



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: December 2014 / January 2015

## What's On...

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December, 7-8pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'Jazz Vespers'  
with Terri Quaye & Sarah Tinker

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 7.30pm  
**Cultural Outing: Esterhazy Singers**

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 11am-noon  
**'Find a Stillness'**  
Led by Kate Dean

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 7-9.00pm  
**Creativity Group: Stitchcraft**  
(or bring your own craft project)

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December, 11am-noon  
**'Christmas Carol Service'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December, 12.30pm  
**Congregational Christmas Lunch**

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2.00-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 7-9pm  
**'Prepare for an Inner Christmas'**  
Workshop with Sarah and Jane

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 11am-noon  
**'Winter Solstice Celebration'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by John Hands

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December, 5pm  
**Candlelit Christmas Eve Service**

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December, 11am-noon  
**'Yes, it's Still Christmas!'**  
Led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January, 11am-noon  
**'Taking Stock'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

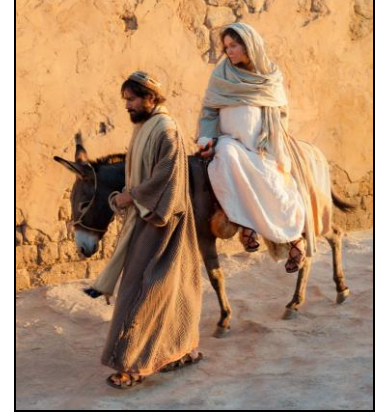
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

(listings continue inside the back cover...)

## A Message from our Minister:

### Christmas Cheer

How are you feeling today? Full of joy, perhaps, or maybe a bit under the weather. Perhaps it's because we're meant to be jolly at Christmas time that it manages for some of us to turn into one of the gloomier times of the year. It's cold, wet and dark. We're supposed to be happy and we're not. Our lives are better than many other people's on the planet and still, we can feel miserable. There's a bit of Charles Dickens' character Scrooge lurking in many of us I think, with his 'Bah! Humbug' attitude to festive cheer. Little wonder then that *A Christmas Carol* is high on the list of seasonal favourite stories with its narrative of a life turned bitter and the redemptive nature of love and care for others.



We're supposed to care for others at Christmas. The narrative of Jesus's birth told in the Gospels is full of strong characters – both friends and foes to the young couple and their child. We're writing this newsletter towards the end of November and I have already received a couple of Christmas cards from overseas reminding me of loved ones who have left these shores. I've also received my latest tax return from HMRC, Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs. It arrived with a helpful leaflet showing how our taxes are spent. Helpful, except that I don't think it's accurate. Since childhood maths lessons I've always liked a pie chart, showing how the pie is divided between different categories. And as soon as you look at this particular pie chart it's striking to note that the largest slice of pie, or spending of tax revenue, goes on 'welfare'.

But the well-regarded Institute for Fiscal Studies has raised concerns about what has been included or left out of that category 'welfare' and the TUC points out the false implication that most of the welfare budget goes to the unemployed or to asylum seekers. In truth, much of the welfare category covers public sector pensions (teachers, nurses etc.) and money used by local authorities to fund care for disabled or older people in need and to fund safeguarding provision. Just 6% of our tax revenue is spent on the unemployed or on working tax credits for people earning low wages.

We might ponder upon the ancient story of god made flesh and born as an innocent baby, a story of a couple forced by a foreign power to move and be registered by the state, receiving humble hospitality far from home and later fleeing from an oppressive tyrant. Let's not allow misused statistics to harden our hearts to those who find life a struggle in our society now. The answer in dark times surely is to turn towards others and not against them.

*'Like dreams, statistics are a form of wish fulfilment' - Jean Baudrillard, French philosopher*

Do come to one of our Christmas services or other activities and experience some real Christmas cheer!

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## In this month's newsletter...

\* 'An Introduction to Emotional Competence' workshop with Jeannene and Sarah in January \*  
'Turner: Reflections on Light' by Niall Doherty \* 'LGBTQ: What Does it Mean?' by Jane Blackall  
\* GA President's Visit \* Report from 'Intimacy with the World' evening by Robyn Hazelwood \*  
Women's Group starting in the New Year \* Poems by John Hands and Carole Grace \*  
Your Christmas Greetings \* 'Be Not Afraid' sermon by Rev. 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.



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

*Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514*

*Email: [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)*

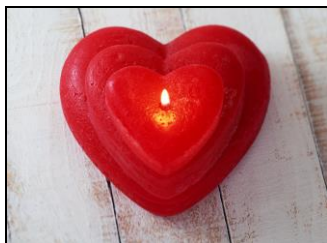
*Web: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)*

## 'Heart and Soul'

### Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

**Thursdays 4<sup>th</sup> December  
and 8<sup>th</sup> January, 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, chance to explore the topic in relation to your own life. This will be followed by refreshments and fellowship.

Our December gathering will be titled 'Jazz Vespers' and will be co-led by Sarah Tinker and Terri Quayle. Our January gathering will be titled 'Great Spirit, Mother Earth' led by Natasha Drennan and Jane Blackall.

If you would like to know more about these gatherings please contact [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

## Sabbatical



Ministers are recommended to take sabbaticals from time to time and I am grateful to our congregation's committee for agreeing to a month's sabbatical for me in January.

Sabbaticals come in all shapes and sizes. Some ministers go on retreat or a training course, perhaps do some writing. I'll certainly take some time to get away, do some pondering and a bit of studying. But the main purpose of this sabbatical is to sort my books and papers out before the manse flat disappears under a sea of paper. This is not the world's most exciting project but I do want to have another go at creating and maintaining a filing system – a skill that so far in life seems to have eluded me.

Living over the church means that you'll probably see me from time to time but I won't be as available as I'd usually be. I'll try and avoid doing too many emails or phone calls but of course if there is an urgent need then do get in touch. Two events I will be attending at the church are Jeannene's Emotional Competence course on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January and the first meeting of the Living Well With Ageing Group on Sunday afternoon, 1st February.

And writing of ageing reminds me to invite you all to help celebrate my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at our Christmas lunch on December 14<sup>th</sup>. There'll be cake and celebratory drinks. Inviting you is not a ploy to wheedle presents out of you – your presence is gift enough and if you have a December birthday then let us know and we can share the celebration.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

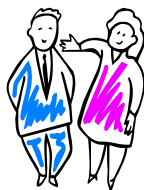
## The Reader

He sits engrossed, reads his book  
Black hair, black beard, seldom stirs  
Hand supporting head, reads as if he cared:  
Wondering perhaps what does it all mean?  
Somehow I feel he must be foreign –  
Polish or Czech, Latvian or Serb,  
His reading seems some sort of revelation.  
He reads on and on.  
Why am I so comforted because he reads his book?

