



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2014

## What's On...

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 11am-noon  
**'The Spirit of the Suburbs'**  
Service led by Caroline Blair

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 7-8pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'Respect Yourself'  
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon  
**'Transport for All'**  
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by Sue Smith

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2.00-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August, 7-9.00pm  
**Creativity Group: Printmaking**  
(or bring your own craft project)

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon  
**'When We Reach the Station'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August, 11am-noon  
**'The Authentic Self'**  
Led by Jane Blackall

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August, meeting 11am  
**Horsenden Hill Walk** (from Perivale)

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August, 11am-noon  
**'Maps of Our Lives'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> August, 12.30-1.15pm  
**'Finding Your Voice'**  
Singing workshop with Margaret

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

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 7-8pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'Respect for Others' led by Sarah T

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon  
**'Nurturing Faith, Embracing  
Life, Celebrating Difference'**  
Service led by David Francis Darling  
(listings continued inside back cover)

## A Message from our Minister:

### 'Ordinary, Everyday Pleasures'

*"Happiness and a meaningful life come from making differences. But this is the most important rule to follow: always make the differences you can make, not the differences you would prefer to make but can't." – Lyndon Duke*

Many of us have high ideals. We want to live life well. We know it's precious. We want to make a difference in the world and help to heal all that is broken and painful. But I know I'm not the only one who can feel utterly dispirited at times when my ideals don't live up to reality.

Perhaps summer is a good time to let ourselves off the hook, to practice the gentle art of living simply and realistically. In truth, most of us are not going to change the world. Probably none of us are going to tackle the world's most pressing dilemmas. But we are going to live each day and perhaps it is the qualities that we invite into each day that will help us make our mark.

Instead of trying to be the best, the busiest, the most organised, the fittest, the most spiritually enlightened (fill in whatever you yearn to achieve here) let's aim to be ourselves, our ordinary selves living ordinary, everyday lives. Let's accept ourselves and our lives as we are and they are. I remember sitting in a park years ago now with two friends, having a cherry stone spitting competition. The one whose stone flew the furthest was the winner but we were sitting on a slope so there was plenty of scope for disagreement about where each stone had actually landed. We laughed so much that afternoon. A month later one of those friends was dead, a terminal illness having finally taken her life. Before she died she talked of our cherry stone afternoon as one of her happiest times in those last few months.

She's not the only person with a life threatening illness to speak to me of this; of the unexpected way in which knowing we are mortal can help us enjoy each moment with greater intensity than we've known before. When we remember that our lives are finite and that this moment is all we have, we're less likely to waste it. So let's fill these summer months with ordinary, everyday pleasures and recognise the ways in which our enjoyment of life makes a difference to all those around us.



**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

*with thanks to life coach Michael Neill for these ideas.*

## In this month's newsletter...

- \* 'Can Everybody Hear?' – reflections on hearing from Stephanie Saville and Rick Taylor \*
- 'Greetings from Leicestershire' by Howard Hague \*
- Responses from our 'Chapeau!' service \*
- 'Unitarian Social Action: Then and Now' by Natasha Drennan and Sarah Tinker \*
- 'Glimpses of Truth' by John Hands \*
- 'New Roof – At Last!' by Jenny Moy \*
- Foodbank Update \*
- Committee News \*
- 'Containing Multitudes' sermon 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.



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)

Join us for a congregational outing in West London:

## Horsenden Hill Walk

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August, meeting 11am at  
Perivale Station (Central Line, West Ruislip branch)



We are planning a late summer walk in the Horsenden Hill area on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August. This should be quite a varied walk, with some along the canal, some across fields and some through woods. There is a pub with a large garden en route where we hope to stop for lunch.

Please let Caroline Blair know if you are planning to come.  
Email [caroline\\_blair\\_lobster@hotmail.com](mailto:caroline_blair_lobster@hotmail.com).

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

3 <sup>rd</sup> August:	Veronica Needa
10 <sup>th</sup> August:	Niall Doherty
17 <sup>th</sup> August:	Allen Hawkin + Friend
24 <sup>th</sup> August:	Ellen McHugh
31 <sup>st</sup> August:	Alam-Nist Family
7 <sup>th</sup> September:	Alice Lambert
14 <sup>th</sup> September:	Eliz Beel
21 <sup>st</sup> September:	Veronica Needa
28 <sup>th</sup> September:	Carole Grace

### Coffee:

3 <sup>rd</sup> August:	Liz Tuckwell
10 <sup>th</sup> August:	Natasha Drennan
17 <sup>th</sup> August:	Kate Brown
24 <sup>th</sup> August:	Veronica Needa
31 <sup>st</sup> August:	Eliz Beel & Juliet
7 <sup>th</sup> September:	Sue Smith
14 <sup>th</sup> September:	Caroline Blair
21 <sup>st</sup> September:	Sue Smith
28 <sup>th</sup> September:	Jane Blackall

### Greeting:

3 <sup>rd</sup> August:	Sue Smith
10 <sup>th</sup> August:	Sue Smith
17 <sup>th</sup> August:	Roy Clark
24 <sup>th</sup> August:	? (...can you help?)
31 <sup>st</sup> August:	Anne Russell
7 <sup>th</sup> September:	Carol Sheppard
14 <sup>th</sup> September:	Elisa Melgosa
21 <sup>st</sup> September:	Juliet Edwards
28 <sup>th</sup> September:	David Darling

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)

'Evangelism is not a matter of converting someone to a different belief; it is a matter of welcoming those who are isolated and in need of a community. Evangelism is about reaching out. However, before we can reach out we have to reach in and reach down. Before we can be an inviting church that attracts and keeps visitors, we have to know who we are, what we stand for, what we have to offer. It arises from the deepest place of our sense of what is sacred, of what it means to live religiously. Evangelism is, then, a religious orientation based on an eagerness to share something precious, to share our good news.'

**UU Ministers Peter Morales & Don Southworth**

# Gathering of the Waters

In the service on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September



We will be holding our traditional 'Gathering of the Waters' ceremony during our service on 14<sup>th</sup> September. Please do bring a little water from your summer travels, or your home or garden, to symbolize the gathering of our community.

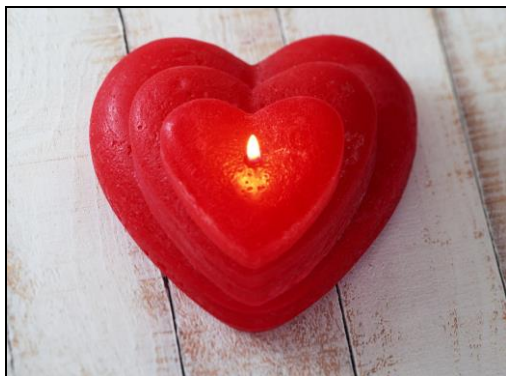
## 'Heart and Soul'

### Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August from 7-8pm

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September from 7-8pm

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



Our August and September gatherings will both be led by Sarah Tinker. The theme for August is 'Respect Yourself' and the theme for September is 'Respect for Others'. Joan Didion writes that "Character - the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life - is the source from which self-respect springs."

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.

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

# Latest News from the Management Committee



The management committee met for the first time since the Congregational AGM on Thursday 17th July. We discussed the minutes of the AGM and the recommendations that had come from the congregation. We have looked in the past at what to do with the organ which at present doesn't work. Perhaps surprisingly this is quite a big project that none of us felt we could deal with at present but if anyone feels that they have the knowledge, skills and time to take this project on we would be very happy to hear from them. We are going to reinstate the Visitors Book and ask the greeter to encourage all our visitors to sign it. We are also going to re-introduce the green contact slips for anyone who would like to keep in contact with the church.

