opportunity to consider the meaning of charity, its connections with justice and the need for re-distribution of resources in complex societies. Can a 12th century Jewish philosopher help our understanding?

Sunday 22nd October, 11am – ‘Sharing Who We Are’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The more we express who we truly are, the more we show our vulnerabilities, the greater the authenticity of our being and the possibility of depths in our relatedness.

Sunday 29th October, 11am – ‘Grateful for Love’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

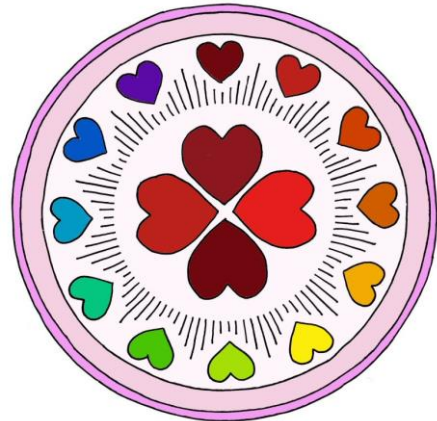
As we honour through ritual those we love who have died, let's explore the strength of gratitude to lift our spirits and shape our living.
Don't forget that the clocks go back this weekend!

‘Heart and Soul’

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 5th October, 2nd November,
7th December from 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. October's 'Heart and Soul' will be led by Sarah on the theme of 'Giving and Receiving: The Way Life Flows'. Sarah says: 'please bring a tiny wrapped gift if you can – suitable for anyone. We'll have extra gifts available so don't worry if you can't bring one.' This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

By Lambeth Bridge



I and the ebbing river
travelling homewards
heard a blackbird,
out of the dusk
singing its solo
over the city's
discordant choir.
we shared its song,
I in my memory
to fill my dreams,
the river in her flow
to join the dark fathoms
of the sea.

Brian Ellis