**John Hands**

*(Birmingham New Street waiting room, 2013)*

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

7 <sup>th</sup> December:	Juliet Edwards
14 <sup>th</sup> December:	Natasha Drennan
21 <sup>st</sup> December:	Eliz Beel
24 <sup>th</sup> December (5pm):	Michaela von Britzke
28 <sup>th</sup> December:	Gina Bayley
4 <sup>th</sup> January:	Juliet Edwards
11 <sup>th</sup> January:	Tristan Jovanović
18 <sup>th</sup> January:	Natasha Drennan
25 <sup>th</sup> January:	David Darling

### Coffee:

7 <sup>th</sup> December:	Kate Brown
14 <sup>th</sup> December:	Liz Tuckwell
21 <sup>st</sup> December:	Sue Smith
24 <sup>th</sup> December (5pm):	Jane Blackall
28 <sup>th</sup> December:	Melody
4 <sup>th</sup> January:	Elisa Melgosa
11 <sup>th</sup> January:	Caroline Blair
18 <sup>th</sup> January:	Jane Blackall
25 <sup>th</sup> January:	Sue Smith

### Greeting:

7 <sup>th</sup> December:	Niall Doherty
14 <sup>th</sup> December:	Runa Alam
21 <sup>st</sup> December:	Melody
24 <sup>th</sup> December (5pm):	Roy Clark
28 <sup>th</sup> December:	Elisa Melgosa
4 <sup>th</sup> January:	Gina Bayley
11 <sup>th</sup> January:	Sue Smith
18 <sup>th</sup> January:	Annette Percy
25 <sup>th</sup> January:	Roy Clark

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

'Hope's home is at the innermost point in us, and in all things. It is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather, it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. When our innermost being is attuned to this pulse it will send us forth in hope, regardless of the physical circumstances of our lives. Hope fills us with the strength to stay present, to abide in the flow of the Mercy no matter what outer storms assail us. It is entered always and only through surrender; that is, through the willingness to let go of everything we are presently clinging to. And yet when we enter it, it enters us and fills us with its own life — a quiet strength beyond anything we have ever known.'

Cynthia Bourgeault

## Christmas Eve Meal



It has become a tradition over the last decade or so that a small group goes out for a meal after the candlelit service on Christmas Eve. If you would be interested in coming along please get in touch with Jane as soon as possible as we will need know numbers in early December to reserve a table. Please email [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) ASAP.

## An Introduction to Emotional Competence

led by Jeannene Powell and Sarah Tinker



**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January,  
10 am for 10.30 am start - 4pm**

A New Year course exploring new ways of being in the world. We'll be spending the day exploring our relationship with our emotions and developing what is sometimes called our 'emotional competence'.

Through group and individual work, imagery, creative and interactive exercises we'll cover many themes, including the benefits of feeling more at ease with emotions – both our own and other people's; messages and myths about emotions; emotional vocabulary and how we recognise and define emotions, what their purpose is in life and the different ways we can acknowledge and express emotion in our everyday lives. People will be able to work at a level that feels comfortable for them and will leave the day with a clearer understanding of their own emotional styles.

**Cost: suggested donation of  
£5 / 10 / 15 depending on income**

To find out more or to book your place either speak with or email Jeannene: [jeannene@innerworldouterlife.com](mailto:jeannene@innerworldouterlife.com) or ring the church office and leave a message on 020 7221 6514.

# Christmas Greetings!

Greetings from Hinckley!  
With our best wishes for Christmas  
and the New Year. Howard & Gill Hague

Wishing all my friends at Essex Church every blessing  
of the Christmas Season. David Francis Darling

Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year to  
all you lovely Kensington Unitarians.  
With love, Annette

Hoping that all members of Kensington Unitarians  
find peace, warmth and kindness over the Christmas period.  
Love from Jim and Caroline Blair.



Christmas Greetings to everyone in the congregation  
from Sam and Caio and all the Kensington Unitarians  
Kids' Club. We're looking forward to singing for you in the  
carol service when we'll be getting our Chalice Award  
certificates for all the work we've done on diversity.  
We've had a great year and are working really well as  
a team, with lots more fun to be had in the new year!

Wishing everyone involved with Kensington Unitarians  
a very Happy Christmas and a New Year filled with  
peace and good cheer. With love from Sarah.



## Glory of Geese

Viewed from above or afar, like rice strewed over the burial ground,  
The church withdrawn, not foremost in appearance, the bridal pair long since  
Swept away in dark cars. Or like a thousand crumbs of discarded white bread  
Scattered over the field, after the famished multitudes have sauntered on.  
Amazingly unaggressive, lurching from side to side, or hobbling like  
Elderly veterans flocking together to talk of old times. Or  
Launching into the muddy brook, with scarcely liquid enough to submerge  
Their orange-yellow feet. But not minding, not complaining at all:  
No arrogant pecking or hierarchical shoving, affable in the extreme; just  
Wading or splashing, or calling and cackling, everywhere assuming  
Life is a benefice, just an open field, with amazing opportunity to flock  
Neighbourly together, between no perceptible boundaries. Blissfully they  
Maunder and trundle, assuredly free-ranging, with not the smallest consciousness  
Of hour or day, or month or year, or time, or Christmas.



John Hands

Forthcoming Essex Church Cultural Outings

## Esterhazy Singers' St. Nicholas Day Concert

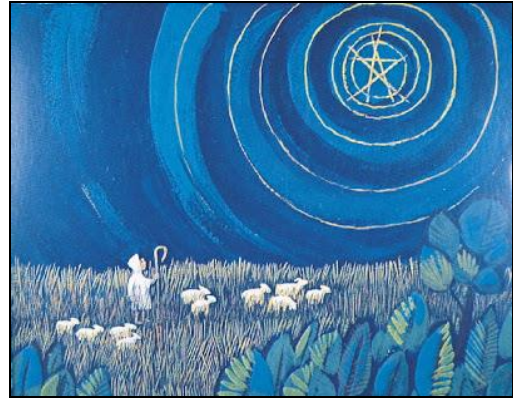


**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 7.30pm**  
**St Giles Cripplegate, London EC2Y 8DA.**

The Esterhazy Singers, featuring our own Natasha Drennan, will perform a programme of music for St Nicholas's Day in the Barbican at St Giles Cripplegate. Tickets are available from [www.esterhazysingers.com](http://www.esterhazysingers.com) for £15. Please do put the date in your diary now and let Natasha know if you would like to come: [tash\\_drennan@hotmail.com](mailto:tash_drennan@hotmail.com)

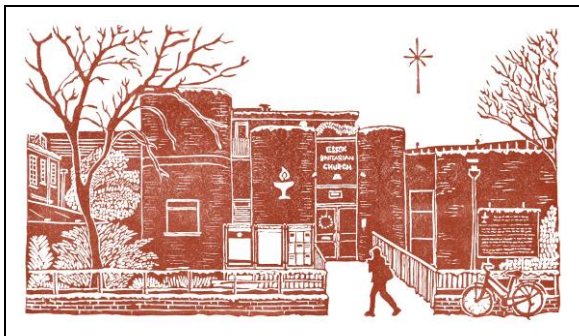
## 'Prepare for an Inner Christmas'

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December, 7.00-8.45pm**



Join us for an evening of inner preparation for Christmas, with time for meditation, gentle music, and creating our own festive season within. With seasonal refreshments. Please bring a small wrapped gift costing £1 or less to give to someone else.