In discussing building and maintenance issues Sarah reported that the balcony at the Manse has now been resurfaced with fibreglass which should hopefully solve the problem of water leaking into the church. The sound system has been thoroughly reviewed by a sound engineer who has reported that the loop system is working well but it is important that those using it sit as close to the loop as possible, sitting in the back row is thought to be best. He also recommended that we purchase a wired microphone for the lectern to prevent interference from taxi firms or others when some of the wireless bands are deregulated though I suppose that that could show that we were a church that connects with the world!

Jane reminded us of the various groups and workshops that were provided. Please see information in this newsletter and take flyers to encourage others to attend. The creativity group will be continuing and it was felt that this provided a great opportunity to try new creative activities as well as get to know members of the congregation better. The various cultural outings are another way of experiencing new things in the company of friends.

Caroline has been to visit the Food Bank where our food offerings are taken and has come back with a list of preferred foods and will put a list of this items near the food bank box which will now be more prominent on a Sunday morning. They seem to have a glut of beans and tinned tomatoes but are desperate for Smash powdered potatoes. Caroline pointed out that this indicates that many of the people receiving food have no cooking facilities other than a kettle. Please have a look at the list and be as generous as you can.

The next committee meeting is on the 18th September so please give any suggestions or feedback to the committee before then.

**David Francis Darling**  
Chair of the Congregation



## A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
10<sup>th</sup> August, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 12<sup>th</sup> October

N.B. There will be no midweek classes in August

Midweek classes will resume on TUESDAYS  
starting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September from 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 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

## 'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



Sundays 31<sup>st</sup> August and 28<sup>th</sup> September  
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.

## Greetings from Leicestershire!



It is now about six months since we left Greenford and moved to our new home in the (very) small village of Aston Flamville in Leicestershire. We are about three miles to the east of Hinckley, not far from the M69. The main reason for moving (once we had both retired from our work in London) was to be nearer Gill's sister and her family in Hinckley, and also nearer my brothers in Sheffield. We are now starting to feel more settled here. Our house is a semi-detached cottage (former stables) around a courtyard which we share with two other properties. We have lovely views at the back over open countryside, and some of the time we have sheep in the orchard next door (neither the sheep nor the orchard are ours, I hasten to add!). We have enjoyed seeing a variety of birds in the garden, including a woodpecker which is a regular visitor. Recently I have been spending quite a bit of time in the garden, trying to get on top of the weeds which have thrived this spring and summer with the wet and fairly mild weather. This is definitely a work in progress.

We have been attending the Hinckley Unitarian chapel quite often since we moved, and have found a warm welcome. There is currently no minister, so the services are lead either by a member of the congregation or by a visiting preacher. I took the service a couple of weeks ago on the subject of drug addiction, following the Foy conference on this topic which we attended in May. We have also attended services at Great Hucklow (where the denomination's Nightingale Centre is located) and at the old chapel in Chesterfield. As yet we have not got involved in too many other activities in Hinckley as we have been busy getting the house sorted out and catching up with friends and family. In mid-June we had a few days in Norfolk with Gill's sister and her husband, staying in a holiday cottage in the village of Martham near the east coast. This turned out to be quite a good base for seeing the area, and we managed a boat trip on the Broads and visits to Great Yarmouth and Gorleston on Sea.

Gill and I will look forward to visiting Essex Church again on one of our occasional visits to London, probably in the autumn. Do we miss the big city? Yes, I suspect we still do, not least for all the cultural activities and the (still) excellent public transport.

Howard Hague

# Can Everybody Hear?

We've been having some problems with our sound system lately and it's something that we need to get right because the acoustics in our lovely worship space are not the easiest for hearing the spoken word. We've had the induction loop system checked and it is working but as Stephanie Saville explains in her piece below it is far more effective if you sit nearer the edge of the room rather than the middle. I asked Stephanie and loyal visitor Rick Taylor to write about their experiences with hearing impairment as a way of helping me and others to understand their situation better. I've read a statement that a church without disabled members is itself disabled. Here at Essex Church we are trying to be as accessible a venue as possible – we offer large print hymn sheets and an accessible building, at least on the ground floor. But there is always more to be done and we would encourage anyone who has a disability to let us know how best to ensure your needs are met.



**Sarah Tinker**



To anyone with less than perfect HEARING. The church has a microphone and an induction loop system. This, as you may have guessed (I didn't) is a wire running all the way round the edge of the room. Once turned on, with two sets of lights flashing on the sound system console, this picks up sound from the amplification system and feeds it into hearing aids set to the loop setting, and gives the impression that someone is speaking directly to us.

It helps if we co-operate. The centre of our room gets the weakest loop sound, though it's an obvious place to sit opposite a speaker so we can lip read. I despair when I sit right next to a speaker and can hear nothing. So for best results I suggest hearing aid wearers who want to use the loop system should sit close to a wall but not right up against a wall. My smile in the last service I attended was REAL – I could HEAR. Watch this space for future discoveries.

**Stephanie Saville**

The senses are the gateway to our understanding--and to our memories and perceptions and all those elements that contribute to our fulfilment as people. As I make my annual returns to Essex Church, every step I take from the Notting Hill Gate Tube stop to the church door is filled with the sights and sounds and smells that evoke the anticipatory thrill of reunion. I visually embrace the church's architecture, the welcoming tea room, the plain beauty of the sanctuary, the smiles of those who recognize the loopy American who has returned for yet another summer sojourn.

Ironically, for someone who is hearing-impaired, I consider myself an auditory learner. My ears guide my emotional experiences, much of my aesthetic appreciation, and--in my time as a worshiper with you--the powerful spiritual renewal that sustains me throughout the year. I want to hear and savour every word, from the joys and concerns of the members -- let me take each one into my own heart -- to the minister's uplifting and challenging messages. Doing so is more difficult for those of us with hearing impairment.



Hearing aids are not quick fixes like glasses often are. For most of us, frankly, hearing aids suck -- they are seldom up to the task. The benefit we derive from excellent sound amplification systems (as well as from speakers adept at vocal projection) is almost beyond imagination: to hear every word is incredibly satisfying.

In theatres (along with teaching, my principal London agenda), devices for the hearing impaired offer people like me a complete experience of the artform. Otherwise, I struggle to fill in large gaps, cup my palms to my ears in frustration, sense what it must be like to be only partially literate. Even in matters of spirituality and worship, technology can contribute enormously--or detract painfully.

**Rick Taylor**

'Six hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Chinese wise man Lao Tzu counseled, *In times of adversity, make energetic progress in the good.* This is still the real work at hand: for each of us to meet the bad in the world with the good in our own hearts. To energetically rouse ourselves out of tired habits and worn-out loyalties and replace them with bigger and broader circles of inclusion.'

**Elizabeth Lesser**

# Chapeau!

In our congregational service on 6<sup>th</sup> July, we explored the term 'Chapeau!', in connection with the Tour de France visiting Britain. In the world of cycling, 'Chapeau!' is used to express deep respect for another's achievements or heroic efforts ('chapeau' literally means 'hat', of course, so when you say it to someone you are metaphorically doffing your cap, or taking your hat off to them in tribute). In this service we invited people to pay tribute to underappreciated achievements in all spheres of human endeavour with the following instructions:



*Chapeau! Who would you like to take your hat off to? Perhaps you would like to pay tribute to a great achievement, a valiant effort, a heroic endeavour – something that has inspired you – or which has somehow extended the boundaries of what humans can do. It does not need to be somebody famous – it may be an unsung hero from your own life experience – please write their name below along with something to tell us about their story.*

## Ivy M

In order to enable her two children to stay on at school, cleaned offices in the mornings before her normal job and also washed up in a Chinese restaurant on Friday and Saturday nights. Her perseverance and determination was incredible. I was one of the children.

