



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: May 2018

What's On...

Wednesday 2nd May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 3rd May, 6.45 for 7-8pm
**'Heart & Soul:
Notes From a Green Planet'**
Led by Roy Clark

Sunday 6th May, 11am-noon
'Nature as Sacred'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 6th May, 2-3pm
Inclusive Tea Dance with Rachel
Sparks (*including Samba for Beginners*)

Wednesday 9th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 10th May, 7-8.30pm
Poetry Evening
Led by Brian, Carole and Sarah

Sunday 13th May, 11am-noon
'Sustainable Living'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th May, 12.30-1pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 16th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 20th May, 11am-noon
'What Nature Means to Us'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and members of the congregation

Sunday 20th May, 12.30-1.30pm
Essex Church AGM

Sunday 20th May, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 23rd May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 27th May, 11am-noon
'The World as God's Body'
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 27th May, 12.45-1.45pm
Sunday Conversation:
On the month's theme of
'The Earth and the Natural World'.

Wednesday 30th May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Nature as a Spiritual Path

A Message from our Minister



Our ministry theme this month is The Earth and the Natural World and May is such a beautiful time of year to consider nature as a spiritual path. Many of us Kensington Unitarians are walking this path in life and are enriched by its teachings. I wonder if some of these methods have proved valuable in your life.

Pay attention. The natural world is full of interest and calls out to us to pay more attention – to small details of colour and shape, to tastes and sounds, to reach out and touch something. When we find ourselves obsessed with our own troubles, paying attention to the natural world may give us a refreshing change of perspective.

Find delight in a special place or view. Form a relationship with it and make it a place of rest, retreat and comfort for yourself.

Being in the natural world can be a timely reminder for us that there is no separation. We are as one with all existence and have our place within all that is. What does it mean for you to be part of the interdependent web of all existence?

The natural world encourages us to slow down and breathe, to take time to feel the wind on our skin, the air in our lungs, the warmth of the sun, even the wetness of rain.

Being in nature reminds us of the power of inner listening, of allowing an inner dialogue to emerge. Take a problem for a walk, allowing it to rest gently in the background of your mind as you focus on the life around you. Allow your attention to be drawn by a particular feature – a flower, a rock, a weed or tree perhaps. Ask its advice and see what response emerges.

Do let me know if you would like to contribute to our service on May 20th and tell others about your relationship with the natural world. And happy spring everyone.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

On Monday 14th May we are invited to join the monthly Silent Walk for Grenfell, which will be starting outside Notting Hill Methodist Church (on the junction of Lancaster and Silchester Roads) gathering at 6.30pm for a 7.00pm start. These silent walks have been one of many actions taken to ensure that the suffering of people who lost their lives, their loved ones and their homes in the fire at Grenfell Tower is not forgotten. Eleven months have passed since the fire and yet many people are still waiting for permanent re-housing and investigations have yet to be completed and acted upon. The Grenfell United Group is holding a demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament earlier that same afternoon. Let our minister know if you would you like to join the evening silent walk with other Kensington Unitarians.

In this month's newsletter...

* Poetry Evening with Brian, Carole and Sarah * Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance in May * Feedback from the General Assembly (GA) Annual Meetings * Playback Theatre Report * Svetoslav Todorov: Heard First Here! * Visit to the Mithraeum – Report by Roy Parnell * 'Talk: 'A New Perspective on the Universe Story' * Warden's Column: 'Chair Meditations' * New Books for the Church Library * 'What is Grace?' by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and 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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Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Essex Church AGM

Sunday 20th May 2018, 12.30pm



Please save the date for our congregational AGM which will take place after the service on Sunday 20th May. Signed-up members of the congregation will receive a copy of our annual report in late April or early May so you can read it before the meeting. We appreciate it if as many people as possible come along to support the work of the church and discuss our activities and plans for the future.