## Kensington Unitarians Christmas Cards



I have produced a lino print image of Essex Church in the snow (see the snapshot above which shows a test print) and as promised in the last newsletter we have now turned it into a greetings card which is available for you to buy. It is blank inside so that you can send it at any time of year and there is some very basic information about Kensington Unitarians, including our website address, on the back.

The cost of these cards, which will come with envelopes, will be as follows (with a modest multipack discount):

- Single card: £1
- Pack of 5 cards: £3
- Pack of 10 cards: £5

We will be selling these cards after the service on Sundays in November and December. A proportion of the profits will go to the Hucklow Summer School Bursary Fund as this is a Unitarian cause which is especially close to my heart.

I am also selling original mounted prints for £40 if you would like to buy one to put on your wall or to give as a gift to a friend. Please contact me directly if you might be interested: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

**Jane Blackall**

## 'Living Well With Ageing'

**February 1<sup>st</sup>, March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015,**  
**from 2.00-5.00pm here at Essex Church**



Certain life issues may come to the fore as we grow older. Health; finances; children and grandchildren or lack of them; other relationships (possibly still with parents); loss; where to live; what to wear; disappointment at what we didn't achieve or pride in what we did; what to do for fun; dealing with anxiety, living in an ageing body ... etc. etc. just a few of the preoccupations of those of us in the ageing process post 50 and beyond, and no doubt you can think of many more!

This series of three monthly sessions, lasting three hours each, will be looking at some of the issues we encounter around our ageing, both emotional and practical. The group will be no more than 12 people, aged 50 and over. We will build the sessions around material the group participants bring and the sessions will be reflective, sensitive and responsive. Each session will build on the session before, so please sign up for all three.

Sessions will be run by Sally Payne and Annie Tunnicliffe, both of whom are experienced group facilitators, trainers and counsellors. You will be welcome to join us for a bring-your-own lunch at 1pm before the sessions.

**Cost: £20 per session. Concessions available on request.**

To book a place or for more information please contact us by email on [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) or by phone on 020 7221 6514 or talk to Sarah Tinker



## 'LGBTQ' – What Does it Mean?

In last month's newsletter I wrote a piece about the Kickstarter Appeal for Irreverent Dance, the LGBTQ-inclusive, body-positive, accessible dance community that I'm involved with (and I'm delighted to report that we reached our fundraising target and are due to open our own studio early in 2015!)

Following publication I received a letter from Stephanie (*printed on the left*) pointing out that I had not spelled out the meaning of the term 'LGBTQ' and that it had taken her some days to work out what it stood for. Apologies for this oversight! It is a term that I am very familiar with (as familiar as I am with 'A&E', really) and so it never crossed my mind that it would be unfamiliar to some of our newsletter readers.

I thought I would take the opportunity to write a bit more about the matter, in response to Stephanie's letter. Terminology is always changing and I appreciate that it can be hard to keep up with what is regarded as appropriate language if you are on the outside of the particular community that it belongs to. The phrase 'LGBT' (usually without the Q) is widely used as the umbrella term for this community these days so as to acknowledge the different and distinctive experiences and justice issues of each of the separate groups.

When we talk about LGBTQ+ people we are often doing so in terms of a group of people who have experienced and still experience some form of discrimination, abuse, insensitivity or exclusion *because of* their sexuality or gender identity (this is why there isn't a 'H' for heterosexuals in the acronym!) Sometimes you see even longer versions of the acronym, with 'I' for intersex and 'A' for asexual, hence the '+' that I added to LGBTQ above. There are varied views on this ever-extending alphabet and some people prefer to use the acronym 'GSM' for 'gender and sexual minorities' instead but this has not yet caught on in popular culture and I suspect few would know what it means.

In the early days the movement was framed in terms of 'Gay Liberation' and 'Gay Rights' and you quite often hear people in mainstream culture still refer to 'gay' this or that as a shorthand term for the whole of the LGBT spectrum... but this is one of many habits that erases the voices of L, B, and T people. Visibility is a big issue for bisexuals in particular who are often overlooked or discriminated against, both within the world at large, and within 'gay' communities. Trans\* people (the T is generally taken to stand for 'trans\*' or 'transgender' both of which are broader terms than 'transsexual' and allow for non-binary gender) have a whole different set of issues to deal with and at the present time arguably face the most discrimination of anyone under the LGBTQ umbrella.

'Queer' was indeed primarily regarded as a pejorative term at one time. However, over the last 25 years or so it has been reclaimed, and used to establish community and something of a political identity. This is a term that each person probably interprets in a slightly different way and it is hard to do justice to the full range of its meaning and resonance in this short article. It is perhaps more often used by activists and people who are less conformist. The LGBTQ+ community is not of one voice on this (and that's why you'll get conflicting information like Q standing for 'queer' and 'questioning') but that's all the more reason to listen to diverse voices on the matter and try to get a sense of the bigger picture.

Now, you might wonder what this has got to do with our Unitarian community. I would say that at the very least as part of our commitment to hospitality we have a duty to pay attention to these issues. There will be LGBTQ+ people in our congregation already for whom this stuff really matters, and others out there in the world who would like to join a religious community, who may have heard we are more inclusive than other churches. At the AGM it was agreed that we should display a rainbow flag in the window so as to let people know that we are a welcoming church. This is a great thing to do yet I would suggest we've got some more work to do here, some more learning and reflection as a group, if our actions are going to live up to our image. In the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association in the US) they have a very rigorous 'welcoming congregation' programme to help congregations reflect on these issues in a deep way.

If you don't feel drawn to engage with the politics or the justice issues at stake here then perhaps you can approach it as a simple form of courtesy and respect to use the terms that people have chosen for themselves. A further step is to try and understand the reasons behind their choices and the personal experience behind them.

If there is sufficient interest we could organise some training on this issue in 2015. Let me or Sarah know if you would like to attend. Finally, I would recommend reading the award-winning sermon by 'Spaces Between: A Theology of Rainbows' by UU seminarian Caitlin S. Cotter, which says it so much better than I can in this space (available online if you Google it or let me know and I can print you a copy).