## Dr Lynn Margulis

She developed a theory for the origins of eukaryotic cells and for many years was discredited. She was not taken seriously as a scientist mainly due to her being a woman, the only one in her field. Now everybody regards her theory as true. She inspired me to learn about biology and evolution.

## Health Care Assistants

They work for the minimum wage, doing unsocial hours. They do hard physical work, feeding, washing, dressing and changing adult nappies. They get shouted at, slapped, bitten and spat at. And they keep smiling, keep hugging, keep charming a smile out of their most difficult clients.

## Teresa McM

Tess has been a great help to me this past six months, despite having many challenges of her own, to name but a few: 1) a new job; 2) the death of her mother; 3) member of her church council.

## John C

John is a magnificent inspiring father to our two daughters. When our eldest, July, was born, he quit his job and started a business at home so he could help care for her. After our younger, Sarah, was born, John joined school activities shuttled the girls to sports, dance, and doctor's appointments and now has the most wonderful relationship with both, now grown to be 27 and 24 years old. Well done, my excellent husband!

## Lauren C

Lauren has directly and indirectly helped thousands of children in need through her work in child protective services. Her work is unsung because it deals with what we usually don't want to know or see.

## Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay)

Despite all his fame and achievements in boxing he refused to fight in Vietnam. A man of strength, dignity, and integrity.

## Bob Brunquell

Bob, who with his smile and sense of humour, brought me and others the light and joy in mine and others' lives. May he rest in full joy and peace.

## Mrs Rudell (and Mr Rudell – who ran the local Dogs Home)

She was clairaudient and clairvoyant with intense gifts which she never, ever, used professionally for personal financial gain but she did give sittings for a worthy charity. Her gifts must have cost her dearly in anguish when she was aware of others' troubles and pending danger. She showed great understanding and acted with the utmost discretion.

## Yves Postic

Yves is an actor/musician par excellence. He is gay and is bringing up his son François – who is the result of a huge process of egg donorship and surrogate birth mothering – François knows he has two mothers, an egg mother, and a birth mother – and will visit them in the states next year. Yves is a magnificent parent – chapeau!

## Dr Alexander Shulgin

An accomplished chemist, he experimented with psychoactive substances, i.e. MDMA and DMT. He conducted his experiments with the highest level of ethics. He suffered persecution by the authorities as he lived in the USA in the age of the war on drugs. Dr Shulgin died a few weeks ago. He left us a vast treasure trove of knowledge that will be enormously helpful when our governments and scientists adopt a truly scientific and humane attitude towards drugs.

## Jeannene and Carol of this church

We, two strangers, walked in and were immediately warmly welcomed. This may not seem that big of a deal to the church's members – our Unitarian church in Rochester, MN, is still working on how not to be shy and really greeting newcomers – thank you!

## Elderly Women and Men who Get Dressed up in Elegant and Fabulous Costumes when they Go Out

I know what an effort it takes to get gussied up: lipstick, jewellery, lovely prints, good shoes. To think with all the difficulties of age and without society's pressure any more these elderly people do this in a determined affront to age and the lack of expectations that come with it – chapeau!

## Chapeau! *(continued)*



### Father Anton Srholec

A Roman Catholic priest who as a youth was caught by the communist police as he and a friend attempted to swim the Danube so they could train for the priesthood in Austria. After a period in the dungeons of Bratislava castle they were sentenced to 10 years hard labour in the Uranium mines. Anton Srholec told me that he had been fortunate because his fellow workers were intellectuals who taught him English and many other things and who were a constant inspiration to him.

### My Children

They taught me the meaning of the word "love".

### Trish L

Mother, business owner who keeps on with a positive attitude after losing her house and enduring periods of joblessness and terrible part time jobs. She is a study in optimism and survival.

### Patricia and Gerald

Dealing with chronic pain and terminal illness "together". Patricia is one of my T'ai Chi soulmates.

### Mike

Who looked after his sick parents for 8 years until their death. During that time he did his Masters and started healing others.

### Barack Obama

Despite his being stuck in a tight framework, he still manages to somewhat express and implement his beliefs, convictions.

### Sheri R

My best friend and business partner for 25 years. Her strength is amazing and has inspired me.

### My Friend Vera

Now nearly 80 she has been beaver away most of the past 40 years as an environmental activist, lobbying, networking, and trying to make a difference setting up local initiatives.

### Good Teachers

For inspiring children. The good ones can do so much – especially for children who may have very difficult lives at home. School can be a place where those children can shine. My English teacher especially – she was the one who said 'you can do anything!'

'The word "enthusiasm" comes from two Greek words: "Theos," which means "God," and "En," which means "in"... it literally means "to be filled with God." Enthusiasm, then, in the original Greek sense, is much more than simply getting really excited about something. Enthusiasm, it seems to me, is a deeper, longer-lasting spiritual quality of being filled with "great spirit"...it's having within you "the highest life and most sustaining energy of the universe," and – and this is the crucial piece of the equation – it means that you are spiritually able to vibrantly live your life out from that sacred source.'

UU Minister, Rev. Scott W. Alexander

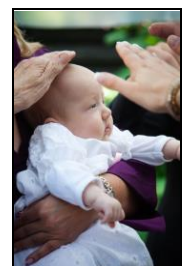
## 'Spiritual Life Skills' Forthcoming Workshop

### 'Celebrating Life's Moments'

with Ant Howe and Sarah Tinker  
Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 10.30am-4pm



Come and learn more about leading rites of passage ceremonies such as funerals, weddings and child blessings. A workshop both for those who are new to the role of celebrant as well as for those with some experience, with advice on resources, settings and how to connect with people at key moments in their lives. You'll have chance to think more about the role of such ceremonies in our lives both individual and communal, and clarify some of the important elements of such services for you. Ant Howe has wide experience in creating rites of passage ceremonies and probably leads more such services than any other Unitarian minister currently. He brings useful insights into what people most need at such turning points in life.



Cost: £5 / £10 / £15 (pay what you can afford)

To book, email: [sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

# Congregational Lunch

After the Service on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September



We will be holding a congregational lunch after the service on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September. Why not invite a friend along? We also have True Heart Theatre visiting that afternoon from 3pm so you could make a day of it and stay for both.

Carol Sheppard will be co-ordinating the lunch so please do let her know what food or drink you will bring to share. We are always grateful of help in the kitchen on the day so do let Carol know if you might be willing to lend a hand.



'Our only protection is in our interconnectedness. This has always been the message of the dark emotions when they are experienced most deeply and widely. Grief is not just 'my' grief; it is the grief of every motherless child, every witness to horror in the world. Despair is not just 'my' despair; it is everyone's despair about life in the twenty-first century. Fear is not just 'my' fear; it is everyone's fear — of anthrax, of nuclear war, of truck bombs, of airplane jackings, of things falling apart, blowing up, sickening and dying.

If fear is only telling you to save your own skin, there's not much hope for us. But the fact is that in conscious fear, there is a potentially revolutionary power of compassion and connection that can be mobilized en masse. This is the power of fear. Our collective fear, which is intelligent, is telling us now: Find new ways to keep this global village safe. Find new forms of international cooperation that will root out evil in ways that don't create more victims and more evil. Leap out of the confines of national egos. Learn the ways of peace. Find a new ceremony of safety so that not just you and I but all of us can live together without fear. This will take all of our creative power and ingenuity, as much and more as the intelligence and power we have put into constructing smart bombs and nuclear warheads.'

