



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2016

What's On in July...

Sunday 3rd July, 11am-noon
'Truth Seekers'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 3rd July, 12.30-1.15pm

John Hands' 'Bike Ballads'
Poetry Book Launch

Sunday 3rd July

'Dress for Success'

Clothing Drive for Charity

Thursday 7th July, 7-8pm

'Heart and Soul'

'Simplicity'

Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10th July, 11am-noon

'Art and Spirituality'

Led by Sarah Tinker & Heidi Ferid

Sunday 10th July, 12.30pm

Inclusive Communion

Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 17th July, 11am-noon

'Flower Communion'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Please bring along a flower today!

Sunday 17th July, 12.30-1.15pm

'Finding Your Voice'

Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 24th July, 11am-noon

'What is Emerging?'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 31st July, 11am-noon

'Welcome to the Feast'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 31st July, 12.30pm

Congregational Lunch

Please bring along some food to share!

Stormy Weather

A Message from our Minister

"We are all of us together carried in the one world-womb."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

None of us want to hear any more difficult news. But the unusually wet weather we've been having so far this summer here in Britain could be the 'new normal' according to climate change scientists. May 2016 was the 13th month in a row to break global temperature records and 16 of the 17 warmest years on record have occurred since 2000. Warmer global temperatures are bringing greater disturbance in weather patterns the world over. No wonder our church roof struggles to cope with the monsoon like rainfall we now seem to experience so often.



As we come to terms with the result of the EU Referendum and ponder the Chilcot Report on the decision to invade Iraq, let's take time to think about some even deeper issues around human existence here on planet earth. A relative newcomer in the list of species to have inhabited the earth, homo sapiens has certainly made its mark, changing landscapes, using resources and warming up the temperature. When we're told that over 99% of all the species that have ever lived on earth are now extinct, it perhaps helps to put our human ascendance in some kind of perspective. We are temporary, just like everything else. But we have certainly made our mark in this brief time.

Now, when so many other issues clamour for attention, let's not forget the human-created environmental changes that are putting a strain on communities and infrastructures far more fragile than our church roof. With a problem so huge, it is so tempting to hide behind the duvet and feel powerless. Yet every time we make a small but positive change in our own ways of life, every time we read about and speak about climate change concerns we are keeping the existence of this shared human dilemma to the fore, where it really needs to be. One of the reasons our species has been so very successful is our problem solving ability. Now we are called to use that ability for the greater good of all.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'The time has come to lower our voices, to cease imposing our mechanistic patterns on the biological processes of the earth, to resist the impulse to control, to command, to force, to oppress, and to begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which our life depends. Our fulfilment is not in our isolated human grandeur, but in our intimacy with the larger earth community, for this is also the larger dimension of our being. Our human destiny is integral with the destiny of the earth.'

Thomas Berry in 'The Dream of the Earth'

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Mucking In: We Need Your Help' by Jane * 'Building News: No Hard Hats Needed' by Sarah * 'Bike Ballads' Book Launch by John Hands * 'Dress for Success' Charity Clothing Collection * 'There but for Fortune Go You and I' by Carolyn Appleby * Onelight Spiritual Gathering * 'Ablaze! 150 Years of the Fire Service' by Eliz Beel * Charity Collection for the Koestler Trust * 'Heart and Soul' * 'Reclaiming Community' 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.



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Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Congregational Lunch

After the service on Sunday 31st July



We will be having a simple congregational lunch after the service on Sunday 31st July. All are welcome. Please have a think about what food or drink you could offer to bring, and look out for a sign-up sheet nearer the time, to let us know what you intend to offer.

It may be wise to keep your offerings simple as we are likely to be in the middle of building works at this point in the summer which may limit the space that is available to us in the hall. Thank you!

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

3 rd July:	Brian Ellis
10 th July:	Michaela von Britzke
17 th July:	Michaela von Britzke
24 th July:	Alice Lambert
31 st July:	Tristan Jovanovic

Coffee:

3 rd July:	Jane Blackall
10 th July:	Sue Smith
17 th July:	Melody
24 th July:	Juliet Edwards
31 st July:	Edward Goodall & Melody

Greeting:

3 rd July:	Roy Clark
10 th July:	Gina Bayley
17 th July:	??? (can you help?)
24 th July:	Jonathan Crawford
31 st July:	??? (can you help?)