Dear Editor,

*It is more than 25 years since I retired, but I do still read some medical journals, and am well aware of how medicine has improved since I left it. There are numerous new departments, drugs, operations, often known by initial letters (like A&E). But somewhere in an article using such an abbreviation there is the full name so that the reader is kept informed. As an anaesthetist, I often looked after patients having sex-change operations, visiting them before surgery, exploring what I was going to do, reassuring them about pain relief when I woke them up. We approached them with compassion, understanding and confidentiality.*

*Reading the excellent article in the November newsletter, I read LGBTQ three times before beginning to grasp what it stood for. I got L&G but it was two days before I grasped B&T. Q was beyond my comprehension despite discussing it with members of our book club and various friends. It was a week before someone put me wise: Q stands for queer. It was another week before someone else told me it meant questioning. A bit of a difference. Lesbian, bisexual, transsexual – these words could be said to describe a condition, they are clinical. Queer is judgemental. Now, I am told, embraced with pride.*

*I wonder, dear editor, whether in your life span, these letters LGBTQ will have been joined by H – this happy band – lesbians, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, questioning and 'heterosexual'.*

*Best wishes to the dance studio project. I am sure all your readers will wish you well.*

**Stephanie Saville**

**Jane Blackall**

## Creativity Group

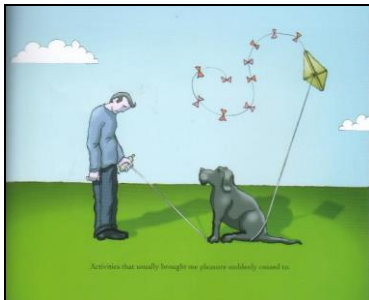
11<sup>th</sup> December and 15<sup>th</sup> January from 7-9pm  
(please note irregular date in January 2015)



Our creativity group meets once a month, usually to focus on a particular art or craft medium or a certain project for each quarter of the year, so that we can go deeper into it during that period. One of the particularly enjoyable features of this group is the space it offers for fellowship and conversation while we are each working on our individual projects alongside one another. If you don't fancy the art or craft we are 'officially' focusing on then you are always welcome to bring along whatever you're working on and do your own art/craft whilst enjoying the good company of the group. Please bring your own crafts in December and January and bring along any flowers you have made for the 'Craftivists' Garden'. We will be having a chat about the future of the group and what projects we might like to take on in the New Year.

Jane Blackall

## Book Recommendation: 'I Had a Black Dog' by Matthew Johnstone



Just 48 pages long, and with only two or three sentences on each page, this looks like a children's picture book. It isn't. It is a thoughtful and very helpful book about the experience of depression. With warmth and a touch of humour, it covers everything from isolation and shame to openness; some possible solutions are touched on, but the book does not pretend that there will be a 'cure'. There are over 200 reviews on Amazon, many of them by people who suffer from depression themselves, and who find the book helpful both to read and to give to other people who don't understand what depression really means. As someone who has rarely been afflicted with depression (and the temptation to touch wood when I type that is overwhelming) I found it quite eye-opening, especially the statement that often people with depression don't feel 'down' at all; "At its worst it's about being devoid of feeling altogether". The book is linked to a website where people can exchange thoughts. I would recommend this book to anyone who is affected by depression, whether personally or at second hand.

Caroline Blair

## Dates for your Diary

**GA President's Visit and Lunch  
Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015**



We are pleased to be welcoming our General Assembly President Marion Baker to co-lead our service and join us for a congregational lunch afterwards. Make a note in your diary and join us that day and hear some of Marion's insights into our national movement.

## FUSE: Festival of Unitarianism in the South East, 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> Feb

A group of people from Kensington Unitarians are already booked in to this Unitarian weekend by the sea in Worthing. The congregation is offering generous bursaries to members who would like to attend – speak to a committee member – the early bird discount has been extended to 21st December 2014. See [www.fusefest.org.uk](http://www.fusefest.org.uk) for details and to register.

## General Assembly Annual Meetings, 29<sup>th</sup> March-1<sup>st</sup> April

Each year we send two delegates to our Annual Meetings and this year they are being held in Birmingham. Attending is a good way to learn more about our movement so let a committee member know if you would like to attend.

## 'Finding Our Voice'

**Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall**

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January (no class in December)  
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.

## Essex Church Membership 2015



In January current members and friends of our congregation will be receiving their annual letter and form to fill in for membership. It's good practice to ask people to renew their membership in this way each year and we'd be grateful for your feedback on how our form feels to receive and fill in. We'd also be grateful if you could return the forms speedily to the church office – or even fill them in straight away on a Sunday morning – as this makes it much easier to administer. The form simply checks that we have your contact details correctly.

Our annual suggested subscription remains at £40 for members and £16 for friends. This payment is not a requirement but it in some way covers the cost of newsletter production and mailing and the annual quota payment we make for each member to our central General Assembly. Some people pay with a cheque, others put money in the collection during the year to cover this cost, or pay by standing order.

Our treasurer Caroline is particularly grateful to all those who make a contribution by monthly standing order. Monthly payments vary between £10 and £50 a month at present. Could you make a monthly contribution in this way?

Please don't let finance stop you from filling in the form but also do ask yourself what you can afford to contribute to the running costs of the church, or other ways that you might contribute to our community through your time and enthusiasm.

Membership is a really valuable way to show that you support our congregation and are in accord with its liberal religious ethos. If you want to know more about what membership entails then do get in touch with me and have a chat.

Sarah Tinker

## Turner: Reflections on Light



I recently visited the *Late Turner - Painting Set Free* exhibition at Tate Britain where I spent several hours amongst canvases ablaze with the light of fiery sunsets, incandescent skies, and depictions of elemental forces. These works of art are strikingly expansive and ethereal, evoking spaciousness and freedom of feeling within; and all this is contained in the light.

Turner adopted an even looser style in his later work and his paintings became increasingly hazy and indistinct, as if landscape and architecture were as insubstantial as water and light. He painted not so much form, as essence; and his paintings are *au fond* expressions of feeling and Spirit.

One work that stands out in particular is *Snow Storm* (1842). In this Turner depicts the swirling vortex at the heart of nature through the eye of which a steamboat battles. This whirling motion within nature is a motif that recurs in several other works, namely *Shade and Darkness - the Evening of the Deluge* (1843) and *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - the Morning after the Deluge* (1843), and these indicate how the science and natural philosophy of the day informed Turner's work: matter in motion forming spiral patterns in alignment with the force of magnetism and Cartesian vortices.

The keynote of Turner's art is that no matter how turbulent the sea or forbidding the sky, the light always prevails as an inextinguishable element. The light ever penetrates the darkness whether as lambent glow, sanguine red, cadmium yellow or auric radiance. It is this rendering of light that expresses Turner's sublime, even mystical vision.

With the foregone *Turner and the Sea* exhibition at the National Maritime Museum and the release of Mike Leigh's acclaimed film *Mr Turner*, this year has been a celebration of J.M.W. Turner- visionary nonpareil.

Niall Doherty



## Foodbank Reminder

Thank you so much to all the generous people who have been donating to the foodbank in the foyer. We are passing the food on to the Trussell Trust, who are very pleased to receive it. Can we please ask that any fruit juice (always a popular product) is of the kind that is stored on the shelves, not in the refrigerator? Unfortunately we had some donations of fresh juice that had to be discarded. The food bank cannot use products that have to be stored in the fridge. Thank you again.

Caroline Blair



## Intimacy with the World: An Evening with Elias Amidon



You know how there are some evenings you just do not want to venture out? It is a Sunday in November, it is raining, I have a good book to read and some soup on the stove. It was one of those Sunday evenings for me when Elias Amidon came to talk to a group at Essex Unitarian Church. And I nearly stayed at home. And I am so glad I did not. If I had stayed at home I would have missed a very special evening, an evening that helped me better come to terms with a lot that concerns me about our world.