**Miriam Greenspan**

# True Heart Theatre at Essex Church

Returning on 21<sup>st</sup> September from 3pm-5.30pm



Since its beginnings in 2006, London's own Chinese-led True Heart Theatre has been regularly performing Playback Theatre on the third Sundays of most months in a variety of venues as our service to the community. Our events have created an opportunity for people from all cultures, across generations and languages, to meet each other through a heart-full exchange of real-life stories and experiences. Entry is by donation. Please book by emailing Veronica at: [info@trueheart.org.uk](mailto:info@trueheart.org.uk)

## Reflections on True Heart Theatre's May Visit

We began in a circle with a gentle process of introductions, and simple exercises to help us meet in an easy way. We had folks from Iceland, Taiwan, China, Eastern Europe as well as from up and down Britain. Our performance started with some words that captured our present sense of self. And then proceeded to three stories that explored life choices. In each case the stories were from people who spoke of a significant meeting or connection with another person.

The first story was of the recent suicide of good friend. Someone with a psychiatric condition, he chose not to live a half life on drugs. Refusing to take them, his last weeks led him to suicide or was it a liberation? Our teller is not angry with his friend for this choice.

Our second story honoured those in our families who are the silent, almost invisible ones who do the menial work and are often overlooked. They endure so that others may live sweetly.

Our third story celebrated a mother who refused to accept death or anything less than freedom to live a full life in the face of pogroms and borders.

Very different life choices that hold a light to our own. Our stories took us around the world. Thank you London for bringing such a diverse audience together for a rich gathering and exchange.

**Veronica Needa**

*"How powerful this process can be, and how valuable it is to meet people from different cultures"*

*"I don't think you see a human as a human until you have heard their story"*

*"[Playback] enthrals in the moment and absorbs all into oneness"*



## New Roof – at Last!

Before you get too excited, I'm afraid I'm not referring to the roof of the main sanctuary - which according to the archived trustees minutes appears to have been an ongoing problem since the building was built in 1972 - but for a few years we've also had a completely separate leak problem, through the flat roofed area outside the manse (immediately above you as you come through the front door). Flat asphalt roofs are notorious for inevitably developing leaks eventually and this one was no exception. The stained ceiling tiles in the lobby show where water has come through from time to time – on one particularly scary occasion it was



even dripping from the central light fitting. Sarah and Daniel have been managing the problem for years by brushing away pools of water whenever there's heavy rain, but the only real solution was to resurface the whole area. We'd been hoping to minimise disruption by doing this at the same time as work on the main roof, but as it's still not clear what work would be most useful there and in the meantime our lovely handyman Fraser had found a company that re-does flat roofs in fibreglass rather than asphalt – and is confident enough in their product to offer 50 year guarantees – we decided to take the plunge and sort out this problem first.

Work started in early July on the roof of the outside store in the back garden – and we immediately hit the problem that the fibreglass produces a very strong solvent smell while being laid which was putting customers in the next door restaurant off their food. After an hour or so of “shuttle diplomacy” between the restaurant and the workmen – it was agreed that the next batch would be laid first thing in the morning (the restaurant doesn't open till 12) to allow time for the smell to disperse. In the interest of good neighbourly relations, we offered to pay overtime so that all the preparation work could get finished the night before to make this possible.

So far so good, but then the weather delayed work on the main roof for more than a week. The preparation stage involves laying a hardboard subfloor and drilling holes in it: rain at this point gets into the holes and causes all kinds of problems, so it's important to wait until the forecast is dry for the next few days. When the workmen did come back to drill, we had music exams in the building – and predictable problems ensued. Luckily both the examiner and the workmen were very accommodating, so again we reached a compromise – the examiner would tolerate the noise for practice tests and piano exams and I'd ask the workmen to take a break during exams for more sensitive instruments. Violins seemed to be most sensitive to disruptive noise and vibration, so at one point work had to stop for nearly an hour while we had a batch of them.

The workmen had assured us that smell from the main roof would be less problematic than from the back garden shed because the greater height would allow it to disperse more. Sadly this wasn't really the case – and on the day they needed to lay the fibreglass strips, we had a large public open day for the work of a local mental health trust. Again, tolerance on all sides was needed. The trust had to keep the front doors shut and ventilate through the rear door only (this on a day of 30 degree temperatures) and the workmen had to move their van to the metred spaces down the road & carry everything from there to avoid blocking the entrance slope. I also made the mistake of hanging out my laundry only for it to get covered in a light powdering of fibreglass flakes: these can irritate the skin so I had to re-rinse.

All in all, although we were very lucky to have such pleasant and friendly workers doing this job – it was a great relief to finally see them go. The new roofs look impressively tough and hardwearing though and I'm looking forward to us finally being able to replace the stained ceiling tiles in the lobby – and who knows, maybe within the next few years I'll be able to write another “new roof!” article, this time for the main church and our beloved building will be totally watertight for the first time in its eventful history.

**Jenny Moy, Essex Church Warden**



‘Serving God means being completely connected to our divine source and channeling divine presence into the world. ... To serve God means striving to portray God's qualities of love, wisdom, understanding, kindness, justice, compassion, beauty, truth, peace, and so on. When we act mercifully, we are serving the source of all mercy. When we act intelligently, we are serving the source of all intelligence. And when we are serving justice, we are serving the source of all justice. This is how we authentically portray our godliness and experience true fulfillment. The path to ultimate meaning requires making our life a means to expressing God in the world.’

**Rabbi David Aaron**



## Unitarian Social Action, Then and Now

Sarah, Natasha and Simone joined people from as far afield as Norwich, Edinburgh, York, Cardiff, Oxford, Lewes, Brighton, Birmingham not to mention all parts of London for the first social action conference in July, organised by Rob Gregson and Ann Howell from *SimpleGifts: Unitarian Centre for Social Action* based in Bethnal Green. A representative of the British Humanist Association also joined and asked useful questions about

whether we always needed to identify social action projects as 'Unitarian' in origin. The general consensus was that we should make alliances wherever we can, join forces with other groups whenever possible and use the resources of our faith communities for the greater good of all.

The day began with an exercise to identify the personal interests of the group on areas of social action - women's rights, LGBT rights, access to education, racial justice, labour rights, issues around poverty and equality, penal reform and environmental justice were some of the choices presented. There was much personal interest from the group for economic justice for all, with the feeling that this could be linked to many other social issues. LGBT rights and environmental justice also were prominent issues closest to participants' hearts.

A timeline was created of Unitarian social action which showed how often Nonconformists had been at the forefront of social change: from early reformers such as John Biddle who spent much of his adult life in jail for translating the Bible into English and teaching ordinary folk how to read it, to those who campaigned for the end of slavery and for universal suffrage, along with all the great reformers of the Victorian era. Access to information and education was a common thread – founding of newspapers, opening public libraries as examples, along with access to public health – early vaccinations and the fight against cholera were mentioned. We noted the contradictions - that wealthy factory owners could treat their workers well and give them health care and education yet also fight to keep child workers on 12 hour days.



The group representing the Norwich congregation impressed everyone when they explained that their congregation supported 24 social action projects, some very actively indeed. Sarah met Bruce and Carol Chiltern who do so much for penal reform. Carol touched Sarah when she explained her own yearning to reach out to others, particularly those she has met through the 'lifers' group at a local prison as a knowing that "what unites us humans is love and pain."



The day closed with a discussion on next steps leading out from the day and it was decided a social action network will be set up to share ideas and success stories on what we are doing now in our individual communities. An e-newsletter highlighting local and national social justice events and news will also be created.

