



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2019

What's On...

Wednesday 3rd July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 4th July, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Holy Curiosity' led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 7th July, 11am-noon
'Powers of Ten'
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 10th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 14th July, 11am-noon
'Trial and Error'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 17th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 21st July, 11am-noon
'Science and Religion'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st July, 12.30-1.15pm
'Find Your Voice'
Singing Class with Margaret

Sunday 21st July, 2.00-3.00pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 24th July, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 28th July, 11am-noon
'Why? Why Not?'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 28th July, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation
On 'Curiosity and Wonder'

Tuesday 30th July, 7.00-8.30pm
Summer Poetry Evening

A Date for Your Diary:

Sunday 11th August, 12.45pm
Greeters' Training Workshop
PLEASE BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!

Curiosity and Wonder

A Message from our Minister



If you're looking for a new spiritual practice to shape your summer, I'd like to recommend curiosity, our latest monthly ministry theme. Forget all dire warnings about curiosity and the well-being of cats. I'm convinced that curiosity, and our human ability to question and experiment, is a remarkable gift that has helped us evolve into the complex creatures we are today.

Dictionaries define curiosity as a 'strong and eager desire to learn or know about something' and approaching life with curiosity helps us stay awake and alert, rather than sleep-walking through our days. Curiosity helps us pay attention:

- To the miracle of existence
- To the mystery of other people and ourselves
- To our infinite potential to learn more

Let's bring what physicist Albert Einstein described as 'a holy curiosity' to everything that occurs in life. With every occurrence, every person, every physical sensation, every emotional feeling, let's activate our holy curiosity rather than our reactivity. Between a stimulus and a reaction there is a space, a space for inquiry. If the stimulus is a boiling kettle we do well to react swiftly and move away from the heat. But if we experience a strong emotional response to something we've just been told, for example, it's worth making space for observation and investigation. It may help to prepare some regular questions to ask ourselves:

- What's going on here and what am I experiencing?
- What bodily sensations do I have?
- How is my breathing?
- Is some old pattern being triggered in me?
- Can I pause and wait before reacting?
- What would my wisest self say about this?
- What would love do now?

Many of us are living in a speedy and reactive world. Let's counter-balance that and slow the summer down, taking time to breathe, observe and delight in the miracle of being alive.

'Do you have the patience to wait
Till your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
Till the right action arises by itself?'
Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching Chapter 15

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Greeters' Training – Sign up Now! * Summer Poetry Evening * Sunday Conversation * Congregational Days Out in Southend and the Progressive Christianity Conference * District Meeting in Horsham * GreenSpirit Group in Kensington * London National Park City * 'Learning from Gardening' reflections from members Pat, Carolyn, Jack, Marc and Juliet * 'Achieving Our Potential' 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.

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



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Summer Poetry Evening

Tuesday 30th July 7.00 to 8.30pm



Everyone is invited to join us for an evening of summer poetry with themed music and refreshments too. This is an opportunity to choose a favourite poem you'd like to bring and we're encouraging the many secret poets in our congregation to take this opportunity to read their own work aloud. If you give Sarah your choice in advance we will make sure we have enough copies for everyone. Let us know if you plan to join us.

Volunteering Rotas:

Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

7 th July:	Gabby Chanteloup
14 th July:	Billy Jackson
21 st July:	Heidi Ferid
28 th July:	Brian Ellis

Coffee:

7 th July:	Pat Gregory & John Humphreys
14 th July:	Nadia, Enea and Greta
21 st July:	Claire Norman
28 th July:	Marianne Harvey

Greeting:

7 th July:	Billy Jackson
14 th July:	Roy Clark
21 st July:	Juliet Edwards
28 th July:	John Newton

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you want to sign up for one of the forthcoming slots.

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Learnt in a Garden



Be present and touch the earth.

Connect with the soil.

Plant your seedlings and speak with them.

Water, feed and keep them warm.

Pray that they are healthy.

Then let go of the outcome.

Keep smiling and be excited when the garden does its own thing as it most definitely will.

Gardening has taught me that it is like all relationships - we need to be connected, and nourish our loved ones, listen to them and keep them sheltered and then let go of the outcome - what a blessing.

Pat Gregory

From our 'Learning from Gardening' service in June – all the other congregational contributions are on pages 12-13.

Sunday Conversation

Sunday 28th July from 12.45 to 2.00pm



Why not bring your lunch and stay behind after the service on 28th July for our regular Sunday Conversation in connection with this month's theme of 'Curiosity and Wonder'. All are welcome.