Elias had posed the question: how can we be aware of all the sorrows of the world and remain open-hearted and loving and filled with unflinching acknowledgement of all that we survey? For some of us I think the answers lie in the Sufi Way of non-dualistic thinking, of moving beyond ideas of us and them, the good and the bad, the pure and the evil. 'This too is me' is a powerful reminder for me that there is no separation. But how easy it is to slip into the illusions of this world in which we live and start to believe our media with its repetitive obsessions about different groups and countries and tribes. Such approaches separate us rather than connect us.

As the rain beat down, we meditated deeply upon one of the names of Allah; Ya-Latif, the most subtle, refined, ineffable one. As so often happens, our meditation changed the whole feel of the room for me. It led us into such a peaceful exchange of responses where there was a genuine listening for one another. We spoke about the pain we feel when we witness the sufferings of others. We spoke about our sense of powerlessness in the face of so many of the world's troubles. We spoke about the news. Should we avoid papers and TVs and endless news feeds? Should we vary our sources of news? I liked the recommendation from one person who liked to compare the news we receive in this country with the way reports are given by Russia Today for example or Al Jazeera. Both are available readily here in Britain and the world apparently looks very different from their differing points of view. I was touched by Elias' story of his father moving towards death and commenting that dying felt rather like not getting to see the end of the film. None of us will ever get to see how things turn out. Life is indeed unfinished business. And much of life is an illusion – but what a convincing illusion for these sensory bodies of ours and in our busy minds. It was interesting to hear that a number of Unitarian and Interfaith ministers are involved with the Open Path, the Sufi Way training programme. If you want to read more I recommend the Sufi Way website, which contains many interesting resources. Thank you to Essex Church Unitarians for inviting us to this evening of warmth and connection. Our world needs more of this.

Robyn Hazelwood



### A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
14<sup>th</sup> December, 11<sup>th</sup> January

Midweek classes on **TUESDAYS** - 12.30-1.30pm  
(except 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> December – winter break)

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 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.



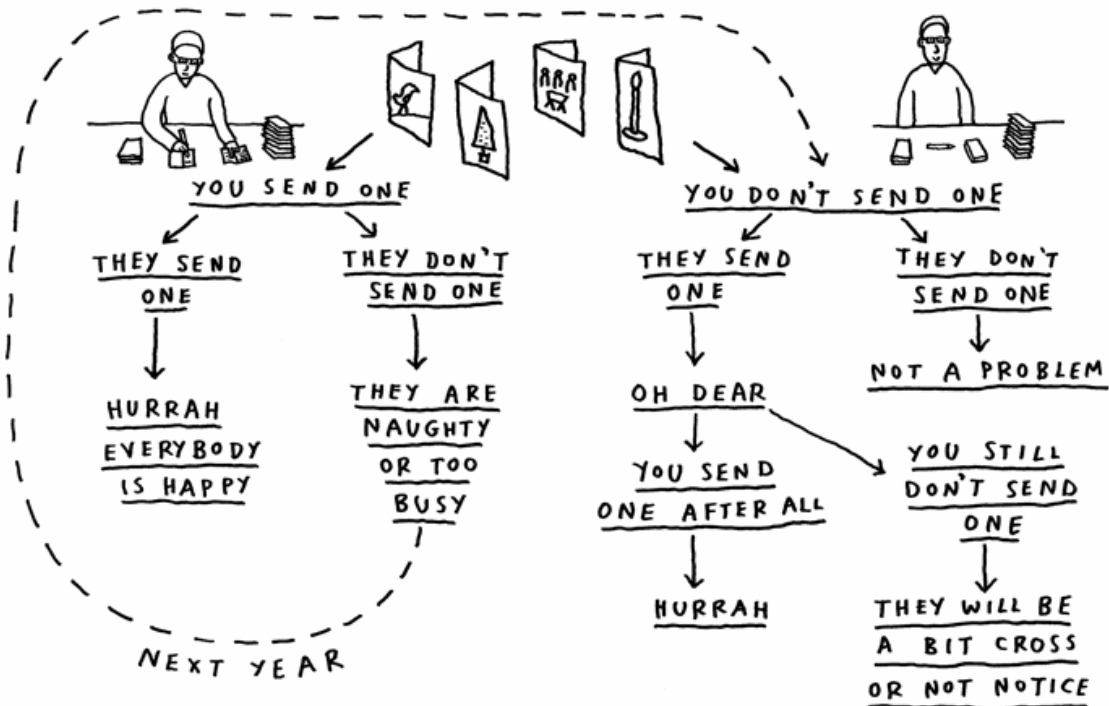
'Christmas is complicated. And if you feel like it is, you are not alone. I think more than anything, today I want you to hear that you are not alone. You don't have to pretend that this is the happiest season of all if you don't feel like it is.

If you are struggling, if you are facing difficult memories or feelings of inadequacy, talk to someone close to you who understands. There's a very good chance that they already know you are having a hard time, and they probably want to understand why. Your friends and family can't promise to take your pain away. But what we can do is help you not feel alone in it.

In the darkest of times, we look to find hope somewhere. That's what this whole season is about, in these shortest days of the year celebrating some sense of hope. For Christians that comes in the story of Jesus, for Pagans it comes with the turning of the year and the return of the sun. Sometimes in our darkest times, we have the energy to go out of our way and find some hope in the world. We can choose hope, and seize it. But sometimes even making that choice is too much work. Sometimes we need the blessing of hope to come to us, like a newborn child, like the return of the sunlight. [Here at church] we are trying to bring some hope and healing to you, in this dark time of year.'

Rev. Kent Doss

# CHRISTMAS CARDS



@davewalker / davewalker.cc

This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by the jolly nice chap Dave Walker originally appeared in the Church Times.

## Poems by Carole Grace

### Poppies Prettifying Mass Slaughter

Fields of glossy, vibrant, blood red poppies  
 surrounding the old castle  
 like a fairy story  
 They name the dead, each one a hero  
 Let's take the kids and celebrate,  
 be thankful for their sacrifice  
 War, what is it good for?  
 This.

### Remembrance Sunday

These tawdry poppies are token payment of our debt  
 To men we sent to war  
 To die in squalid ditches  
 We will forget  
 Repeat.

### Magic

You need a quorum for a coven  
 One or two is not enough  
 You need a fire and lovely fireworks  
 That sprinkle sparkly lights and stuff  
 Taking minutes of the meeting  
 Of the magic spells and dance  
 Allows a scientific journal  
 To print and sorcery to advance

## Tantra Mantra Dance

### Meeting & Merging the Divine Masculine and Feminine



Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 4.45-8pm  
 Presented by Illumina here at Essex Church

In Mantra Dance, powerful ancient Mantras are combined with the embodiment of Dance to shift and raise energy, bring us into the present and support a sense of our living sacredness. There will be dancing and chanting as partners, as a group and various exercises using voice and movement to open up to the free flow of masculine and feminine energy within and around us. Dress code: Men please wear white; Women please wear red. Couples and singles are welcome – this will be a fun, safe way to explore your relationship with the dance of masculine & feminine polarities. This is a live music event and renowned Mantra /Chant artists Illumina will lead us into opening our voices and expressing ourselves authentically.