We return from this day keen to clarify what we already do as a congregation in the field of social action and to find out what else might be calling to us as a community with something to offer the world. Please contact Natasha Drennan on [tash\\_drennan@hotmail.com](mailto:tash_drennan@hotmail.com) if you would like to discuss a social action project that Kensington Unitarians might be able to help with.

**Natasha Drennan and Sarah Tinker**

For more information about *SimpleGifts* visit:  
[www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk](http://www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk)

## Remembrance Sunday



November is still a few months away but I'd be grateful to hear from people who would like to be actively involved in our Remembrance Sunday service on November 9th. This year marks the centenary of the start of the First World War and there has already been considerable public debate about how such a sombre centenary should be remembered. Hardly a celebration, yet nonetheless an important event. What are your thoughts?

Sarah Tinker

## Blacksmith's Forge



My grandmother's brother was a blacksmith – 'Look!  
– yow can see 'im  
Can't yer?' lookin' at the camera from a corner  
of the forge-'ood –'cept it aint 'im: this bloke was London  
My great-uncle was Brum. All over the country  
Thousan's of blacksmiths shoed thousan's of 'orses – 'cept  
There aint an 'orse in sight'ere is there? All yow can see is  
Rows and rows of grips, pincers 'ammers an' wrenches:  
Dangling arownd the walls – 'angin' from the ceilin'.  
In the foreground a dirty great anvil – but never  
An' 'orse in sight. An' two chaps in the background  
'ammerin' a bloody great chunk of metal. Part of summat  
We can't see, don't know about – nor never will either!  
The fire's a burnin' the tools are waitin', the men are werkin'  
An' it's nineteen 'undred an' eight. Not much fewture for  
Most of 'em then is there? Trenches an' tombstones stretchin' for  
Miles an'miles. An' them what cum back 'ad t' double-quick  
Tern themselves inter car-mechanics, or find werk in the fac'tries.

This is it: this is the life they're leadin' – but not fr long.  
Great Uncle got a girl inter trouble, an' ran away to America,  
'cos great granddad was waitin' for 'im with a knife in the entryway.  
'e never came back: so probably missed the tombstones  
an' trenches.

Wonder if 'e termed 'isself inter a yankee blacksmith?

John Hands  
Sept. 20th 2012

## Foodbank Update



Thanks to everyone who has donated so far to the food bank in the church foyer. We recently took the food collected to the Trussell Trust collection point, and they could not have looked more pleased. We asked them to give us a list of the scarcest foods and goods so we don't give stuff they are already over-supplied with – they were obviously not short of baked beans, for example. Top of the wish list was Smash instant mash – remember that some people may have no cooking facilities other than a kettle. Also ketchup, long-life fruit juice, UHT milk, tinned pies and stews, small packs of tea, coffee and sugar, and finally toiletries of all kinds including sanitary towels. Please consider dropping one of these products into the box when you are passing. It was very pleasant to see people picking their food parcels up, and seeing how pleased and relieved they were to get what they needed.

Caroline Blair

### An UPDATED basic wish-list of items:

- Instant mashed potato
- Ketchup
- Long-life fruit juice
- UHT milk
- Tinned pies
- Tinned stews
- Small packs of tea
- Small packs of coffee
- Sugar
- Toiletries (including sanitary towels)

If you would like to donate any of these items please bring them along to church next time you come.

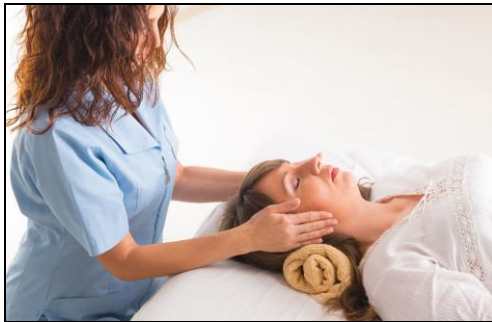


'[Let us move] beyond tolerance... [be] willing to engage, to be confused, to be curious, to remain open to the possibility – just the *possibility* – that everything we believe may be wrong. "Even the wisest may err."

As a religious people, we need to grow our willingness to engage one another, to be disturbed by what we hear, to be confused, to ask questions... and to seriously consider that the way someone else understands the world might be essential to our survival. Our survival as a religious movement, if not more literally as human beings together on this small, threatened blue-green planet.'

UU Minister, Rev. D. Audette Fulbright

## Reiki Healing Sessions at Essex Church



A Reiki master and his students are offering Reiki sessions here at Essex Church, currently on Wednesday evening in the library. Come along from 6pm onwards or you can contact Antonio Moniz on 07939 709 488. They suggest a minimum donation of £5.00, which they then donate back to us at the church for the use of the room. Let them know if a daytime session might be easier for you.

*An Essex Church Cultural Outing:*

## Digital Revolution: An immersive exhibition of art, design, film, music and videogames



**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September at 6pm**  
**Barbican Centre, Silk Street, EC2Y 8DS**

Natasha Drennan is organising a cultural outing to this exhibition at the Barbican in September. Discover the rise of digital creativity across the arts in this immersive exhibition. Interact with a three-dimensional laser light field, meet giant robotic snakes and see the future of wearable tech. Check out new commissions, or step into digital culture's past and revisit classic videogames and vintage music hardware. Artists, filmmakers, designers, musicians and game developers, all pushing their fields using digital media, unite for the first time in Digital Revolution.

Please contact Natasha ([tash\\_drennan@hotmail.com](mailto:tash_drennan@hotmail.com)) to let her know you're coming. It is recommended to book tickets in advance for this time slot. Book online or by calling 02076388891. Tickets cost £12.50 (£10.50 concessions).

**For more information and to book tickets:**  
[www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution](http://www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution)

## Write Letters for Amnesty



I am writing this in response to our Minister's front page piece in the July newsletter, "How do you cope with this?" in regard to Pushpa and Murti, the Nigerian girls who were brutally murdered. It was whilst I was viewing Nelson Mandela's story on film, "Long Walk to Freedom" that I thought of joining my local Amnesty group. I felt it was time to be at least a bit politically active again.

At our monthly meetings one of the things I take away to do is write letters or emails on behalf of a prisoner, who is held in an unjust way. Recently it was as a result of a conversation elsewhere about how the two Nigerian girls had now disappeared from the news that I chose to support a prisoner in Nigeria. On the sheet of paper from Amnesty International head office about Moses Akatugba, which also shows his photograph, the correspondent is asked to write both to the man himself and to the State Governor. I cannot put in to words what it means to me to make this personal contact with a vulnerable individual across the world.

I take one of such a sheet every month and from different countries so far. Sometimes letters need to be written and sometimes emails. If anyone wants to write too please ask me and I will either pass on the sheet I have or pick up sheets about citizens from any countries you wish for, depending on their availability.

**Carolyn Appleby**

## Farewell Celebration for Rev. David Usher

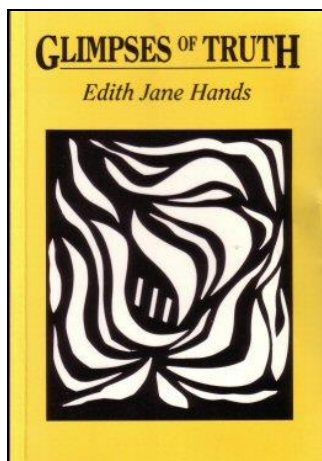


**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August from 4pm at**  
**Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, NW3 1NG**

District Minister David Usher's 'leaving do' will be held on 10th August at 4pm at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead where David was minister in the 1980s. All welcome. Let Sarah know if you plan to attend so that we can share lifts.