Greeters' Training: A Short Workshop on How We Can Better Welcome Newcomers

12.45-2.00pm on Sunday 11th August



At the recent AGM it was suggested that we should hold a 'Greeters' Training Workshop' (in a similar fashion to the successful 'Readers' Training' we recently held) in order to help people be better prepared to take an active role in welcoming newcomers to our congregation and to share hints and tips about best practice. Please email Jane ASAP if you plan to attend: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Worship that Works:

Equipping Unitarians to lead High-Quality
Services through Reflective Practice



Saturday 21st September – 10.30am until 3pm
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead

This autumn's LDPA quarterly will feature a whole-day training session introducing participants to best practice in Unitarian worship. This will be particularly beneficial for anybody who would like to be involved in leading worship in their own congregation or in churches around their district. It would also be useful for people who already lead worship and who would like to develop skills and share hints and tips with other Unitarians.

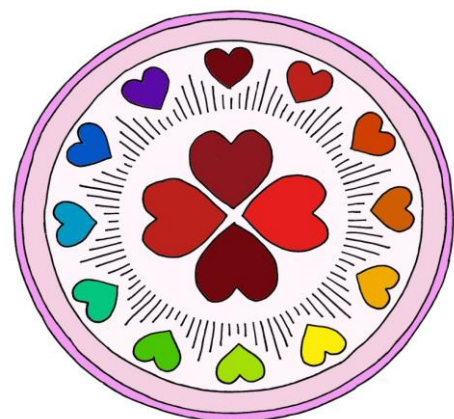
However, all who enjoy Unitarian worship and would like to think about it more in a structured way are also welcome to attend. The workshop will have a particular focus on reflective practice and the meaning and purpose of the worship we do together.

The workshop will also act as an introductory session for anyone wishing to undertake the Worship Studies Course (Foundation Step), a nationally recognised GA course, which we are intending to run once again in the LDPA at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, between autumn 2019 and spring 2020. The remainder of the course will be run over three further Saturdays, by a variety of expert tutors, and we would be glad to hear early expressions of interest from any who might wish to sign up.

'Heart and Soul' Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 4th July and 1st August, 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This month Jane Blackall will be leading Heart & Soul on the theme of 'Holy Curiosity'. The contemplative hour will be followed by time for refreshments (home-made cake) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you'd like to have a go at co-leading a Heart and Soul session, or doing a reading, please get in touch with Sarah or Jane to find out more.

Thematic Ministry



Theme-based ministry is happening in more and more congregations throughout our movement both here in the UK and over in the States as a powerfully engaging way of focusing the life of a congregation on monthly themes through worship, small groups and other activities. It gives everyone an opportunity to get more involved so do have a look at the themes planned for the months ahead and let us know if you'd like to suggest some music or a reading, or bring your own thoughts to one of our Sunday morning gatherings.

Here is a list of our future monthly themes: Hopes and Dreams (August); Moving On & Staying Put (September); Religious Life (October); Time and

Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December). Here are some ways to explore July's theme of 'Curiosity and Wonder':

- Take time to look at something in a new way. Ask yourself how an object you take for granted has actually been made. How many different processes had to occur? Or find some living thing, an insect perhaps or a plant, and consider its aliveness.
- Look for something very small and very large out of your window and look at them in a way you have never looked before.
- Think about a person you know well in a new way. Challenge some of the fixed thoughts you have about them. Maybe ask them some questions you've never asked them before.
- Find a picture of our planet earth in space and sit quietly with it in meditation. What emerges for you?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Eritrean Groups at Essex Church

Our church has been offering meeting space to Eritrean groups for at least 15 years. We're connected with two main groups: the Eritrean Cultural Support Group and the Eritrean Lowlanders' League. The League recently held an iftar meal at our church for members of their community during Ramadan. Salah, one of their organisers, sent us some photos from the evening and asked us to thank the church community for their hospitality. We could probably learn from their efficient methods of feeding large numbers of people in a short space of time with a tiny kitchen!



The Big Butterfly Count: 19th July to 11th August



The big butterfly count is a nationwide survey aimed at helping us assess the health of our environment. It was launched in 2010 and has rapidly become the world's biggest survey of butterflies. Over 100,000 people took part in 2018, submitting 97,133 counts of butterflies and day-flying moths from across the UK. Butterflies react very quickly to change in their environment which makes them excellent biodiversity indicators. Butterfly declines are an early warning for other wildlife losses. That's why counting butterflies can be described as taking the pulse of nature. We're just coming in to peak butterfly season so it's a great time to get counting. Simply count butterflies for 15 minutes during bright (preferably sunny) weather during the big butterfly count. You can submit separate records for different dates at the same place, and for different places that you visit. Remember that your count is useful even if you do not see any butterflies or moths. Visit www.bigbutterflycount.org/about for more details and to download a free identification chart to help you work out what you've seen.

Jane Blackall

A Day Out by the Seaside: Our Church Trip to Southend



Sixteen of us had a very jolly afternoon out visiting Southend-on-Sea in early June. Our main aim was to visit our fellow Unitarian congregation at their monthly afternoon service. We were warmly welcomed by friends of our congregation Rob Gretton and Jen Hazel and appreciated the refreshments they'd laid on for us. A few brave people chose to paddle in the sea and we enjoyed a trip on the pier railway – the longest pier in Europe. Our intrepid American visitors decided to walk rather than ride – and we hope they returned home safely as they were last spotted reaching the furthest point of the pier! With a fish and chips supper to sustain us and Billy's stories of living and working in Southend to entertain us, we all agreed we should come to visit the seaside more often.