Volunteering Rotas:

Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

6 th May:	Abby Lorimier
13 th May:	Juliet Edwards
20 th May:	Brian Ellis
27 th May:	Mike Pritchard

Coffee:

6 th May:	Kate Brown
13 th May:	Sue Smith
20 th May:	David Talbot
27 th May:	Helena Coope

Greeting:

6 th May:	Juliet Edwards
13 th May:	Roy Clark
20 th May:	Sue Smith
27 th May:	Liz Tuckwell

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

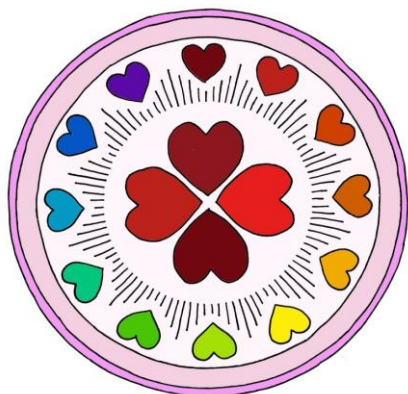
rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 3rd May, 7th June 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. May's Heart and Soul will be led by Roy Clark on the theme 'Notes from a Green Planet'. This will be followed by refreshments (including cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about our 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

A Poetry Evening in May

With Brian, Carole and Sarah

Thursday 10th May, 6.45pm for a 7pm start, finishing by 8.30pm, with refreshments.



Everyone is invited to join us for an evening of summer poetry with themed music and refreshments too. We ask people to choose a poem they'd like to bring which fits our seasonal theme. If you let Sarah know your poetry choice in advance we will make sure we have enough copies.

Fundraising for SOS Villages



This will be the ninth and final year of our sponsorship of two girls who live in an SOS Village in Swaziland. SOS Children's Villages is an independent, non-governmental, international development organization which has been working to meet the needs and protect the interests and rights of children around the world since 1949, the largest organisation of its kind.

Through our Swaziland Education Project here at Essex Church, we have been supporting two girls living in an SOS Children's Village since 2009. Each year we have raised at least £1,000 a year through donations, enough to cover all the living and education costs for the two girls, Patience and Fortunate. Both girls hope to work in healthcare once they have completed their education. Such aspirations are perhaps not surprising in a country where life expectancy is 50 years and where HIV/AIDS and TB are prevalent. We're grateful to Caroline Blair and all the Blair family for encouraging us with this project and for their visits to Swaziland, bringing back inspiring stories of real people working hard to make life manageable for so many orphaned young people.

The church committee would be glad to receive any donations large or small towards this project. Cheques can be made payable to Essex Church and marked on the back Swaziland Education Project. If we raise over our target amount we'll give the rest to SOS for their general funds. The SOS website tells many stories, both sobering and hopeful. You might want to read about their developing work in the Ukraine, where more families are struggling to feed their children and domestic abuse is prevalent. Or find out about a project in West Africa, offering young adults training opportunities with the hope that this will lessen their vulnerability to people traffickers offering them a 'better life' in Europe – but at what price?

Sarah and Juliet

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance

Sunday 6th May from 2.00-5.00pm

with a dance lesson for beginners at 2.15pm
at Essex Unitarian Church, Notting Hill Gate



Join us for a tea dance with social dancing and actual tea and cake! Come and enjoy a gentle afternoon learning basic social dancing steps with Rachel who can teach even the most left-footed people. There will be a lesson for beginners from 2.15pm (in May we'll do the samba). This is an inclusive event for LGBTQI+ people and allies and we ask that everyone is respectful to each other. There's no need to bring a partner or dress up specially for the event (but you can if you like!) All our partnering is gender-neutral, so anyone can lead and anyone can follow, and we are body positive. The venue is wheelchair-accessible and has gender-neutral toilets. We ask you not to wear high heels as we need to protect the floor!

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

You are invited to bring home-made cakes (*clearly labelled*), to raise money for our nominated charity, Opening Doors London.

Future Tea Dances – Save the Dates:

23rd September and 9th December 2018

For more information contact:

rachel@rachelsparksdance.co.uk

www.facebook.com/rachelsparksdance



Inclusive Communion

Sundays 13th May, 10th June 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. 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.