Minimum suggested contribution £10 on the door.

For more information see: [www.illuminamusic.co.uk](http://www.illuminamusic.co.uk)

# Warden's Report

As I write this, I am also producing the December bookings calendar for the office door. This is a somewhat complicated procedure, because it's too complex to be legible at A4 and it's not possible simply to print it A3 instead. The best process I've been able to come up with is to have a word document with all the regular monthly bookings which I print out as three A4 sheets and then cut and paste into an A3 format adding and deleting bookings as needed.

When I started the job, the bookings diary was an actual paper diary, but for several years now it's been a Google Calendar instead. This has many advantages – it means that I can check and update it via my phone to deal with bookings enquiries when I'm out of the office. Sarah and Jane can also check from wherever they are if they need to programme a church event. It also means that repeating events only need to be entered once, rather than laboriously handwritten onto every week of the diary (although in fact, the previous Warden just kept them in his head rather than bother to do this – which caused its own problems when he left & someone had to take over!)

However, it's useful to have a paper version too for reference – particularly for our cleaner Gitana if she wants to see if it would be possible to come at a different time one week. It's also sometimes checked by regular users if they're not sure which room they're booked into. So every month or two I need to do this job – and I have to admit that I particularly enjoy doing December because the Xmas holidays means I get to cross out lots of bookings in the last week or two – leaving a blessed blank.

Hmmm – normally I use pritt to attach the A4 sheets to the A3, but we seem to have run out: nevermind, I'll use sellotape.

**Monday 1st December**, first deletion – London Meditation Centre – they don't meet here every week, this month they're only here on Monday 15th

**Wednesday 3rd** – an insertion: Associated Board Music exams, they're here on Friday 5th as well

**Thursday 4th** – a deletion: Russian Imperial Ballet school are starting their Xmas break already & a change of room: in December the Guild of Pastoral Psychologists meet socially in the Hall over mulled wine rather than have their normal monthly lecture in the church

**Sunday 7th** – another insertion, Illumina a sacred chanting duo who've performed in services here sometimes, are leading a "Tantra Mantra" in the church from 5–8pm

**Tuesday 9th** – John Stirk yoga is breaking early for xmas this year to work on his book: must remember to go on Tues 2nd for my last fix of the year – I really love that class!

**Thursday 11th** – Lloyd Williamson School Xmas Concert: they need the whole upstairs from midday through to 10pm, so therefore the regular Thursday afternoon kids class has been cancelled & the monthly church creativity group is moving down to the library

**Saturday 13th** – insert all day yoga retreat in the Church

**Monday 15th** – suddenly lots of groups are breaking for xmas: delete Ashtanga, Monkey Music & Babybop

**Tuesday 16th** – also Sing & Sign (although I stupidly deleted it from Tuesday 9th instead & had to handwrite it back in – grrr)

**Wednesday 17th** – delete Tse Qigong, Wednesday yoga and another ballet class. This leaves a totally blank day for the first time since 31st July – hurrah!

**Thursday 18th** – insert Piano Circle: they've been meeting here for their Christmas concert for a couple of decades, but we're so busy nowadays they've had this date booked since last year to make sure we had space

**Friday 19th** – delete Beit Klal synagogue: it's Hanukah this week, so they're celebrating elsewhere on Tuesday

**Saturday 20th** – delete Michal Levin meditation, they take a break from their monthly meetings in December

**Sunday 21st – Saturday 27th** OK! Now even the diehards are on vacation: delete Feldenkreis, delete Taiji, delete Nia, delete Pilates, delete Little Foxes, delete Pregnancy Yoga, delete Reiki, Eritreans & Seicho no Ie – a week of wondrous blankness broken only by the xmas eve service on Wednesday (& Sufis on Monday 22nd, who only take one week's break a year)

**Sunday 28th onwards** – would also be blank, except that for the 3rd time Sarah has given permission for me to organise a New Year dance event here. So the final insertion is "London New Year Contact Improvisation Gathering" with a big arrow to show it's happening all week. We have a rather snazzy website this year – [www.contactcity.org](http://www.contactcity.org) if you want to take a look

Or pop downstairs to see this finished December sheet stuck on the office door. Happy New Year!



Jenny Moy

## Small Group Communion



**Sundays 21<sup>st</sup> December, 11<sup>th</sup> January**  
 (please note irregular date in December)  
**at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. These services are led by different members of the congregation. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we can experience a variety of different approaches. The line-up for the next couple of months is as follows:

**21<sup>st</sup> December** – Led by John Hands

**11<sup>th</sup> January** – Led by Tristan Jovanvić

**8<sup>th</sup> February** – Led by Jane Blackall

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



“Once I heard Dean Sperry in a lecture at the Harvard Divinity School say this: There had been times, he said, when he scarcely knew what he believed or whether he believed anything at all — times when he was baffled, confused and dismayed—as, no doubt everyone is sometimes. And at those times, he found great good in the Communion. For here was something which generations of people has said and done over the centuries. And somehow, regardless of doctrine, that gave him a thread of continuity, a kind of steadying. In that service, it was as if he felt himself one with the age-long movement of humanity, together, through thick and thin.”

**W L McKinstry** (from *uchristian.org*)

## Women's Group

Starting at Essex Church in January



**22<sup>nd</sup> January, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 23<sup>rd</sup> April,**  
**28<sup>th</sup> May, 25<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015**

**6.45pm (for 7pm start) - 8.45pm**

After the success and interest in the Women's Spirituality and Sexuality course we ran here in the summer, we're starting a monthly Women's Group to be held at Essex Church on the 4th Thursday of each month (which isn't always the last Thursday!)

The aim of this group is to provide a safe space for us to explore issues and topics of interest to us as women. These include things such as spirituality and sacred space; self-image; women and aging; as well as other topics suggested by the group.

Each session we'll use various ways, including discussion, art/creative exercises, meditation and other interactive means, to explore the topic for that month.

It's unlikely that we can all attend every session, but we hope women wanting to attend can commit to a minimum of 4 of the 7 meetings. The group is open to all. We'll keep the group small, so please contact Liz Tuckwell, to reserve your place by email at [ltuckwell@gmx.co.uk](mailto:ltuckwell@gmx.co.uk), or in person, as soon as you can.

If you'd like to know more about this proposed Women's Group, please speak with Liz Tuckwell, Carole Grace or Jeannene Powell. Or email us on [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) or leave a message on the church phone and we'll get back to you: 020 7221 6514.

'It is likely that the most profound religious and spiritual truths have a paradoxical quality to them. The God we await, is already here, already present and awaiting birth in our lives. Advent is a season that is about waiting, about gestation, about expecting and hoping about what is coming, but it is also, profoundly, about what is already present, what exists within us all the time and needs not wait for an appointed time in order to emerge, but only needs our attention. As is said in the gospel of Luke, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Lo, here it is!" or "There!" for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.'