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

'Mucking In' We Need Your Help!



Every Sunday we need people to help create a welcoming atmosphere and enable things to run relatively smoothly. As well as the 'official' duties of stewarding, coffee-making, and greeting, we rely on everybody to look out for visitors or newcomers and ensure that they are well looked-after. As many readers will know, I currently look after the rotas, and recently I have been finding it harder to fill all the slots. We have a relatively small pool of regular volunteers and some are now taking on two or three duties a month to ensure that everything is covered. I would very much like a few more volunteers to come forward so some of our stalwarts can have a week off once in a while! Please get in touch if you might be willing to help out. If you don't know what the various tasks entail we can arrange training for you.

Jane Blackall

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 7th July & 4th August from 7-8pm

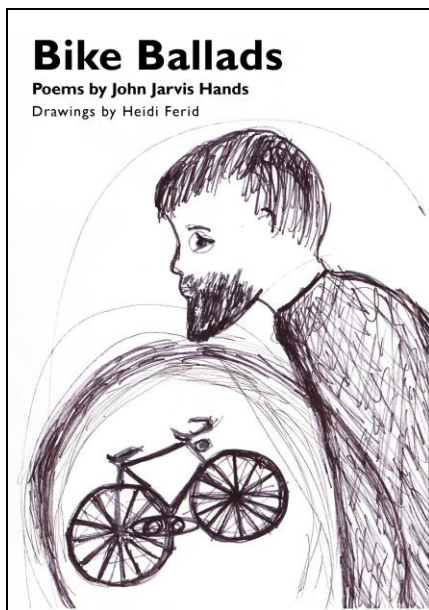


*Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library
Followed by social time and refreshments*

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. This will be followed by refreshments and fellowship. Our July gathering will be led by Sarah on the theme of 'Simplicity'. How might we create greater simplicity in our own lives and the life of our wider world? All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart and Soul' gatherings email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Bike Ballads' John Hands' Book Launch

Sunday 3rd July, 12.30-1.15pm
Here at Essex Church



A new poetry book by John Hands will be launched at a special event after the service on Sunday 3rd July. There will be some readings from 'Bike Ballads' and time for people to share their experiences of cycling. Do put the date in your diary and plan to stay behind that day.

Building News: No Hard Hats Needed



As we reported in last month's newsletter, we are preparing for major building work here at Essex Church this summer and although hard hats won't be necessary, the place will look a bit like... a building site. Installing a completely new heating system in a building like ours will be a challenge but we're hopeful that our chosen contractors from Dunphys Ecclesiastical Heating will be used to unusual buildings. Their team from Rochdale will be working Monday to Thursdays so weekends should be calm and quiet. Our main aim over the next few weeks is to clear all the clutter and encourage user groups to remove as much equipment as they can because replacing radiators and pipework is going to cause a lot of dust.

Meanwhile, up on the roof, we hope that there'll be plenty of dry weather so that we can proceed with the replacement of rooflights and creating a new membrane to waterproof the whole roof. Can we do it? Yes we hope so! Thank you to people who've given us donations towards these works in the last month. It's a great help and is a much appreciated way of showing support for our community.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Inclusive Communion

Sundays 10th July, 14th August 2016
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library



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. All are welcome to participate.

10th July – led by Jane Blackall

14th August – leader to be announced

11th September – led by Tristan Jovanović

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



'Only a few things wear the mark of the eternal: the giving we have invested in others, the love we have expressed in deeds, the kindness we have shown, the work we have done because we loved it, the light we have shown that others may not stumble, the evil we turned into good because we saw that none of us lives apart, but all are members one of another.'

UU Rev. Dr. Sidney L. Freeman (adapted)

'Finding Our Voice' Singing Workshops



**Sundays 17th July and 21st August
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

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

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

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

'Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.'

The passion for social justice that we see in the prophets is a protest against systemic evil. Systemic evil is an important notion: it refers to the injustice built into the structures of the system itself. Embedded in oppressive and exploitative social structures, systemic evil is a major source (perhaps the single greatest cause) of human suffering.'

Marcus J. Borg

Clothing Drive for Dress for Success

Sunday 3rd July – Here at Essex Church



I wrote about Dress for Success and a proposed clothing drive in the last newsletter. We now have a date: Sunday 3rd July.