Sarah Tinker

PCN Conference: 'Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide'



A good number of Unitarians (or regular attenders at our congregations) were present at the Progressive Christianity Network's day conference on 'Religion and Atheism - Beyond the Divide' last month. I counted seven in the end (and sat near the back with Michael Allured of Golders Green Unitarians, Marta Pacini from the Monton congregation, and our own David Carter) but there may have been others I didn't spot! It was a very interesting day with talks from Harriet Harris, Julian Baggini, and Richard Holloway, and it concluded with a panel chaired by my degree dissertation supervisor, Fiona Ellis. I appreciated Baggini's 'Ten Commandments for Good-Faith Dialogue between Religious People and Atheists' and was intrigued by his comments which seemed to imply that, as an atheist, he'd have a lot of time for a religion which followed Jesus but didn't make any supernatural claims about him. He seemed to be saying that every time he probes deeply into what Christians really think, even the sort who would go to a PCN day like this, he finds they always have supernatural beliefs about Jesus tucked away somewhere... so he seemed to suggest that such a form of religion doesn't really exist. I found myself wanting to point out that both Unitarians and Quakers are perfectly amenable to such a religious outlook! At one point I was sat next to Richard Holloway who is clearly also a fan of the back row! You can read the text of his talk on the PCN website: www.pcnbritain.org.uk

Jane Blackall



LONDON PLAYBACK THEATRE



Andi, Aga & Alexis (actors) with Jon (musician)

London Playback Theatre hosted another evening - on 21st June - with deep sharing of stories on the topic of 'Survival & Growth'. And the conversations continued into the late evening with more warm encounters and refreshments. Bel conducted for the first time - a natural! She has a welcoming and fine quality of listening. Lillie, also quite new to the facilitator's role, conducted the last performance here in May on the topic of 'Relating & Relationship'. This was very well attended and we heard very strong stories from our real lives on this deep topic, under Lillie's warm guidance.

Playback Theatre is both entertainment and education! A creative, heart-centred way to learn about life, through the guided exchange of real-life experiences - with the added-value of theatre art offered by the performing team. All is improvised - the whole event is moment by moment evolving - so we are guided into an opportunity to live in the present moment in a very natural way. Another kind of mindfulness in practice! LPT will be returning on the evening of Friday 20th September on the topic of 'Moving On & Staying Put'...

Veronica & Bel ran 'A Taste of Playback Theatre' session on Monday 17th June evening, which was very warm, cosy and easy. It's a chance to 'have a go' yourself at performing Playback Theatre in a very safe, guided, playful way! We plan to run more of these after the summer which everyone is welcome to.

Veronica Needa

For more information visit: www.londonplayback.com / www.playbackschooluk.org



**Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms
Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 21st July, 18th August 2019**

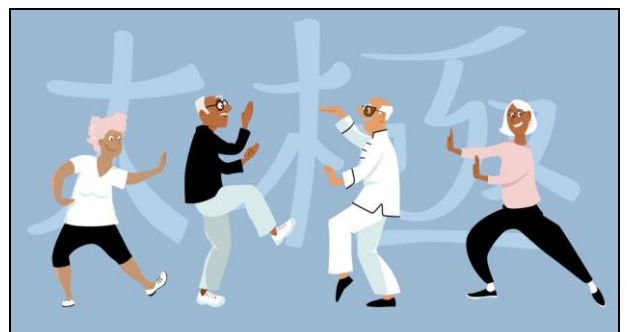
**Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm
Classes on 3rd and 10th July will be taught by guest
teacher Nefra Canning and will be free of charge!**

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

Cost £10 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a 3-month period.

Free Tai Chi for Over 55s

Fridays from 11am-noon at Essex Church



Organised by The Kensington & Chelsea Forum for Older Residents, this weekly Friday morning Tai Chi class welcomes everyone aged over 55.

The class is led by popular teacher Chris Jones and focuses on balance, co-ordination, strength and increasing our sense of well-being. Phone 0845 463 2683 or come along one Friday.

This friendly and relaxed class can be practised seated if preferred. Wear comfortable clothes and soft, flat shoes. Several congregation members already attend.

Sunday Tea Dances in aid of Stonewall Housing

Next on Sunday 22nd September, 2-5pm
Starting with a dance lesson for complete beginners



We invite you to our next Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance in aid of Stonewall Housing! There will be tea, cake, partner dancing and a few line dances from 2-5pm. All are welcome - complete beginners to life-long dancers alike - and even if you think you have two left feet this will be a relaxed and welcoming space for all to enjoy. The afternoon will begin with a dance lesson led by Rachel Sparks.