RSVP by 4<sup>th</sup> August to Danielle Wilson:  
[daniellewilson@ldpa.org.uk](mailto:daniellewilson@ldpa.org.uk)

## 'Glimpses of Truth'



'Glimpses of Truth ' is the name my Mother, Edith Jane Hands, gave to her book on her psychic experiences which she managed to put together with my and my sister's encouragement, and in spite of increasing acute arthritis, in the last two years of her life. She was a gifted clairvoyant, and some of her experiences in this regard have been narrated in her book But perhaps her most notable experience was that of receiving psychic healing for severe cancer during the late nineteen forties. This was done through the mediumship of Isa Northage who worked in her healing sanctuary in Newstead Abbey (Lord Byron's family seat) near Nottingham. My father and a family friend also took part as assistants in this healing ceremony and subsequently (with some assistance from my Mother – my Father was no writer!) their account of the procedure is printed at the end of Mother's book.

From the accounts of a few other healers I have read about, it seems to me that they discover their ability in this respect through some traumatic experience which opens up this capacity in themselves. My mother's experience was that of a near-death experience whilst giving birth to me. That of her healer Mrs Northage came about when she was walking with a friend in a forest at what was thought to be a safe distance from the Front Line during WW1. Other near-death experiences I have read or heard about it seems usually leave the person concerned with a very strong desire to help others in whatever way they can. Sometimes this leads to them discovering a healing capacity which they never knew about before their own traumatic experience.

Of course, in spite of the fact that as Unitarians we have our own Society for Psychic Discovery, most of what I have just written may seem like complete eyewash: the account of a devoted son faithfully reporting the delusional rantings of his spiritualist mother! Well of course any of you "out there" are completely at liberty to react to her account in this way. And indeed if you have long-since decided that only reports of experiences which you can go somewhere and see replicated would provide YOU with a glimpse of truth. If such are your personal parameters of possible experience then nothing much is likely to widen them for you. But for those of us less assured perhaps there may be something in 'Glimpses of Truth' which may have the effect keeping us more alert to widening our experience of Life's possibilities. I have copies available for a donation to a charity, or you might prefer to borrow our library copy.

**John Hands**

## Small Group Communion



**Sundays 10<sup>th</sup> August, 14<sup>th</sup> September  
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:

**10<sup>th</sup> August** – Led by Sue Smith

**14<sup>th</sup> September** – Led by Elisa Melgosa & Mike Eichler

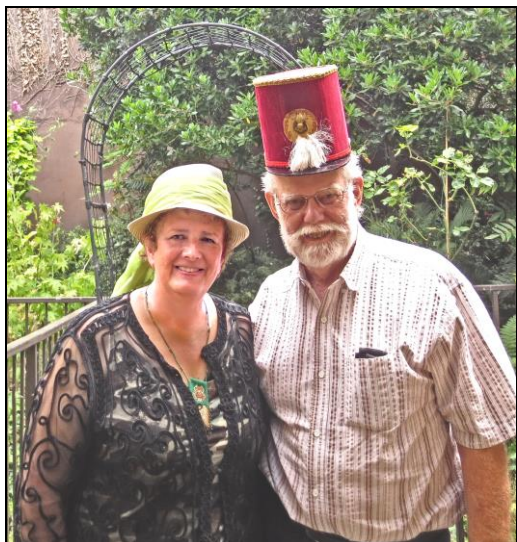
**12<sup>th</sup> October** – Led by Tristan Jovanović

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 [uuchristian.org](http://uuchristian.org))



People were invited to wear their favourite hat to the 'Chapeau!' service.  
Thank you Caroline and Allen for joining in the fun!

## Creativity Group: Printmaking

Second Thursday evening of each month  
14<sup>th</sup> August, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9.00pm



Our latest project in the creativity group is printmaking. The pictures above show some prints that were made in the group a few years ago when we last did block printing (prints by Jane Blackall, Juliet Edwards and John Carter). Eleven of us gathered for the session in July to come up with our designs and start to carve our printing blocks. It is not too late to join us but if you would like to do so you will need to have the appropriate materials and tools. If you would like to buy these items please contact [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) as soon as possible and she will let you know what's needed.

As ever, you are welcome to come along with your own craft materials, and simply enjoy the company of the group.

## Autumn Project: Stitchcraft

We have decided that our final project in the year will be based on stitchcraft: embroidery, knitting, crochet and so on. From October to December we will share our skills in these crafts and also encourage each person attending the group to make a small flower for the Wellmaking Craftivists' Garden. We will write more about this in the next issue of the newsletter but if you can't wait then have a look at their website for details: [www.craftivist-collective.com/wellmaking](http://www.craftivist-collective.com/wellmaking).



Our creativity group meets once a month 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.

Jane Blackall



## Whole Musician Urban Flute Retreat 26-28<sup>th</sup> August 2014 at Essex Church

Whole Musician are holding a retreat for flute players at Essex Church 26-28 August 2014 and each night there will an exciting concert with beautiful flute music open to the public. Whole Musician are a collective uniquely experienced flutists collaborating to offer unparalleled intensive retreats addressing the mental, physical, and musical demands placed on the 21st century performer.

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 7.30pm:  
Gala Opening Concert**

Whole Musician International Faculty and Friends. £10

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> August, 7.30pm:  
Whole Musician Participants Concert**  
Suggested charity donation for entry.

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 7.30pm:  
Whole Musician Participants Concert**  
Suggested donation for entry.

Find more about the team at [www.wholemusician.net](http://www.wholemusician.net)

Niall O'Riordan



'Our relationship with God is not all that different from our other forms of relationship. It takes communication, time, effort, attention, and love. To be in relationship with God means traveling on the two-way street of shared experience, opening ourselves up to God in a way that allows God into our lives. Perhaps most importantly, relationship with God means that we can't simply live in isolation ('me and God') to the exclusion of others. The love we share with God should spill over into our interactions with all people, building others up and announcing the Kingdom of God with our lives.'

**Daniel P. Horan, Franciscan Friar**

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'The Soul'



**Fridays 8<sup>th</sup> August & 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014  
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church**

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

Information from One Light: 'Come and enjoy as we gather for deep healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come help us create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long - with silence, music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved eternal self, your family, children and friends'

**8<sup>th</sup> August – 'Simplicity'  
12<sup>th</sup> September – 'Safety'**

***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 Gatherings: 10<sup>th</sup> October – Art;  
14<sup>th</sup> November – Wisdom; 12<sup>th</sup> December - Gift of Light*

## 'Spiritual Life Skills' Forthcoming Workshops

### 'Celebrating Life's Moments'

**with Ant Howe and Sarah Tinker  
Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 10.30am-4pm**



Come and learn more about leading rites of passage ceremonies such as funerals, weddings and child blessings. A workshop both for those who are new to the role of celebrant as well as for those with some experience, with advice on resources, settings and how to connect with people at key moments in their lives. You'll have chance to think more about the role of such ceremonies in our lives both individual and communal, and clarify some of the important elements of such services for you. Ant Howe has wide experience in creating rites of passage ceremonies and probably leads more such services than any other Unitarian minister currently. He brings useful insights into what people most need at such turning points in life.



**Cost: £5 / £10 / £15 (pay what you can afford)**

To book, email: [sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

'Rachel Naomi Remen recounts a special ritual that her grandfather, a very spiritual man, did with her every week. He put his hand on her head and thanked God for her being and for the opportunity to be her grandfather. Then he would tell God about her struggles and point out something positive about her. Remen notes that her parents always pushed her to excel and expected a lot from her. Her grandfather rejoiced in her just the way she was. Make someone's day by trying this uplifting ritual of blessing. We need all the love and encouragement we can get!'