For anyone who might not have read the last article, Dress for Success is a small charity that provides suitable clothing, interview training and a support network for unemployed women looking for work. 60% of their clients are single mothers. One in two women they help get a job, which is an amazing statistic. They are based in East London, near Shoreditch. Their website is www.dressforsuccessgl.org.

Could any women reading this, please have a look through your clothes to see if there anything you don't want or need, which would be suitable for women applying for jobs. Could any men reading this, please ask your female relatives and friends if they have any clothes appropriate for the office that they no longer need?

What Dress for Success especially needs right now are:

Accessories

- Shoes
- Handbags
- Jewellery
- Other accessories appropriate for an office setting

Clothes

All sizes are welcome but size 16+ are especially welcome

- Suits
- Blouses
- Skirts
- Dresses
- Trousers

The clothes need to be:

- Clean - no stains
- Excellent condition
- Current or classic style

Liz Tuckwell

There But For Fortune Go You and I



On one particular day, after a vague but ignored awareness on the news, I was led in four ways to seriously consider the plight of refugees in Calais. We were visiting Margate for the first time ever. It is an unspoilt seaside town, near Dover in Kent, where we used to get the ferry across to Calais for continental holidays, when I was a teenager.

As we explored Margate in an unplanned sort of way popping in to shops, the open door of a small independent gallery, Vortigern Margate at 6 Lombard Street invited me in to look at the display of photographs by Melanie Arras, which was there for a short time. It was not just the informal pictures of people living in squalor that got my attention. It was also the narrative about ordinary people like you and me living in this way so near our shores that made me take notice.

Next I visited the Turner Contemporary gallery. The exhibition at the entrance is an impressive show of shelves of colourful books by Yinka Shonibare MBE called "The British Library." Quoting from the website, www.turnercontemporary.org it's "a colourful work celebrating and questioning how immigration has contributed to the British culture that we live in today." It's a very attractive installation that is hugely worth seeing. It takes up two large walls just inside the gallery's entrance. There is a table in the middle of the room, with computer screens. These show videos of reports of immigration, with various different attitudes, from the 1940s to the present day. One is an amateur short film of a dinghy in the sea that is choc-a-bloc with people who must be asylum seekers. Watching it I was wondering whether those individuals had any food, drink or luggage with them and what they did when they needed the toilet. There was no visible space.

The last of my leadings to take action was an article in the Evening Standard* by Sophie Dahl. She had visited the largest refugee camp in Calais, only 90 minutes from London and talked to professionals and other innocent people of all ages, some of whom are separated from those of their families, who are still alive. They had to flee their country in dire circumstances.

The needs of 5,168 people in this camp are being attended to by fewer than 100 volunteers of a new nongovernmental organisation (NGO), "Help Refugees" www.help-refugees.org.uk If you check out their website you will see that Calais is only one of the areas where support is offered.

You could donate money or things that are needed such as backpacks, jogging bottoms, sleeping bags, roll mats, foil or ordinary blankets, shoes, socks, hats, gloves and torches. Let others know of the need! This NGO is collecting money under the care of Registered Charity No. 1099682, "Prism The Gift Fund".

Any collective giving will benefit them more.

Carolyn Appleby



When evil darkens our world, give us light;
When despair numbs our souls, give us hope;
When we falter and fear, surround us with beauty;
When nothing seems sure, give us trust;
When we lose our way, be Thou O God,
our light and our guide.

We gather to light our chalice
to openly declare that love is greater than hate,
and truth is greater than
cowardice, deception, dishonesty.
This we do that we might shape our lives to greatness,
as a weaver might take beautiful threads
to make a still more beautiful weaving.
Or as a musician will strike many splendid notes
to make an even more splendid song.
Come embracing fountain of love and truth
Thrive in our reason and passion
Fire our lives, our faith, our community.

Unitarian Universalist Rev. Mark Belletini (*adapted*)

Onelight Spiritual Gathering



**Friday 8th July, 6.45 for 7pm start
(ends at 8.30pm with tea)
Here at Essex Church**

This month's Onelight Spiritual Gathering will be on the theme of "Community Heals" and will be led by Interfaith Minister Rev Alison Trower.