Save the date now to come to this fun event in aid of a good cause (£5 of the door price goes to Stonewall Housing, a charity providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people fleeing violence, harassment and abuse). There's no need to bring a partner so just come as you are - do tell your friends though - the more the merrier! We encourage gender neutral partnering which means anyone can lead/follow during the partner dances. We are family-friendly so children come for free with any paying adult. Tickets are limited and cost £12 in advance (£15 on the door). Book online: www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk/book-online. Members of the congregation get free admission. You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to help raise money for our nominated charity and of course donations to this good cause are very welcome. If you have any questions do email Rachel on hello@rachelsparksdance.co.uk

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

Volunteers will be needed to help with the reception desk / tea stall
– please email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you can help!



Good Cause Collection of the Month: Hammersmith & Fulham Foodbank



Collection on Sunday 28th July

I've suggested this charity for our collection in July as I volunteer with them and admire their work. They are part of the national Trussell Trust Foodbank network and their work is vital in my local area. They have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of food parcels handed out during the last year, partly caused by the introduction of Universal Credit alongside continuing benefit caps, and the rising costs of food and accommodation. Our Foodbank Centres have a café style so clients can have a drink and a snack whilst collecting their emergency food parcels – enough for ten meals for them and their dependants. Holiday clubs for children, a community kitchen and 'eat well, spend less' courses to build cooking and budgeting skills are on offer. We also have two Citizen's Advice workers attached to our projects, to help guide clients through the complexities of our legal system. A Computer Hub gives people access to the Internet and we run weekly Job Clubs and classes on basic IT skills. Future plans include the launch of a mental health project and a Babybank project to distribute the necessary items like pushchairs for families in need. Do give generously in our collection on July 28th or at any time during July. We'll let you know how much we've raised in a future newsletter.

Pat Gregory

Website: hammersmithfulham.foodbank.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

March 24th – **Steiner School Trip** – £198.48

April 21st – **Red Cross Yemen Appeal** – £417.55
(including additional donations from Heidi and John's poetry book launch and Sandra's recent concerts)

May 19th – **Stonewall Housing** – £175



'Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them.'

A. A. Milne

Eliz's Art Exhibition



Our very own Elizabeth Beel had two pieces on display in a recent exhibition in Hammersmith. Well done Eliz!

OneLight Gathering: 'Faith and Trust'

Friday 12th July, 6.45 for 7pm-8.30pm
Monthly Here at Essex Church



There are a great many things that rock our personal faith and trust, and then there are pathways to rekindle or to build them. Once we have been hurt, scared, traumatised, burnt - the reverberations of shock and fear may ripple back and forth within us and make it hard to expand into trust, faith or also love. But what even is faith and what is trust and how do they relate to our own life? Maya Angelou said, "have enough courage to trust love one more time and always one more time." Have you noticed that both faith and trust can involve a practice of repeated motions? In this ceremony we will create space to reflect on our personal connection with faith and trust and we will create a space to together nurture this connection using song, silence, time for reflection and ritual. Led by Rev Amy Firth and Rev Alison Trower with The Heart Of London Threshold Choir.

LONDON Heart Meditation



*Using ancient rhythms,
played on a frame drum, the
classes will help you focus on your
heart beat, enabling you to start on a
journey of self-discovery, to uncover your true potential.*

Beginners Course in Heart Meditation

Classes Held on Various Tuesdays
9th, 23rd July from 6.30-7.30pm (paused in August)
Downstairs in the Library Here at Essex Church

If you're interested in tapping into a lasting source of inner-peace, and beginning a journey of self-discovery then come and join this Heart Meditation course for beginners. Using ancient rhythms played on a frame drum, the teacher will guide you on a step-by-step process for quietening your mind and truly 'listening to your heart'. Held on various Tuesday evenings, from 6.30pm-7.30pm, your first class is free and donations are welcome thereafter.

Beverley Eve

To confirm course dates and book a place email:
infoheartmeditation@gmail.com

For more information visit: www.heartmeditation.eu

'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 21st July and 18th August
12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church



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

Unitarian District Meeting in Horsham



Four of us travelled down to visit Horsham Unitarians in June for one of our London & South East District quarterly meetings and were warmly greeted by Unitarians from ten other congregations, who'd all gathered for an afternoon of worship and workshops on an environmental theme.

We particularly enjoyed the way their minister Maria Curtis wove together worship and conversation. Maria's five year ministry in Horsham comes to an end in the autumn but the awareness of ecological concerns that she has encouraged within the congregation, and as our anniversary preacher at the General Assembly Meetings, will long continue.