Playback Theatre



Thank you to Sarah and everyone at Essex Unitarian Church for inviting us to use your beautiful space and to explore your theme of 'grace' through playback theatre. What a varied evening of stories we heard and watched: camping in snowy Australian mountains, a friend called Grace who offered a helping hand and paid work when times were hard, strategic ways to pass courses in the Lebanon, children joking as they were made to 'say grace' before a meal at school. Playback will be back with Kensington Unitarians on Friday 15th June to explore your theme of 'creativity and the arts'. Bring us your stories and see what we create with them for you.

Lily

(The Playback team described Veronica Needa as their 'warrior woman' and everyone sent her their thoughts and love, as do all of us at Essex Church, with gratitude for her NHS team and best wishes for speedy recovery.)

www.londonplayback.co.uk / londonplayback@gmail.com

Good Cause Collection of the Month:

Unitarian Peace Fellowship Appeal International Rescue Committee



Collection on Sunday 27th May

The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and gain control of their future. In 2016, the IRC and its partner organizations: Helped more than 24 million people gain access to primary and reproductive health care; Vaccinated more than 173,000 children under the age of one against measles; Supported 2,507 clinics and health facilities that helped 171,000 women deliver healthy babies; Supported more than 21,000 community health workers to treat communicable diseases in children under age 5 and treated more than 186,000 children under the age of five for acute malnutrition; Provided counselling, care and support to more than 42,000 vulnerable children and trained more than 2,200 child protection workers.

For more information see: www.rescue.org

Recent Charity Collections:

March – **Diversity Role Models** – £200.00
(including £59 from the inclusive tea-dance cake stall)

April 1st – **Red Cross / Syria** – £307.71



'The most life-giving elements of our human existence are not the heart transplants or moon shots. They are the unnoticed conversations with the lonely ones; the listening ear we offer to the hurting ones; the word of affirmation that lifts a veil of fear. These are the things that lie well within the range of our personal currency. How we spend that currency makes a great deal of difference.'

Margaret Silf

General Assembly Meetings



I first attended a General Assembly Annual Meetings back in 1996 as delegate for Fulwood Old Chapel in Sheffield where I was then a member and children's group leader. The Meetings were in Glasgow and my teenage daughter Kelly came with me to join the Seniors Group. In those days the Seniors would sleep on hard church floors in whichever town the Annual Meetings were being held in, whilst the rest of us met in University accommodation. Kelly had a great time and is unlikely to ever forget the experience.

Roll on 22 years and the General Assembly now meets in quite plush hotels. This is partly to do with cost – as hotels are now often cheaper places to hold residential meetings than university campuses. And most of us prefer comfortable hotel beds rather than student single rooms. My teenage grandson Zak came and joined the Seniors group this year, attracted by the promise of luxury accommodation, great food and a swimming pool – plus the chance to meet up again with friends he'd made on various Unitarian youth events held at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow. No sleeping on hard church floors for 21st century Unitarian youth! The accommodation may have improved over the years but the high quality provision for young people continues to be impressive, with a good mix of activities and challenges. These included a visit to an Escape Room and a fundraising effort that achieved over £400.

It is always special to meet up with Unitarians around the country and people of all ages will be welcome to join us next April for the new slimline Annual Meetings, to be held at the Birmingham Exhibition Centre Hilton Hotel between 16th to 18th April 2019 – just two nights away but promising to be packed with all sorts of interesting meetings and activities.

Sarah Tinker



A few years ago I covered the GA as official photographer, a job which entailed a great deal of running around from plenary to meeting, to service, to talk, to workshop! By the end of the fourth day I was not only exhausted but somewhat confused as the whole array of events had sort of melded into one slightly weird carnival of faith.

This year I returned as a voting delegate representing Essex Church and was able to participate much more meaningfully in our General Assembly. I also managed to catch up with some old friends from member churches across the country as well as meet some new ones.

For anyone who wants to get to know how the wider Unitarian Movement goes about its business, being a delegate is a good way of finding out. You will also have an opportunity to influence policy and set the agenda for Unitarianism in the U.K. Why not consider attending next year?