*"Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate.
We are different precisely in order to realise our need of
one another." - Desmond Tutu.*

'Reclaiming Community'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker from Sunday 12th June

This sermon is also available online as a podcast.

Do you know the story of the tree of sorrows? In a small village in Poland there lived a wise rabbi, much loved by the villagers, who often came to him with their tales of woe. But the rabbi grew tired of their endless complaints, each convinced that their life was the toughest life of all. And so he announced a special event in which each should bring all their sorrows and troubles in a bag with their name on it and tie the bag to a branch of the tree that stood in the centre of the village. 'All will be allowed to exchange your troubles for someone else's and go home with someone else's troubles rather than your own'.

And so they brought their troubles tied in a bag and hung them from the branches of the great tree. Eagerly they looked round for a better bag to take home with them, circling the tree in anticipation of finding an easier life. Yet as they circled round inspecting each bag, a realisation came upon them. And one by one, they quietly chose their own bag of troubles and went off home with them. The rabbi smiled to himself as the villagers decided to stick with their own lot in life. They had at last seen the troubles of others as they truly were and had decided that their own lives were at least familiar to them!

We're not living in a small village in eastern Europe yet I think being part of a church community allows us to examine each other's bags both of sorrows - and joys; we get to know one another's lives a bit and it's in the sharing of the realities of our own particular version of the human story that we strengthen the web of connectivity that create a community.

However shy or reserved or private we may sometimes feel, we are social creatures and our very existence as a species here on earth is because of our ability to collaborate and cooperate with one another. However aware we are of our own prized individuality yet we know, don't we, that we can't do this thing called life on our own. We are reliant on others to make our lives work and it is in community that we do the work of learning how best to relate, one with another. It's a lifetime's work, relationship building, community building, particularly perhaps in these post-modern times in which we live. Most of the time I am grateful to live in such a fluid and changing world. It wouldn't have suited me to live in one village and be part of one family, one tribe, all my life. Would it you? But the statistic that 47% of people in this part of London lives alone, - that figure could be the subject of an essay or an interesting conversation over a cuppa, but what it does tell us is that a lot of people in a modern city are having to come out of their homes in order to find community, in order to find and connect with others. As you well know, that takes effort and intention to organise. If we generally find ourselves eating alone then it's going to need someone to reach out, to say – shall we meet for coffee, shall we eat together, shall we go to the Cinema, art gallery, park. Or send a card or make a phone call. Or any of the other ways we reach out maybe tentatively to touch another human being.

And a church community like ours is just one of the possible social choices we might make. This is a place to get together with others. Everything we do here could be described as community building. We're strengthening the web that connects us. And it takes effort. I wonder if you've noticed our church garden this week. It's looking so well cared for – and that's because a little team of people are making an effort. When I first arrived here nearly 11 years ago



now, the front garden in particular was a mess and it had a little sign on it that euphemistically described it as a wildlife garden. Creating and maintaining a garden is not a once and for all effort – a garden requires on-going effort. It's less of an A to B sort of progress than a spiral. And the same can be said for community building. It requires on-going work and attention.

Within our national movement I chair our Interview Panel for potential ministry students. And one of the questions we often ask a candidate is in what ways they have been disappointed by our Unitarian movement. People often feel a call to ministry in the quite early stages of their involvement with a Unitarian community. But it's only when we have been annoyed, disappointed, infuriated even – that we can start to create a mature relationship – be that with an individual or a church community like ours.

And only when we can then move beyond our own satisfaction or dissatisfaction can we start to go deeper. Because a relationship or a community that focuses only on itself will be limited in its potential. We need to turn outwards and consider ourselves in relationship to the wider world. Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes that "the root of religion ... begins with a consciousness that something is asked of us". Religion then becomes less about our beliefs and more about our actions. It becomes an inquiry into our particular part in the web of connectedness and asks us to examine our responsibility – our ability to respond. We cannot solve the painful realities of our world but we can do our bit to make this world a little more loving, a little more beautiful, a little more connected and we can achieve more together than we can ever achieve alone.

Here at Essex Church today we'll hold our AGM, the annual general meeting required by charity law. As we consider the work of the last year and pay attention to our assets financial and human, let's ask ourselves how best can we use what we have for the greater good of all, how best can we all minister to this complex world in which we live.