The congregation hosts a GreenSpirit Group, which is an idea we are considering here in Kensington. Maria has been inspired by the work of Buddhist philosopher and eco-activist Joanna Macy, particularly her recent work on the possibility of a Great Turning in human awareness about our oneness with the earth and all living beings. Macy recommends that in these times of challenge and possible despair we *'Link arms with others. The hyper-individualism of competitive industrialised culture has isolated people from each other, breeding conformity, obedience and an epidemic of loneliness. The good news of The Great Turning is that it is a team undertaking. It evolves out of countless spontaneous and synergistic interactions as people discover their common goals and their different gifts.'*

'We have lost a knowable world. We have lost a servile science and an all-powerful deity. In exchange all I am offering you is a wild immeasurability, and a God who seems prepared to let the whole thing go its own chaotic and random way. However I am certain that accepting all of this randomness and unknowability gives us more, if we dare to receive it, than it takes away. I believe what we have gained is complexity, freedom and loveliness. We have gained a universe so extraordinary that it should stun us into awe.'

Sara Maitland

GreenSpirit Group in Kensington?



GreenSpirit is a 'national network of people who celebrate the human spirit in the context of our place in the natural world and Planet Earth's evolutionary journey. Our radical vision brings together the rigour of science, the creativity of artistic expression, the passion of social action and the wisdom of spiritual traditions of all ages.' Let us know if this sounds like your kind of group and if you'd like to be involved in setting this up in the autumn. We could perhaps organise meetings every two months, with visiting speakers, and occasional other activities and outings.

David Carter & Sarah Tinker

London National Park City



Map available from www.nationalparkcity.london/map

You may have read that London has been declared a National Park City with an aim of improving the quality of life here in our capital. It's hoped that this community based movement will encourage us all to get out into the outdoors and will inspire everyone to help make the city greener, healthier and wilder.

Some 48% of Greater London is green / blue space and it's hoped that we will all look after the bits we care for with as much ecological awareness as possible. We're already doing what we can in the church garden, with planting to provide cover for wildlife and flowers for the bees.

Look out for National City Park launch events across London in July and throughout the summer and let's see how we might support one another in enjoying the outdoors more. Further information is available at www.nationalparkcity.london/festival

'Achieving our Potential'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From the service on Sunday 9th June

Some of you know that my sister Mandy has learning difficulties. You'll perhaps have chance to meet her when she comes to stay in the summer. Mandy said it was ok to tell her story and she hopes other people can have as good a life as hers has turned out to be. A lot of that success is because of who Mandy is and how she manages her life. But she and our family also give great credit to the Camphill Communities where she was educated and where she works to this day. Set up in the 1940s by Dr Karl Konig, these communities were based upon Rudolf Steiner's educational principles. The Camphill Community website explains that *'Today, Camphill consists of a world-wide network of more than 100 communities in over 20 countries where people of all abilities - including some 3,000 children and adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems and other special needs - live, learn and work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Camphill succeeds because it integrates those with disabilities into caring communities that recognise all people as equals with each capable of making valued contributions to community life.'*

I wish I could whisk us all now to one of those Camphill Communities because you'd instantly notice the calm and loving atmosphere, with people of differing abilities working and living alongside each other. There's a tangible pride that all of us can experience when we have meaningful tasks to perform and know ourselves to be part of some group, some higher aspiration. These are not perfect communities – what community is? – and the Camphill organisation has gone through some years of difficult changes. But their high quality of care has been maintained.

Some of us will have seen recent film footage shown on the BBC Panorama programme about the abusive treatment of young adults with special needs in a so-called hospital, Whorlton Hall. I don't suppose I'll have been the only one who wept when I saw such degrading treatment and I realised I was weeping for the staff almost as much as the patients. They had no respect for the people they cared for, and that is a terrible way to work and live. Our American Unitarian Universalist cousins have a list of principles guiding their communities and the first is the 'inherent worth and dignity of every person'. Every person. We sometimes speak here of the Quaker advice to 'seek something of God in everyone we meet'. Everyone.

Rudolf Steiner, whose educational ideas form the basis of work at Camphill to this day – believed in reincarnation. He believed that each one of us has an eternal spirit and it is that spirit that the Camphill educational and care system relates to – seeing each person as a unique expression of the spirit, and each person as equally valuable and worthy as everyone else. Even though these are no longer my spiritual beliefs I still find it an inspiring way to view our remarkable human diversity. And I treasure the under-pinning message – that each of us has something unique to achieve here on earth with the life we have and the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Two Unitarians from Wakefield, Mel and Ned Prideaux, have been cycling all night to raise money for the Alzheimers Society. They cycled 135 km on a tandem and raised over £1,360.



I thought they might have joined us in church today but apparently they've gone to bed. This month's ministry theme here at Essex Church is coping and flourishing. And when we are flourishing in life we can be said to be fulfilling our potential. But what flourishing looks like for each of us is different isn't it. I would not, and could not, cycle for 135km. And let's forget the X Factor and Britain's Got Talent. For most of us, fulfilling our potential won't be anything grand or headline-grabbing will it. It's more about being the best we can be at being who we are.