**Rev. Linda Hart**

## One Light Spiritual Gathering 'Gifts of Light'



**Friday 12th December 2014, 6.15-8.30pm –  
Here at Essex Church**

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

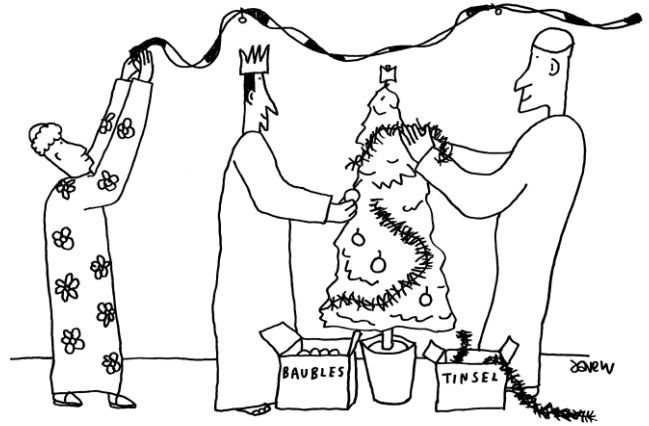
We warmly invite you to join us in celebration of the gifts of Light through sacred live music, meditations and readings. Festive refreshments will be served from 6.15 pm and the gathering will start at 7.00 pm. Entrance is free, but donations are gratefully received.

***This event is free. Donations for expenses are welcome.  
Any surplus will go to Essex Unitarian Church***

### **For further information contact:**

Interfaith Reverend Joanna Ryam 07929 836 935

*Forthcoming One Light Gatherings:  
9<sup>th</sup> January – Power; 13<sup>th</sup> February – Relaxation;  
13<sup>th</sup> March – Efficiency; 10<sup>th</sup> April - Celebration*



**EPIPHANY: THE WISE MEN /  
TAKING DOWN THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS**

*This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by the jolly nice chap  
Dave Walker originally appeared in the Church Times.*

## **Good Cause Collection of the Month**



**For women and children.  
Against domestic violence.**

### **Collection on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December**

For our next charity collection we will be supporting Refuge. Refuge supports 3,000 women and children on any given day through a range of services, including refuges, independent advocacy, community outreach and culturally specific services.

**For information about Refuge visit:** [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

## **MSF: West Africa Crisis**



### **Collection on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January**

For our next charity collection we will be supporting the MSF West Africa crisis appeal. Since the Ebola outbreak was officially declared on it has claimed 5,420 lives in the region. MSF has more than 3,400 staff working in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mali.

**For info about this appeal visit:** [www.msf.org.uk/ebola](http://www.msf.org.uk/ebola)

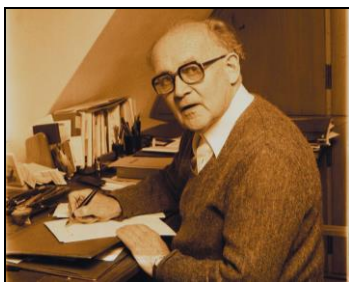
## **Previous Charity Collections:**

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:

**October – Prison Phoenix Trust - £274.31**

**November – Summer School Bursary Fund - £147.19**

## **Seven Lives**



I would love to have seven lives  
One completely given over to things of the spirit:  
Another one to sketching, another to writing.  
One spent in the woods, another spent  
Praising the stars, the great silences.  
One to lie naked on the sea-shore  
Or in the white foam of the waves  
Or in the sand and grass of the dunes.  
One life entirely for Mozart. Another for gentle  
Another for energetic games  
And for all the heart-ache of this world  
An entire lifetime. And I, I have –  
Oh how I would love seven whole lives!  
But have just one life only.

**Albrecht Goes**

*(Translated from the German by John Hands)*

# 'Be Not Afraid'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – adapted from service given on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014

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

It is completely normal for human beings to feel fear. Our fears start in childhood – from the two universal fears of falling and loud noises – but most of us soon add to the list – fear of spiders and other creatures, fear of public speaking, fearing of flying etc etc. These are specific fears but most of us at times will also know more generalised forms of being afraid – the worries and anxieties that circle around in our minds, often not focussed on any one specific thing. As I explore this topic this morning I do want to acknowledge how dreadful it can be to feel fear, how anxiety is one of the most commonly experienced psychological conditions and how utterly debilitating that can be.

To be afraid is a very common human experience – no wonder then that fear is a subject often mentioned by the world's religions. Calling on a higher power can be greatly comforting when we are afraid. You may have heard the joke of the child asked by his mum to pop out into the garden to fetch the sweeping brush. The garden is dark, the child does not want to go out there in the dark. His mum re-assures him by telling him that Jesus is out there and will protect him at all times. Then she spots the little lad standing by the open door calling out into the garden – 'Jesus if you are there, can you bring the sweeping brush in for us'.

We know the biology of fear – we perceive a potential source of danger – the spider for example that dangled down over my bed only the other night – our body releases adrenalin – a hormone designed to get us going – we experience the fight or flight rush that can help us escape – out of the bed perhaps. Once the source of fear is removed, our body can return to a calmer state. We know that this fight or flight response was very useful to us in pre-historic times giving us the speed to escape from angry woolly mammoths or encouraging us to stand and fight those who threatened our loved ones. Our fear response is still useful in many situations today – it will get us quickly out of the path of red London bus for example. Our fear response is so sensitive that even talking or reading about fear will bring a slight increase in our heart rate. We are primed and ready because we never know what's going to happen next. I am confident that if a sabre toothed tiger appeared here right now we'd all be out of that door in double quick time.

But we also know how some aspects of this physiological response can be troublesome in modern life. Adrenalin increases our heart rate – it can make us sweat and blush or smile inappropriately; it can make us freeze like a rabbit caught in the headlights of an oncoming car. Because fear is such a strong emotion it can have a remarkably powerful effect on us and how we live our lives. I suspect many of us here today will know the ways in which our fears have limited our lives, the ways we have held back at times, not stepped out into a new beginning or way of being in life. From our childhood days we'll tend to be sent out into the world with a 'take care' message that implies the world is a scary, anxious making place. Interesting to imagine how different life might be if we heard more of the 'take risks today, make mistakes, don't worry about making a fool of yourself, it's fine to fail' kinds of messages from our earliest times.



And have you noticed how fear is used at times by politicians and the media? Policy changes we may yet regret are being introduced to deal with perceived threats from terrorism. Our own economic anxieties become so interlinked with immigration and welfare issues that it becomes hard to think clearly about these important and complex issues of our time. Our newspapers give immense coverage to diseases such as Ebola yet tend to ignore the less dramatic diseases such as malaria, which kill and disable far more people yet are not deemed newsworthy because they are ever present. Fear does not seem a healthy position from which to make decisions for our society. And if our fears were rationally based we'd be most afraid of our own stairs, kitchens and beds since these are the places where most of us will have accidents and eventually reach the ends of our lives.