Each year in this service we celebrate our Kensington Unitarians members and friends, and speak together a simple statement of commitment:

It is with pleasure and love
that we commit ourselves to this shared ministry.
With caring and open hearts we pledge
to join in making our community an inclusive
and welcoming place for all people of goodwill.
We shall continue to uphold our liberal religious tradition
and to encourage the many spiritual seekers
who meet in our church building.
We trust the power of honest communication,
creativity, and kindness, to heal and hold us always.

Ablaze! 150 Years of the Fire Service



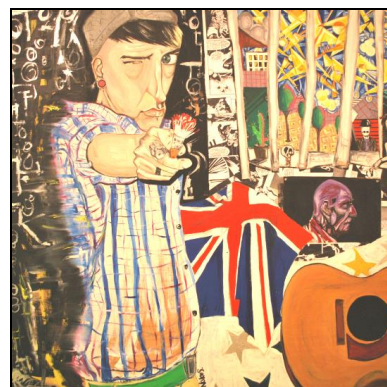
A particular Pentecostal treat, or maybe a non-Pentecostal surprise, came my way on the 15th May last. At our local fire station in North Kensington I encountered their Firemen and Firewomen decked out in full array displaying to the public the glories of their major fire engines and ancillary equipment, both present-day and from the past. There are to be seen three types of helmet that are worn for fire work, and the visiting children to the show enthusiastically tried these on. There were, too, various pumps, water hoses, and a further engine carrying ladders designed to rise up and up to a high-storey window wherever a fire-trapped person might be stationed therein. There was even on display a pair of large hacking cutters designed to carve through heavy metal, such as a car folded up under a blanket of enveloping fire-flames.

In the centre of the station courtyard, too, there was a revolving poster display set up revealing a number of large atmospheric black and white photographs, and particularly impressive were some revealing firemen and women in dedicated Second World War service. Women undertook some training but did not themselves fight fires in WW2. Instead they became fire-watchers and drivers, managed the communications network, and worked in mobile canteen vans, also even to be seen in uniform (if sometimes borrowed from the post office), and astride motorcycles on watchful duty. A rank system for women of the fire service was developed during this time with medals to be awarded, even the George Cross. It was not until 1982 that women were formally admitted in to the Fire Brigade itself, and on that day when I was there a sturdy black and yellow uniformed woman was sat up in a frontline Fire Engine, outlining the various working items to be seen around the inside of the fire engine to a little crowd of enthralled youngsters stood at the bottom of its steps.

Various advice was given on the probably time-worn subject of fire prevention and defeat. One particular piece which of course NO-ONE can afford to ignore is the situation of being caught up alone in a room or flat where no-one else in the house seems to be about and there's heat to be felt and a strong burning smell from somewhere: a particular nightmare to wake up to in the middle of the night, as can be imagined. The advice in that situation is very strongly to stay indoors, do not move out of the door into any smoke-filled corridor, dial 999, state as precisely as you can just where you are placed in your house address. Then you should wait, as calmly as you're able; whereupon the Fire Engine team promises to arrive to your house within 8 minutes. A special illustrative leaflet containing puzzles and drawings was also made available to the visiting children to take home and fill in... it's quite good fun, too.

Eliz Beel

Good Cause Collection of the Month Koestler Trust



Collection on Sunday 24th July

The Koestler Trust is the UK's best-known prison arts charity. They encourage ex-offenders to change their lives through taking part in the arts, and they challenge negative preconceptions of what ex-offenders are capable of. The charity aims to:

- Help offenders, secure patients and detainees lead more positive lives by motivating them to participate and achieve in the arts.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of arts by offenders, secure patients and detainees.
- Be a dynamic, responsive organisation which achieves excellent quality and value for money.

The charity's small team is based just outside HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs in west London. They partner with organisations across the UK to develop ambitious, innovative programmes that maximise resources and expertise. You may be familiar with their annual exhibitions at the Festival Hall.

They work across the UK's criminal justice and secure systems. Including custodial settings (prisons, young offenders institutions, medium and high secure hospitals, secure children's homes and immigration centres), and people in the community (on probation, engaged with youth offending teams, and on community sentences).