You perhaps know the Jewish teaching story of a timid rabbi Zusya who awakes from a vision and goes with tears in his eyes to tell his followers about it. They asked him: 'Zusya, what's the matter?' And he told them about his vision; 'I learned the question that the angels will one day ask me about my life.' The followers were puzzled. 'Zusya, you are pious. You are scholarly and humble. You have helped so many of us. What question about your life could be so terrifying that you would be frightened to answer it?' Zusya replied; 'I have learned that the angels will not ask me, 'Why weren't you a Moses, leading your people out of slavery?' and that the angels will not ask me, 'Why weren't you a Joshua, leading your people into the promised land?'" Zusya sighed; 'They will say to me, 'Zusya, why weren't you Zusya?''

It could be said that our primary task in life is to be ourselves. Carl Jung wrote 'In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody', which reminds me of Rudolf Steiner's idea that I mentioned earlier on - that a unique expression of the spirit resides in each of us and can be nurtured, encouraged, allowed space to be fully expressed.

We know, don't we, that we're all dealt a different hand of cards in life – our genetics, our origins, our life experience, our levels of inherited privilege, accidents, the chance nature of who we meet – all these enhance or limit our capability to do X, Y, or Z in our life. And just here in this room we will have a great range of experiences in this field – so please forgive me if any of this is painful for you to think about and let's make time to talk more about it privately – I'd like to hear your experiences.

Let's consider a couple of examples to make this concrete: disability and neurodiversity. Within disability activism there has been shifting opinion over the years as to how we should best reflect on disability. One perspective is called a social model of disability. Put simply its view is that people are disabled because of how our wider society is organised. In this view how society is organised and structured can make it harder than it needs to be for disabled people to fully flourish and achieve their potential in life, whether through built environments which are inaccessible or that contain unnecessary obstacles – because we've not prioritised accessibility as a society – or through attitudes and prejudices which bar people from participating in certain activities.

(continues on next page)

'Achieving our Potential'

(sermon continued from previous page)

Until quite recently the dominant model of disability has been a medical model which sees the body as a machine that functions. Disabilities are then viewed as an aberration from the norm. The social model of disability takes a different approach and importantly reminds us that there is no 'norm' to diverge from. Throughout our lives the vast majority of us will at some time or another require some special considerations to be made if we are to function effectively.

So the social model of disability 'identifies systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) that mean society is the main contributory factor in disabling people. While physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences.' (quote adapted from Wikipedia)

The message then is that all of us can achieve more when we are given the support we need, that we are all impaired in some way and that a simplistic division of people into disabled and non-disabled is quite simply wrong. But let's not pretend that it is easy to sort all this out. Few of us are trained to have the conversations we need to have with one another about what we need in order to fulfil our potential. And as a society I think we're still at quite an early stage of awareness. But when I think of people in Camphill Communities I spoke of earlier and when I think of people I know living in society with appropriate levels of care that they organise for themselves – I know that people with disabilities can of course live flourishing lives.

We're increasingly aware now that not all disabilities are visible and I'm proud of London Transport for their badge project that says 'Please offer me a seat. Not all disabilities and conditions are visible'. Let's think of some other forms of disability. What about learning disabilities? What about mental health conditions? What about neurodiversity (a word which is increasingly used to cover a range of conditions – I'll talk a bit more about that in a moment)? Each of these natural variations will make it harder to flourish in a world that's not set up to support people who are different from the 'norm' in some way (even though there is no such thing as a 'normal' person really).

Here's a helpful quote from the campaigning charity Autistic UK explaining more about this term neurodiversity. *'Neurodiversity is an essential form of human diversity. The idea that there is one "normal" or "healthy" type of brain or mind or one "right" style of neurocognitive functioning, is no more valid than the idea that there is one "normal" or "right" gender, race or culture. The classification of neurodivergence (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia, bipolarity) as medical/psychiatric pathology has no valid scientific basis, and instead reflects cultural prejudice and oppresses those labelled as such. The social dynamics around*



neurodiversity are similar to the dynamics that manifest around other forms of human diversity. These dynamics include unequal distribution of social power; conversely, when embraced, diversity can act as a source of creative potential.'

Steve Silberman, author of *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*, defines neurodiversity as *'the notion that conditions like autism, dyslexia, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) should be regarded as naturally occurring cognitive variations with distinctive strengths that have contributed to the evolution of technology and culture rather than mere checklists of deficits and dysfunctions.'*

So there's a slowly growing understanding that ideas of 'normal' are less useful in human society – and that it's far more helpful both to individuals and society as a whole, to view all of us as a bit different, to consider all of us as in need of particular environments in which we will be more likely to flourish. There's work for us to do on ourselves about this. There's work for us to do in this church community. We need to educate ourselves about all this, read more, listen more, ask more questions – if we're really committed to supporting the flourishing of all people. We need to move beyond conventional ways of thinking and keep seeking ways to support everyone's participation and engagement in life.