Roy Clark



'Central Tickets'

A Recommendation from Annie

Annie Fowler would like to recommend 'Central Tickets' to fellow congregation members. She says: 'Membership is FREE for the first year. You do get quite a lot of emails but you can tailor that to your needs & there are plenty of chances to get very cheap tickets to all sorts of London entertainment. I paid £3.50 for a matinee of Fanny & Alexander at the Old Vic and had a great seat in the stalls.' The website says: 'Take advantage of seat filling opportunities and discounted tickets for theatre, music, dance, opera, classical music and film by becoming a member of Central Tickets.' See centraltickets.co.uk for more information.

Thematic Ministry



Our ministry theme for May is 'Earth & the Natural World'. 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 our theme over the next month. Do get in touch if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering or maybe there's a piece you'd like to write for a future newsletter. Let us know.

Themes coming up in the near future: June – 'Creativity & Arts', July – 'Liberation & Freedom', August – 'Paying Attention'.

Here are some ways you might engage with this month's theme of 'Earth & the Natural World'.

1. Take more time than is usual for you to be out in nature this month. Take more walks, do more gardening, seize every opportunity to engage consciously with our earth, its plants and animals. Consider your part in the great scheme of things – part of the interdependent web of all existence. If you find yourself feeling troubled, seek solace in nature and see what comforting messages the natural world might have for you.
2. Make one conscious step to help preserve the natural world – perhaps reducing the single use plastics in your life, picking up litter, taking greater care with recycling, taking public transport rather than driving, reducing your meat intake, choosing fish from sustainable sources.
3. Theologian Matthew Fox, founder of creation spirituality writes that "We are not consumers. For most of humanity's existence, we were makers, not consumers: we made our clothes, shelter, and education, we hunted and gathered our food." How might you choose to create more and consume less?
4. Create a nature table at home to display natural objects of beauty, wonder and delight: a flower, a rock, a piece of moss perhaps. Find a picture of our planet earth home to add to this shrine and find ways to honour the gift of life.
5. Write a short piece for our 20th May service explaining 'what nature means to me' and let Sarah know you'd like to be involved.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Unitarian Women's Group Conference: 'Empty Pockets'



**19th-21st October at the Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, in the Peak District**

Join us for another weekend of friendship and feminism. We'll consider how the negative impacts of austerity measures have fallen disproportionately on women and how we can respond to it. This is a weekend where women learn from each other, share with each other, and nurture each other – and we would love you to be there with us. The programme will be led by Jo O'Sullivan, Sue MacFarlane and Kate Dean. The basic cost for the weekend (accommodation and meals included) is £124. Contact Margaret Robinson for information: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com.

Farewell to Amber



Amber says: 'Just wanted to send a picture of Tate and I at the Easter service at the First Unitarian Church in Oklahoma City. We arrived on Tuesday evening and are still adjusting to the jet lag. We had a busy Easter weekend and it's been great to be back around family!' We wish Amber, Stewart and Tate all the best in their new life over the pond and hope they'll have time to come and see us when they visit family in England.

Visit to the Mithraeum



March 29th found me visiting the Temple of Mithras, carefully reconstructed under the Bloomberg building in the City. I am grateful to Sarah for arranging this group outing, which looked at the remains of this cult practice dating from the last period of Roman rule in Britain in the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. As a Unitarian in belief I see such practices as part of the religious quest which included the early Christian churches. The aims of Mithraism are vague – there is very little documentary reference surviving. It throws into high relief the position of the Christian perspectives which were already backed up by the documentary appeal from the various gospels.

However the Romans were the Romans. That is, their thousand-year-old culture provided the world with amazingly developed institutions which we are still coming to terms with fifteen hundred years after the Anglo-Saxon era came in.

The cult of the god Mithras may have infiltrated Roman beliefs from the Middle East or Persia. It may have co-existed alongside the Roman pantheon and growing Christian doctrines and ritual. Alternatively, it could have been a conscious rival, keeping a 'men only' or 'male Roman citizens only' approach to religious observance. As we know, even from the controversies over women bishops in our own era, this is still a bone of contention.

I believe that 'stones speak'. The temple was brought to light on a bomb site being made ready for re-building in 1954. The discovery triggered the whole period of post-war archaeology aimed at gaining a complete appreciation of Londinium. The artefacts turned up in these excavations are well preserved thanks to the River Walbrook's mud and nearby saturated grounds.