**Frederick and Mary Ann Brussat  
from [www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com)**

**Conference Grants:** A grant to help with the costs of attending either or both of the IALRW and IARF events can be arranged through the Essex Church committee. Please speak to Sarah, our minister, if you might like help to attend.

The International Association of Liberal Religious Women (IALRW) Invites you to the

## 2014 IALRW Conference

20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014 at Jury's Inn Birmingham

### 'Raising our Voices for Change towards a Sustainable World'



**Speakers:** Loreta Castro, Barbara Beach, Shizuyo Sato, Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, Afroze Zaidi-Jivraj, Tehmina Kazi

#### Study Group Themes:

Religious Freedom Interfaith Dialogue;  
Sustainable Livelihood (Women's Empowerment);  
Sustainable Environment;  
Justice, Peace-Building & Education

On 21<sup>st</sup> August we will have our keynote speaker, Loreta Castro from the Philippines, who will talk about the peace process that has finally de-fused the confrontations of Muslim insurgents in the southern islands and the largely Christian central government. Other panellists and participants will share their experiences and projects in our thematic study groups and in smaller more personal circles. 22<sup>nd</sup> August includes an optional lunch and bus trip to Coventry Cathedral and its associated Centre for Reconciliation (cost of £50 for this extra event). The Closing Ceremony will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> August at Birmingham University. Karen Armstrong will be opening the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) Congress the following day.

**Registration:** Full participant **£150** (excludes day trip to Coventry; student and local volunteer discounts available)

**For more information see: [www.ialrw.org](http://www.ialrw.org)**

*Our own Annette Percy is already booked in to attend and she will be happy to guide a newcomer.*

**This conference will be followed by the Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) from the 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August at Birmingham University.**

## International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF)

### 'Challenges for Religious Freedom in the Digital Age'



#### 34th World Congress

24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> August 2014

University of Birmingham

At this IARF congress we will consider how the last quarter-century's paradigm-shifting leap in communicative power has shaped the encounter of beliefs, and might inform the ways in which it continues. Contributors will address the advantages that have accrued for the struggle for freedom of belief, as well as the challenges that have arisen for it, from the output of the digital technologies that have revolutionized communication, relationships and identity in recent decades.

Karen Armstrong will deliver the keynote address at our Opening Ceremony on Sunday 24 August 2014.

Our three plenaries over three days will address the following topics: "The coming-online faith world" (Human Rights Defence in the Developing World); "How (not) to Liberate the World" ('Digital Utopianism'); "Educational potential of religious narrative animation" (How can animators help teachers?) Over two days, this long-standing IARF tradition will allow you to meet one another in encounter groups of 10 or fewer, chosen to balance gender, age and faith identity. These encounters begin with self-introductions followed by discussion of your respective faith orientations, and issues around interfaith relations – as well as some conversation on the theme of the event and how it relates to your personal and group lived faith.

**Registration: \$390** (conference only; no accommodation).

The IARF have reserved student accommodation which may be booked at the rate of £45.60 per night.

**For info see: [iarf.net/congress/2014-birmingham/](http://iarf.net/congress/2014-birmingham/)**



## Good Cause Collection of the Month

iasis<sup>+</sup>

to cure • to heal • to make whole



### Collection on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August

For our next charity collection we will be supporting Iasis, a charity nominated by Stephanie Saville. Iasis is a small charity providing medical care to some of the poorest people in the world. At the moment they are providing eye treatment, including restoring sight, in the Tigray area of Ethiopia, where medical facilities are extremely poor; working in Romania, where they provide support in orphanages and blind schools; and providing medical support in Haiti, to displaced people, often living in the grimmest conditions and exposed to multiple infections.

For more information visit: [www.iasis.org.uk](http://www.iasis.org.uk)

### Previous Charity Collections:

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

**May – Christian Aid Appeal - £115.03**

**June – GA Sunday - £ 240.52**

'We are a community of people who have pluralistic beliefs articulated in a wide range of religious, scientific and secular metaphors. We promise to respect one another's views. This is all the easy part — embracing diverse beliefs. When it comes to running the church, we promise mutual trust and support as well. We bring many gifts, and just like with beliefs, they differ. The "spiritual growth" we experience in congregational governance is not just theological or mystical insight. It is learning relational skills: learning to listen, to appreciate others views, learning to accept when the group sees things differently from me, learning to want to hear others' views, learning to forgive when slighted — learning to live the covenant of mutual trust and support despite the variety of relational skills and limitations. Now *that's* real spiritual growth! Not what I expected from religion. Building bonds of appreciation for one another's gifts, laughing despite our quirks, embracing one another's best efforts, restraining and being restrained from non-mutual breaches of covenant, and celebrating the unexpected joys of one another's presence, this is what "*religio*" community really is. Not theology, but loving bonds of mutual trust and compassion in our relationships.'

UU Minister, Rev. Rod Debs

A date for your diary – LDPA event this autumn:

## Unitarian District Quarterly Meeting Workshop: Spiritual Leadership in Worship



**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 10.30am-4.00pm**  
**Lewisham Unitarian Meeting,**  
**41 Bromley Road, Catford, SE6 2TS**

Sarah Alexander, will present a day long workshop on the theme of Spiritual Leadership in Worship. She is a published author and speaker, and attends Meadrow Chapel in Godalming. See [www.sarah-alexander.co.uk](http://www.sarah-alexander.co.uk) for more information about Sarah. There will be a charge of £15 per person, payable on the day, cash or cheques made out to LDPA, or PayPal to [daniellewilson@ldpa.org.uk](mailto:daniellewilson@ldpa.org.uk)

## August



When the blackberries hang  
swollen in the woods, in the brambles  
nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high  
branches, reaching  
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming  
the black honey of summer  
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark  
creeks that run by there is  
this thick paw of my life darting among

the black bells, the leaves; there is  
this happy tongue.

Mary Oliver

# 'Containing Multitudes'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 20<sup>th</sup> July 2014

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

It has not been a week for good news, has it. So many difficult events have been reported to us from around the world: on-going attacks in places like Nigeria, Afghanistan and Egypt – a passenger plane shot down over the Ukraine seemingly by a missile – the Israeli invasion of Gaza: and nearer to home several serious announcements of the possible abuse of young people in faith settings. Pope Francis this week reported the result of his request to his advisors as to the extent of the problem of Catholic priests abusing their power over children. The pope described how his advisors had attempted to re-assure him that no more than 2% of clergy were engaged in such behaviour. But Pope Francis can do the maths like the rest of us and worked out that this means that an estimated one in fifty Catholic priests, bishops and cardinals are potentially involved in such sexually abusive behaviour towards children in their care. The pope expressed what most of us would probably say: "I find this situation intolerable". In the same week Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, expressed his concern that such abuse has been under-reported in probably every institution in the land, including his own Church of England and that victims of abuse who do dare to speak up have been poorly dealt with. News continues to emerge of the long term suppression of information about a possible paedophile ring centred in Westminster. This has not been a good week for news.

And when I hear difficult news one of the problems for me, and I don't know if this is the same for you – but I really struggle to understand how people can behave so very, very badly towards other people. So in this address I am exploring ways to come to terms with our complex and contradictory natures as human beings. If this address has a message it's that all of us are fragmented beings with many different sides to us. The more conscious we are of all these different aspects of ourselves the less likely we are to damage other people.