We need to train ourselves to stop making assumptions about other people when we meet them. The only way to find out more about someone is to ask them and listen to their answers. Let's train ourselves not to generalise about particular conditions – not all autistic people are good at maths or brilliant artists or struggle to understand emotions – just a few irritating generalisations about autism that I've read several people complaining about this week. Let's train ourselves too in thinking how best to articulate our own particular needs to others, because this is not a skill that has been encouraged in most of our education systems or our families has it.

And there's spiritual work to do – because seeing the inherent worth and dignity in every person is easy to say, less easy to live by. It takes commitment and it takes courage and perseverance to challenge our own pre-conceptions about people who are different from us and instead to see us all as individual sparks of the divine spirit, unique sparks of a great life force, of which we all are a precious part. Amen.

'The radical is deeply committed to justice, which finds expression in moral outrage when people's rights are violated. It is this vision and the outrage that give birth to a just and compassionate existence. We seek a world in which the worth of the individual is recognized . . . the creation of the kind of society where all potentialities could be realized; a world where people could live in dignity, security, happiness, and peace — a world based on a morality of humankind.'

Saul Alinsky

‘Learning from Gardening’

Reflections by Congregation Members
From the service on Sunday 2nd June

My Garden – Reflection by Carolyn Appleby

The practical aspects are that it's a good excuse for being outside, to have the physical, spiritual and mood-enhancing effects of the sun. At the same time I can pacify my constant drive to get something done whilst ignoring more complicated tasks inside, ones I regard as boring or those about which I'm not sure how to proceed.

It's important to see what is there in my garden that I don't want to change; a real lesson on being satisfied with what you have. I have found that, as plants grow so very rapidly and my having so many other interests also, besides my garden, I let it grow. I let it show me the way. I recognise this is one of the many things in life I can't control. As John Lennon sang, "Let it be." Anyway, many of my neighbours have concreted over their plots. I want my space to thrive. So I allow wild flowers some people call weeds to abide with me. And also remove some. After all, the world is made up of all types of people in all sorts of places, likewise. And, although I love flowers I tremendously enjoy the shapes and colour shades of all the leaves too. They entertain me wonderfully. After all, special events are great and exciting but life is very much about what's low key and behind the scenes. The two states are equally valuable.

Then there's the naming of plants. Using those three words reminds me of a poem I wrote in 2011 to a certain person with whom I was newly in love.

Naming of Plants at Hidcote (for Cyprian)

Here we have naming of plants-
astilbe, campanula, allium,
deutzia, cuckooflower, hibiscus.
Grey clouds pass overhead -
to us invisible, with
joy between us.
Then rain clatters down.
So I want to protect you from discomfort.

We go to the car and as you predicted
the rain stops
when you dress for the weather.
So we return to naming of plants
through the crannies of Hidcote's garden.

Disagreements about names of plants can almost lead to fisticuffs. I used to be hugely bothered about accuracy in the naming of anything and tut a lot being sure I was right and everyone else was wrong. It didn't occur to me then that I may have been mistaken. Thank Goodness for the wisdom of the Quaker advice eventually getting through to me on this score too, "Consider that you may be mistaken." The truth is that it really doesn't matter what the name is. Enjoy the one you know and enjoy the sight, smell and benefits of your plants.



Allotment Gardening – Reflection by Jack Lalor

I grew up on a farm, so probably learned some early lessons without realising it. I now have an allotment of about 250 sq. metres in West London and am still learning.

I am always anxious to get my planting done as early as possible, so I don't grow many overwinter crops; but spend that season preparing the ground. I learned to make my own compost. Every year I still make the mistake of planting seeds and young plants before the soil has warmed sufficiently. This means that some plants get damaged by low temperatures and some seeds do not germinate.

I don't exactly follow the medieval practice of sitting with my bare skin in contact with the soil in order to gauge how warm it is but, for some crops, I try to discipline myself to wait until the minimum night-time temperature is about 8 degrees celsius. Of course with some crops this caution is not necessary, and my garlic and broad beans can be planted in October.

I've learned that it's probably a good idea to grow the crops that work for me on the type of plot available, and although hydroponics looks like replacing traditional methods for some crops I think I'll stick with being old-fashioned. I've never had much success with parsnips and cauliflowers, so I don't even try to grow them now.

I try to avoid using sprays and artificial fertilisers, and in recent years have reserved a small plot for wildflowers to encourage insects. I have found that ladybirds will often deal with infestations of aphids or blackfly without a need for other interventions. Working with respect for nature and the environment gives a lot of satisfaction, and is thought to be beneficial for both physical and mental health. Our management committee is currently looking at the possibility of reintroducing hedgehogs. My neighbouring allotment holder, when she started, said that she didn't mind sharing her produce with the slugs and snails, but a few months later I noticed that she was using organic slug pellets. She then told me "I didn't mind *sharing* but they started to take advantage".