The news coverage on the only TV channel during 1954 (BBC) was particularly vivid for me as a seven-year-old. Very late in the dig, the head of Mithras was found, confirming the purpose of the temple, which had been uncertain until that point. Ancient London became a reality.

Roy Parnell, Essex Church Trustee

Evening Bells in Lammas Park

bells of the dark and of the mystery
peal from the tower of the ages
through a night so clear
they will echo from the moon
a faint song around the heavens,
and we, if we are still and unafraid,
might hear a whisper from the gods

Brian Ellis

Migrants Organise 'London Legal Walk'



As some of you know I am a mentor for Migrants Organise a local West London charity that helps and supports refugees and migrants here in the UK in their fight for security, dignity and justice. As a church community we are developing ways to work with Migrants Organise to support their crucial work year round.

As part of this myself and Jennie Blair are participating in the London Legal Walk, a 10k fundraising walk on 21 May.

We are fundraising for the Migrants Organise Community Programme which consists of different projects. Generally, it aims to create a safe space for migrants and refugees to obtain on-going holistic support. We will help in particular vulnerable individuals, such as those suffering from mental health illness, who would not be able to access mainstream support (say, a drop-in centre).

If you would like to help, the easiest way is to visit this site:
uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MigrantsOrganise
where you can make a donation.

To find out more about Migrants Organise visit:
www.migrantsorganise.org

Thank you.

Roy Clark

Svetoslav Todorov: Heard First Here!



Some twenty of us gathered one sunny April Sunday afternoon to hear a recital by Bulgarian piano virtuoso Svetoslav Todorov playing some of the pieces he will be performing in his debut appearance in New York's Carnegie Hall, which include Bulgarian Vesselin Stoyanov's Nocturne, Pancho Vladigerov's Balkan Dance, Ravel's remarkable waltz and Basso Ostinato by Russian composer of the sixties Shchedrin, in which he celebrated the launch of the rocket Sputnik. Slav closed with an amalgamation of folk music and jazz classic I Got Rhythm and Michael Jackson's Smooth Criminal. Phew! Our piano will be taking a few days to recover from the excitement.

An Old Jacket



I put on
an old jacket
long unworn

dried pen
used tissue
crumbs
and a key
(but not mine)

whose lock
cannot be
undone?

do you
have the key
for one of
my doors?

Brian Ellis

Unitarians: Together in Diversity

A Survey of the Beliefs, Values, and
Practices of Contemporary British Unitarians

Sue Woolley



New Books for the Library

Two new books written by Unitarians have recently been added to our library shelves. Back in 2017 Sue Woolley, District Minister for the Midlands Unitarians, conducted a survey of British Unitarians to find out what we believe, and how we express our faith in daily life and in our congregations. In her new book 'Unitarians: Together in Diversity' Sue considers the questionnaire responses from 257 Unitarians and draws some interesting conclusions about our creedless faith. Each chapter ends with questions for further reflection alone or in a group, which Kensington Unitarians will enjoy considering.

For many years the students at Unitarian College Manchester have compiled an annual collection of readings called 'Stirrings'. This year's edition is particularly impressive - an eclectic gathering of writings for individual contemplation, offered by a range of Unitarians- a book to dip into and keep by your side. And whilst you're in the library, do have a look at the hundreds of books we have there available for loan. Just remember to sign them out and bring them back when you've finished!



Warden's Column: Chair Meditations

By my calculation, the church currently has 142 chairs: 28 in the library, 50 in the Lindsey Hall, 40 with arms in the church and another 24 without arms in the cupboard to the right of the altar. That cupboard was specially designed to accommodate 3 stacks of 8 chairs by the way. The library chairs are a mixture of with and without arms - 18 without and 10 with, to be precise. In theory that

means 2 stacks of 5 without arms, 2 stacks with, 2 armless chairs around the little round table and one to sit on and play the keyboard. In practice it's usually a lot more chaotic and I only tend to intervene if one of the stacks seems to be reaching a dangerous height.