I was on a retreat recently where we talked in small group sessions. One of the participants said that on the path of self-reflection she felt there was only one question that needed to be asked, and answered, and that was – 'who would we be and what would we do if we were not afraid?' This question became a useful tool to consider the many ways that we limit our lives through fear. It led to some deep and gently challenging conversations and perhaps it's a question we can find ways to explore with one another. But I wondered about its implication - that fear can be got rid of, vanquished, overcome. Susan Jeffers in her famous book of the 80s *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* took a slightly different approach. One of her five truths about fear is that

*"The fear will never go away as long as you continue to grow! Every time you take a step into the unknown, you experience fear. There is no point in saying, 'When I am no longer afraid, then I will do it.' You'll be waiting for a long time. The fear is part of the package."*

I found her message helpful – that fear is part of being alive and by acknowledging it and accepting it as part and parcel of living life fully we can grow and develop further. But Susan Jeffers herself can for me sound a bit too jolly at times. Here's another of her five truths about fear:

*"Pushing through fear is less frightening than living with the bigger underlying fear that comes from a feeling of helplessness! This is the one truth that some people have difficulty understanding. When you push through the fear, you will feel such a sense of relief as your feeling of helplessness subsides. You will wonder why you did not take action sooner. You will become more and more aware that you can truly handle anything that life hands you."*

## 'Be Not Afraid' (continued from previous page)

I don't know about you but yes, there have been times in my life where I have 'pushed through' my fears and yes, over the years, I have felt a greater sense of being able to handle what life throws my way. But I've also come to appreciate fear for the messages it brings me – rather than pushing fear away, trying to brush it under the proverbial carpet – I've learnt to value and respect it. I've also been in situations where fear was a completely understandable response to being genuinely threatened with violence and I've known others whose lives have been forever blighted by terrible and completely understandable fear of all too real dangers. Our congregation's Christmas charity collection this year will be going to the group Refuge, which runs a network of safe houses for women and children escaping from domestic violence. Their funding has diminished because of government cuts yet the need for the safety they can provide is ever greater.

So much as I love those Biblical messages of 'be not afraid' – especially when delivered by large numbers of hovering angels to a group of understandably cowering shepherds – I think the alternative message might be just as helpful. **Be afraid.** You're human, life is scary and uncertain. Accept your fear, breathe with it, and then – then assess the situation. Reflect for a moment. Is this the equivalent of a red bus moment where we really do need all the energy that this adrenalin is giving us in order to get out of danger – quick. At such a moment fear can save us. Or is this a 'goat in the back of the pick-up truck situation' that we heard of in our reading earlier on. I agree with Meg Barnhouse when she writes that there are times in life when we might as well just *"sit for a while and relax. Surrender to events. Don't try to intervene at this time. Detach yourself from outcomes. May we be given the wisdom to know when to sit and just let our ears flap in the breeze."*

## Address to Dead Leaves

*(Highbury Fields: Islington)*

Was it to make him grow you struggled forth?  
In springtime, burgeoning in the warmth  
Of larger suns, revelling in the fresh winds,  
Delighting in the longer day, the calmer night.  
Released from winter's cold you felt  
The sex sap surge through you like a young man's lust,  
You waved and antic'd on the spring boughs,  
Such clownish zest was in you – young  
To resist the pain of rain, obstreperousness of storms, and  
Love's long protracted night-times, turbulent and grave.  
Now look at you: you're dead and down,  
A skeletal host entangled on a stochy field:  
I see you, like men you are, you lie  
A decimated host, sprawled in tattered heaps  
Caved in upon each other: one lifts his arms imploringly,  
One seems to cry aloud for light or air:  
Another propped upon his arm sucks in  
His last of life, abruptly proved intractable and vain.  
Was it for this you lived your life  
You sufferers? Was it for this you laboured to grow tall, you young trees?  
For one brief summer you put forth,  
Were briefly looked upon, decked out, admired,  
And now your end is this: breeze which once caressed you  
Tears you down: and frost, and fog, and wind, and rain,  
Harry you to death.

John Hands



## What's On in January:

*(continued from front page)*

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January, 7-8pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'Great Spirit, Mother Earth'  
with Natasha Drennan & Jane Blackall

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January, 11am-noon  
**'Wings of Desire'**  
led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2-3pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 7pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group: Wall-Hangings**

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January, 10.30am-4.00pm  
**Emotional Competency Workshop**  
led by Jeannene Powell & Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January, 11am-noon  
**'Come to a Quiet Place with Me'**  
led by Tristan Jovanović

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 11am-noon  
**'Just for the Love of It'**  
led by Katie McKenna

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1.15  
**'Finding Your Voice'**  
Singing workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

# Services at Essex Church this December/January

**7<sup>th</sup> December, 11am –  
'Find a Stillness'**

Service led by Kate Dean

Kate Dean (formerly Buchanan), ministerial student, member at Hampstead and friend of our congregation, will be leading this service. She says: "In the busyness of the festive season, let us create together an oasis of calm and stillness".

**14<sup>th</sup> December, 11am –  
'Christmas Carol Service'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker,  
our quartet of singers, and our Kids' Club

Come and enjoy a good sing at our Carol Service. This service will be followed by a congregational Christmas lunch – all are welcome – please bring along some food or drink to share with others if you can.



**21<sup>st</sup> December, 11am –  
'Winter Solstice Celebration'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

On the shortest day of the year we'll gather to welcome warmth and light into our lives and to celebrate the darkness.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December, 5pm, –  
'Candlelit Christmas Eve'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for our traditional, contemplative Christmas Eve service. You might like to invite a friend along on this special evening.



**28<sup>th</sup> December, 11am –  
'Yes, it's Still Christmas!'**

Service led by David Francis Darling

Our very own David Darling will lead this service and explore what the continuing season of Christmas might mean beyond the big day.



**4<sup>th</sup> January, 11am –  
'Taking Stock'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Early January is an ideal time to stop awhile and take stock, to reflect on where we are in life and what surrounds us. In her last service with us before she starts a month long sabbatical Sarah will be considering the value of stock-taking, both spiritual and physical.

**11<sup>th</sup> January, 11am –  
'Wings of Desire'**

Service led by Jane Blackall

According to Iris Murdoch, 'eros is a principle which connects the commonest human desire to the highest morality and to the pattern of divine creativity in the universe'. What role does passion and desire play in shaping the course of our lives? We will explore this question with help from the poets and philosophers.

**18<sup>th</sup> January, 11am –  
'Come to a Quiet Place with Me'**

Service led by Tristan Jovanović

In our very noisy city and world, what do we mean when we say 'to quiet the mind'? And when we talk about God, is the quiet a kind of Rosetta Stone to decoding what we mean? Let's find a quiet place together to listen for the whispers of our deepest selves.

**25<sup>th</sup> January, 11am –  
'For the Love of It'**

Service led by Katie McKenna

Katie McKenna, ministerial student, member of Norwich Unitarians, and friend of our congregation will be leading this service. She says: "sometimes there's no point to doing something, and that can be the point of doing it."