For more information see:
www.koestlertrust.org.uk

Previous Charity Collections:

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

March – Water Aid - £402.93

April – Simple Gifts - £138 + Gift Aid

May – Christian Aid Week - £133 + Gift Aid

Services at Essex Church in July

**Sunday 3rd July, 11am
– ‘Truth Seekers’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this service we'll consider what truth means to each of us, our yearnings for it and the struggle we sometimes experience in hearing the truth of others.

**Sunday 10th June, 11am
– ‘Art and Spirituality’**

Service led by Sarah Tinker and Heidi Ferid

In this service we will be exploring painting and other forms of creative expression as spiritual paths.

**Sunday 17th June, 11am
– ‘Flower Communion’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Bring a flower and join in our simple, moving flower communion ritual, which celebrates the strength of diversity within a church community and beyond.

**Sunday 24th June, 11am
– ‘What is Emerging?’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A chance to consider how a community like Kensington Unitarians might be called to serve the 21st century world.

**Sunday 31st June, 11am
– ‘Welcome to the Feast’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Imagine a table where all shall be welcomed and all shall be fed. Followed by a congregational bring and share lunch.



‘Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.’

Albert Einstein

‘There are times when we feel, quite simply, far too small to contain everything we are feeling.

Maybe a moment of awesome beauty overwhelms us, or a piece of music brings tears to our eyes.

We hold a newborn child in our arms and we are lost for words.

We gaze, helplessly, as a loved one takes a final breath.

Or maybe we are speechless with rage, impotent in the face of some gross injustice, or some intolerable pain.

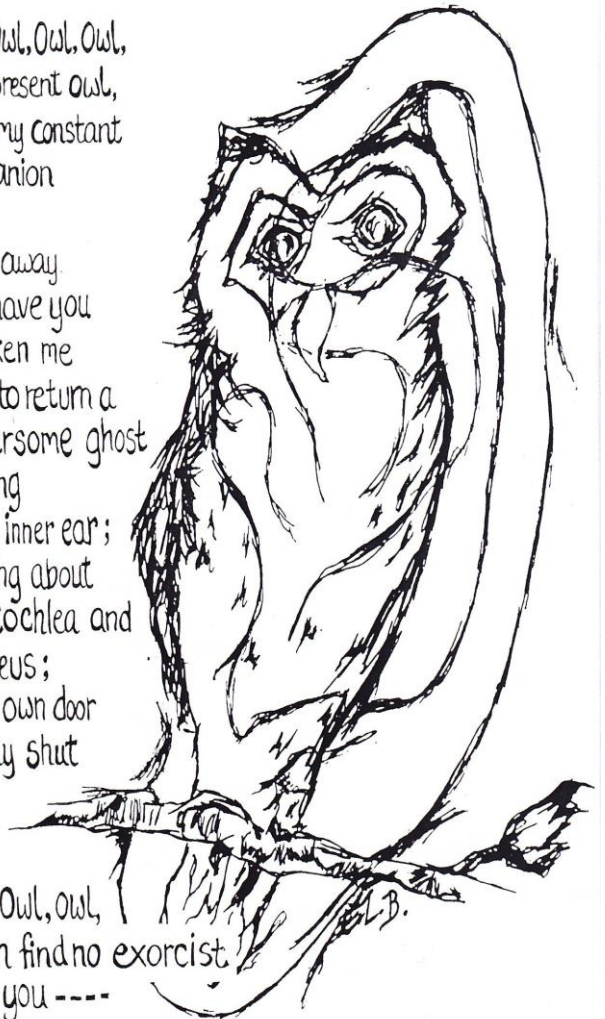
Prayer can catch us in its arms at times like these, often in shared rituals or rites of passage, but also in the unspoken, and unspeakable, aching and yearnings of our hearts.’

Margaret Silf

TINNITUS

Oh! Owl, Owl, Owl,
Omnipresent owl,
Once my constant
Companion
Now
Gone away
Why have you
Forsaken me
Only to return a
Bothersome ghost
Lodging
In my inner ear;
Beating about
My cochlea and
Malleus;
Your own door
Firmly shut

Oh! Owl, owl,
I can find no exorcist
For you ----
You continue
To howl, howl,
Howl
Through my very night.



Poem and Illustration by Eliz Beel