I'm a lot stricter about the upstairs chairs - mainly because if the ones without arms get mixed into the stacks at the back of the room, the ones with arms won't fit in the cupboard. I remember when I first took on the Wardenship I spent several days working out how many chairs to keep in each room so that they could be stacked neatly along one wall. The arrangement has altered slightly from time to time since then. but the 10 stacks of 5 along the curtain in the Hall have been a fixture.

Generally speaking we rent the rooms on the basis that people need to leave them as they found them - so I don't do much stacking of chairs during the week - but I do get to restack these Hall chairs (and put the tables away) after the congregation finishes coffee on Sundays. Recently I've been particularly enjoying doing so because I get to experience how Brian is progressing with his epic project of sanding and revarnishing all of the wooden arms. The Hall currently has 3 species of chair: original (and pretty battered); chalkily sanded and glossily varnished. It makes stacking them far more satisfying for some reason: the different colours and textures; the sense of them going through some kind of rite of passage - their old defences stripped away temporarily, but only so that they can be reborn all shiny and stronger.

Anyway, I've been enjoying observing this process so much I wanted to make more people aware of it. Brian says he's averaging about 6 chairs a week, so original chair arms shouldn't become an endangered species until late May or June - even though he started the project back in January. See if you can spot one - and the rarer sandy-armed variety, before they're both driven to extinction by the relentless advance of the varnished :-)

Jenny Moy

Goodbye from Jo and Tyler

We have started attending Richmond Unitarian Church. I said goodbye to a few of you but I wanted to say goodbye to all of you who have shared our journey over the last 5 years. Thank you for the love and support you have shown us. We send our love to you. May peace be with you all.

Jo and Tyler xx

LDPA Autumn Quarterly: Save the Date 'Circles of Connection' An Introduction to Engagement Group Facilitation Skills

Saturday 15th September 2018 - 11am
arrivals for an 11.30am start until 3pm
(followed by worship and refreshments)



The term 'Engagement Groups' is given to a particular style of Unitarian small-group activity which has the intention to enrich the spiritual life of participants, cultivate right relationship, create community, and deepen participants' connection to each other and to their congregation. In this taster session at Essex Church, led by Jane Blackall, we will introduce some basic principles of Engagement Group facilitation, and give some pointers to further training opportunities and resources, in the hope that participants will be inspired to set up new Engagement Groups in their own congregations.

You'll need to book in advance for this workshop (though the training is free of charge) so the organisers know how many people to prepare for, but you are also welcome to arrive at 3.00pm to attend a special worship service on the day's theme of 'Circles of Connection'. This will be followed by refreshments and time to socialise with everyone. Finish time around 4.30pm.

To book a place on the workshop or find out more, please contact Jane on jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or phone the church office and leave a message on 020 7221 6514.

Swarthmore Lecture 2018:

'Changing Ourselves, Changing the World'

Saturday 5th May, 7-8.30pm at Friends House, Euston, NW1 2BJ

Carolyn Appleby would like to recommend the Swarthmore Lecture, one part of the Quaker Yearly Meeting which is open to the general public, and which is taking place at Friends House on the Euston Road. The 2018 Swarthmore Lecture will be given by Chris Alton. Chris is a life-long Quaker, artist and activist. Through his lecture Chris will share how he seeks to challenge people and create change through his art and how art can be an act of witness. Chris will address the challenges we face in a changing and increasingly violent and fractured world, while considering how he as an artist and collectively as Friends we might respond creatively, and offer subversive alternatives.

'I think that street corner evangelists who shout and accost people are not only displaying poor marketing skills but disrespect for people's right to freely choose whether to listen or not. On the other hand, I must confess that we Unitarian Universalists, overly conscientious about not forcing our religious views on others, go too far in the other direction and "hide our light under a bushel." Which is to say that most people don't even know we exist. On a number of occasions I have had to personally face the frustration and anger of newcomers who have said, "I've been looking for something like Unitarian Universalism for years. Why the heck didn't you make your presence known?" To which I respond, defensively, "Well, it's not my fault. Well, OK, it's partly my fault for not advocating for more outreach. I guess we don't do a very good job of this."