I wonder if you remember when you first became aware of what happened in Europe during the Holocaust of World War Two? I remember my shock, my disbelief and then slow understanding of some of the Holocaust's horrors. I also remember exploring the issues of the cold blooded cruelty and the systematic annihilation of fellow human beings in my own mind, hardly daring at times to read just what depths of depravity we humans can sink to. And I remember at some point having to ask myself 'what part might I have played in this ghastly time if it had been my misfortune to be alive then; would I have had the courage to stand up against such injustices?' Self-examination for most of us probably brings the answer that in truth we cannot know how we would have behaved, followed by an acknowledgement that in the wrong circumstances at the wrong time many of us would have at the least condoned evil acts, or committed them ourselves. Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn explores this potential within each of us when he writes that

*"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"*



The word evil is not one you'll often hear in a Unitarian setting. Our tradition tends to emphasise the good; traditionally Unitarians have not accepted the doctrine of 'original sin' – the idea that humans are born sinful. But a brief scan of world events reveals our human potential for truly terrible behaviour and somehow we need to make sense of that. One path is to describe it as evil – as something over there, different from us – those are bad people, we are good. But another more psychologically accurate view acknowledges the truth that each and every one of us has the potential for just about anything given certain circumstances. We need then to recognise that within each of us is the potential for behaviours that could be described as good and evil as well as a host of possibilities between those two extremes.

A story from the native American tradition attempts to explain this:

*A grandfather is telling his granddaughter about a fight that is going on inside himself. He described it as though the fight is between two wolves. One is evil: Anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other wolf represents good: Joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The granddaughter thought about it for a minute and then asked her grandfather, "Which wolf wins?" Her grandfather simply replied, "The one I feed."*

This story makes sense to me but I don't think I would use the word evil to describe feelings such as 'anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego'. I think these are simply quite normal human emotions and experiences. These are ordinary human states that most of us will find ourselves in from time to time – but yes I'm with the grandfather when he speaks of what we feed. I know how a small feeling in me can build up because I focus upon it. I've known some bitterness and resentment build from small beginnings to a major blockage in my life, because I've just not been able to stop myself from thinking about it. And I'm also aware of ways in which suppressing an emotion – pretending that I don't feel a certain way – can also build up, almost like a pressure cooker and then a sudden outburst, triggered by something quite small, can suddenly erupt. And then I'm taken aback by a feeling's intensity be that in myself or in another.

And if we humans do manage to push a feeling or desire deeply enough into our unconscious there is always the possibility that we will then project that desire out into the world – hence the relatively frequent surprise announcement that some worthy church leader who has spoken so fervently about the importance of marriage has been conducting a hidden affair.

## 'Containing Multitudes'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker (*continued*)

My favourite version of that scenario was Prime Minister John Major who spoke earnestly of family values and the sanctity of marriage and was then found later to have been having an affair with Edwina Currie one of his Cabinet ministers. It was funny but don't we all have something of that ability to delude ourselves somewhere in our natures. Don't we all have our version of Edwina Currie lurking somewhere in the background of our lives?! There are very few of us I suspect who know ourselves in our entirety. We are all to greater or lesser extents fragmented from ourselves; we are far more complicated than we generally suppose.

I have my colleague Bill Darlison to thank for this example from literature. Bill contrasts Tolstoy's ability to describe so sensitively the human condition with his indifferent treatment of his own wife and family. He quotes from Tolstoy's last work *Resurrection*: "*One of the most widespread superstitions is that every person has his or her own special definite qualities: that he or she is kind, cruel, wise, stupid, energetic, apathetic, and so on. People are not like that. We may say of a man that he is more often kind than cruel, more often wise than stupid, more often energetic than apathetic, or the reverse, but it would not be true to say of one man that he is kind and wise, and another that he is bad and stupid. And yet we always classify people in this way. And this is false.....Every person bears within him or herself the germs of every human quality, but sometimes one quality manifests itself, sometimes another, and the person often becomes unlike him or herself, while still remaining the same person.*"

American poet Walt Whitman states cheerfully in his long poem *Leaves of Grass*:

*"Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then, I contradict myself.  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)"*

We all contain multitudes – multitudes of possibilities for ways of being human. May we each in the week ahead seek ways to know ourselves a little better and in so doing find some compassion – compassion towards both victims and perpetrators of dreadful acts. Through that we might make small steps towards healing human fragmentation and recognise that we are one people living in one world, a world containing multitudes.



A photo from our June outing to London Zoo Lates:  
Jennie, Caroline, Natasha, a penguin, Jane, and Carol

## What's on in September

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

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

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 6.00pm  
**Cultural Outing:**  
'Digital Revolutions' Exhibition at the Barbican

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon  
**'Bad Girls of the Bible'**  
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by Jane Blackall

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

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

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September, 7-9.00pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-4pm  
**'Celebrating Life's Moments' Workshop**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Rev. Ant Howe

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September, 11am-noon  
**'A Unitarian Gospel: Sharing Our Good News'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Ant Howe

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September, 12.30pm  
**Congregational Potluck Lunch**

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September, 3pm-5.30pm  
**'Our Living Stories' Playback Theatre**  
Led by Veronica Needa and True Heart Theatre

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 11am-noon  
**'Salvation, Unitarian Style'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30-1.15pm  
**'Finding Your Voice'**  
Singing workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

### Dates for Your Diary:

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 10.30am-4pm  
**'Spiritual Leadership in Worship'**  
Led by Sarah Alexander  
LDPA day workshop at Lewisham Unitarians

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 11am-4pm  
**'A Life of Prayer' Workshop**  
Led by Jef Jones and Jane Blackall

# Sunday Services at Essex Church



## **3<sup>rd</sup> August, 11am – ‘The Spirit of the Suburbs’**

**Service led by Caroline Blair**

Often derided and abused, suburbia is where most of us live for most of our lives. What are the challenges of suburban living, and how to we live the fullest life we can there?

## **10<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – ‘Transport for All’**

**Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

In this service we will join London Transport in celebrating the ‘Year of the Bus’ and recognise the importance of public transport in our busy capital city. With a special treat for all who bring an Oyster Card, Bus or Freedom Pass.

## **17<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – ‘When We Reach the Station’**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

A train journey can be a truly meditative experience and may also symbolize our journey through life. Part Two of our celebration of public transportation.



## **24<sup>th</sup> August, 11am – ‘The Authentic Self’**

**Service led by Jane Blackall**

Fresh from this year’s Hucklow Summer School, on the theme ‘The Authentic Self: Discovering the Real You’, Jane will offer reflections on this theme. How is our deepest self formed? How do we reveal our self to others? And are we part of a larger self?

## **31<sup>st</sup> August, 11am – ‘Maps of Our Lives’**

**Service led by Sarah Tinker**

Maps of Our Lives: How shall we describe the contours of our lives, our high and low moments, our turning points and special features? What compass might point to the path ahead?

## **7<sup>th</sup> September, 11am – ‘Nurturing Faith, Embracing Life, Celebrating Difference’**

**Service led by David Francis Darling**

In this service our own David Darling will offer some reflections on the new ‘strapline’ for the Unitarian General Assembly.

## **14<sup>th</sup> September, 11am – ‘Bad Girls of the Bible’**

**Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

What might we learn from women in the Bible, especially the badly behaved ones? With our traditional Gathering the Waters ceremony – bring a little water from your travels or your home or garden to symbolize the gathering of our community.



## **21<sup>st</sup> September, 11am – ‘A Unitarian Gospel: Sharing Our Good News’**

**Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Rev. Ant Howe**

Rev. Ant Howe of the Kingswood and Warwick congregations will join us for today’s service. This will be followed by a congregational meal – do invite your friends to join us.

## **28<sup>th</sup> September, 11am – ‘Salvation, Unitarian Style’**

**Service led by Sarah Tinker**

Unitarians don’t often speak of salvation, preferring original blessing to original sin. Yet most of us feel a yearning at times to be saved – from emptiness and despair, from our own feelings of doubt and inadequacy perhaps. We’ll consider some possible sources of salvation for us religious liberals.