Richard R. Davis

**An Evening Talk and Discussion on:
'A New Perspective on
the Universe Story'**



**Friday 4th May, 6.30-8.30pm
in the library downstairs at Essex Church**

Following his successful presentation on *A New Perspective on the Universe Story* at the University of Winchester Institute for Theological Partnerships (ITP) on 21st February, David Carter will be offering an evening talk and Q&A session primarily for The Journeying Together group, which meets at Essex Church, Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church, and St James's Church Piccadilly community. Anyone else who wants to come is welcome.

David is an Associate Fellow of ITP. He has a background including university science and theology and has been working intermittently on Universe Story time-lines since 1982. His *New Perspective* is working towards a coherent world-view – a 'human cosmos' – incorporating insights from the sciences, humanities and religions.

If you would like to find out something about the Universe Story beforehand, any edition of these introductory books is recommended: *The Universe Story in Science and Myth*, Greg Morter and Niamh Brennan, GreenSpirit or *Journey of the Universe*, Brian Swimme and Mary Tucker, Yale.

**Suggested donation £5
to include tea/coffee and biscuits**

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sunday 17th June from 12.30pm to 1.15pm

(please note there is no class in May due to the AGM)



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.



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 20th May, 17th June 2018**

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.

Some Thoughts on 'What is Grace?'

by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From the service on 1st April 2018

The service is also available online as a podcast.

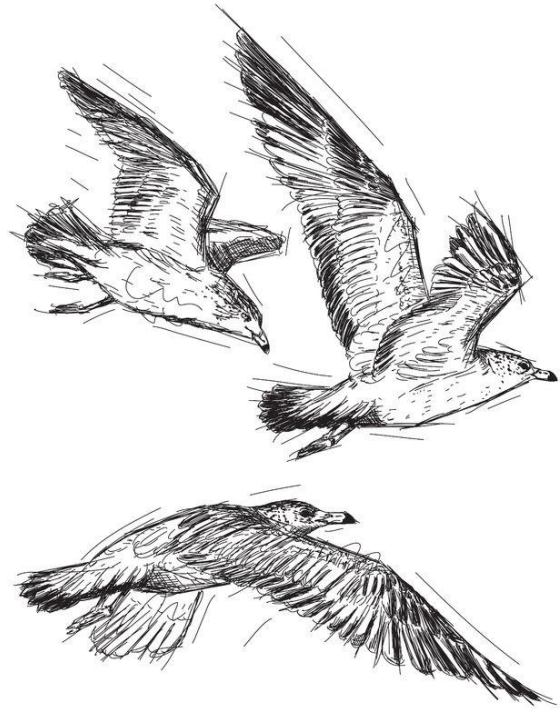
I wonder what 'grace' means to you? How have you experienced grace in your life? Is it a regularly used word in your vocabulary? Probably not. Yet it would have been had we been living a few hundred years ago... The dictionary defines a variety of meanings for grace: 'elegance of movement', 'courteous good will', 'a divinely given talent or blessing', and 'the free and unmerited favour of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings'. Maybe you use the saying "there but for the grace of God go I..." to acknowledge one's good fortune in avoiding another's mistake or misfortune. And something done 'with good grace, or bad grace' means something done in a willing and happy as opposed to resentful or reluctant manner.

A grace may be said before a meal – linking the word with gratitude, with thankfulness. An old school friend remembered with glee us saying grace before lunch every day in primary school and racing to say it more speedily – for-what-we-are-about-to-receive-may-the-Lord- make-us-truly-thankful.-Amen.

Today is Easter Sunday, when churches around the world celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Anyone attending our evening group on 'How To Be a Unitarian' – will now be able to tell you that we Unitarians hold wide ranging and diverse beliefs. Not all of us would agree with the reading we heard earlier on with its repeated message that 'we're not sure what happened' when Jesus died.

But anyone with an interest in world religions would agree that *something* happened. We heard the original closing verses of Mark's Gospel, which ended with the line 'they told no-one, for they were afraid'. We remember Simon Peter's denial that he even knew Jesus – standing in the courtyard whilst Jesus was on trial inside. Simon Peter, the disciple described as closest to Jesus – too afraid to acknowledge his friend. Yet within a few months of Jesus' death his followers were openly proclaiming Jesus' radical messages of love and equality, were prepared to risk persecution and death for their faith. Something happened after Jesus' death by crucifixion. Something empowered his followers.

On Thursday a group of us went on a visit to the City of London to see the Temple of Mithras. It's been recreated beneath a big shiny new office block. Well worth a visit, especially if you then go on the Museum of London where lots more Roman artefacts are on display, giving glimpses of life in the Roman city of Londinium all those centuries ago. The cult of Mithras spread through the Roman Empire around the same time as the early Christian faith. Archaeological remains, including those found here in London indicate that Mithraism was ceasing to be popular by the end of the 4th century and eventually disappeared. We'll all have to enrol in a university religious studies course if we want to take this question further – what elements are involved in forming a world religion as opposed to a cult, that flourishes for a while but eventually dies. Might we call that added ingredient 'grace'? I don't know.



What I do know is that in my own life grace is a useful concept to convey something unexpected, unplanned; the arrival of gifts in life that are not earned or created or even deserved; grace cannot be controlled though I think we can be open to its possibilities and we can allow or impede its flow through us. Grace for me is the serendipitous – the delightful moments of connection, of synchronicity – when disparate elements come together and create something new, some transformational force changes my outlook, my attitude.

A tiny example of this happened for me in our Good Friday gathering for witness. The reading was exploring the many possible ways God is revealed - and the reading happened to mention the cry of the gulls. At that exact moment a very loud seagull squawked from the church roof. Probably nobody else noticed it. But I did; because I hate the seagulls that have moved into Notting Hill. I wish they had stayed at the seaside. The quality of takeaway food dropped here in central London is so high that the seagulls have sensibly re-located and are now living on the roof of the building next door to the church. They wake me up with their cries. They attack smaller birds and they make a terrible mess. What a great message for Good Friday. God is to be found in the seagulls. There is a spark of the divine waiting to be discovered in all that exists.

And grace is to be found in all beings that are authentically what they are born to be. Seagulls always have been, and probably always will be, scavengers. I wonder what it means for each of us to explore who we are or who we might be as our authentic selves – no need to pretend or to strive, no need to fear or hide? Theologian Matthew Fox writes:

"Community is another source of grace. In community we are meant to grace one another; to be sources of grace; healers by way of grace."

The task begins here – the simple yet profound work of making space for another person to be who they truly are. Let's keep asking ourselves this question in our church community – how best can we serve one another in becoming our own authentic selves? Amen.

Services at Essex Church in May



Sunday 6th May, 11am 'Nature as Sacred'

Service led by Jeannene Powell

The natural world often inspires a sense of awe and wonder in us. This service explores beliefs and traditions which hold the Earth and Universe in highest regard and consider nature itself to be Sacred.

Sunday 13th May, 11am 'Sustainable Living'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How are we called to live sustainably in the 21st century? What principles can guide us in making choices?

Sunday 20th May, 11am 'What Nature Means to Us'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Members of the Congregation

An exploration of nature's importance for us – followed by our congregation's AGM – please do plan to stay behind for this meeting and get an insight into the running of the congregation.

Sunday 27th May, 11am 'The World as God's Body'

Service led by Jane Blackall

In this service we will explore eco-theology and pantheism, inspired by the work of feminist theologian Sallie McFague, and her notion of 'The World as God's Body'. This service will be followed by our regular Sunday Conversation on the theme of 'Earth and the Natural World' from 12.45pm-1.45pm.

OneLight Gathering

Friday 11th May, 7pm – 8.30pm – Here at Essex Church



The OneLight team can always be relied on to bring us innovative ways to explore matters of the spirit and their recent daffodil meditation was so beautiful that we borrowed the idea for one of our Sunday services in April. This photo shows the artistic expressions that emerged from our encounters with a daffodil – looking at it as if for the first time and listening for any messages it might have for us. Interfaith Ministers Rev Alison Trower & Rev Amy Firth welcome everyone to join their next Friday evening gathering here at Essex Church on May 11th.