'Learning from Gardening'

(reflections continued from previous page)

The Perfect Flower –

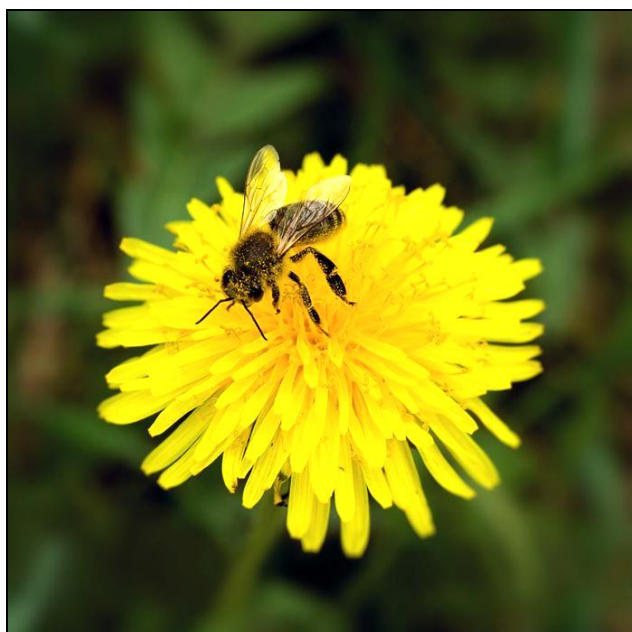
Reflection by Marc Viera

It is a vibrantly bright yellow flower. No fussing with how much water to give it. It is happy in wet or dry conditions. Direct or indirect sun is not a concern. It flowers all season; no deadheading required. When it goes to seed, the flower transforms into a semi-translucent magical globe of wondrous miniature spokes with white wisps of cloud at the tips. And when the breeze is just so, dozens of tiny seedlings, each with its wispy parachute dances like a butterfly, shrinking smaller and smaller into the distance until it simply evaporates into the invisible air. And if that's not enough, you can make a delicious salad out of its whimsical serrated spear-head shaped leaves.

Yes, my favourite flower is the outcast of outcasts: the gorgeous and indefatigable dandelion.

When we lived in Rhode Island, I kept a secret garden of them. It was hidden by stone walls on two sides, by a dog house on the other, and finally by the residence. So none of the neighbours could see it. And a good thing too, based on the occasional but steady stream of tips for achieving the apparently coveted monochromatic lawn. When no one was looking, I would grasp the little white globes into my fist from a wayward stem and drop them into my guilty little garden secret as I casually walked the path to the back door. In the height of summer, it transformed into a kaleidoscope of yellow and green: just glorious.

The value behind a nugget of wisdom is not the same for all who encounter it. Perhaps for some, the plight of the dandelion conjures who (or what) we look upon with disdain for no reason other than our cultural bias. Some may think of who (or what) we direct resources to (or withhold resources from) with little consideration for what might flourish naturally. Some may admire how the dandelion persists in the face of all efforts to persecute it. Perhaps your life's journey reveals a dandelion-related truth meant just for you.



Flourishing and Coping –

Reflection by Juliet Edwards

There have always been flowers in my life. When we went on holiday to Anglesey in North Wales there were lots of wild flowers which I learned the names of. There was always thrift at the time we went and little orchids. In their 50's my Mum and Dad had finally saved enough to have their own house built. From the moment building began they were planning their garden. As a teenager I didn't want to be involved at all. Later on when I came home from college I would join my Mum as she walked round the two large rectangular flower beds gazing on every flower, letting me know their names and their origin. Like most gardeners she wasn't opposed to collecting a seed head or taking the occasional cutting. My own gardens happened much later.

After 11 years of increasingly miserable marriage I came to London and eventually got a basement flat. I don't know how long it was before I dug a little patch of soil in the grassy bank that surrounded the flat. I sowed some Californian poppy seeds and they made a welcoming, bright display. I soon became more enthusiastic and began planting things right up the bank. Then a woman from further down the street offered some plants and later on my upstairs neighbour, Dave, asked if he could help. It was great that he was interested. After a while he told me that the church across the road from the flat was to be demolished. He came back with a rose bush from the church garden after which we both went scavenging and brought plants back to our garden. In 1991 my family were offered the maisonette in Acton where I still live. In front of our entrance there is a paved area. I began by getting a picnic bench – the kind with seats attached - where we could sit and drink coffee. After a while I had a few pots of geraniums on the table and then a tray of seedlings. I hadn't got much in the way of pots, but a bucket with drainage holes drilled in the base works well.

At about this time we had a talk, at Essex Church, about global warming by Jonathan Porritt. He was a founder member of the Green Party and later became Director of Friends of the Earth. Following this, the congregation were asked to say what they might do to make a difference. I pledged to make a garden which was really just expanding on my own inclination. My garden is entirely in pots and trays and it has grown year by year. I have quite a number of plants that come up every year and I always plant tulips and tete a tete daffodils. Neighbours sometimes comment on how they like the garden and I try to encourage them to grow something too but most of them say they haven't got time. But the neighbours on either side of me have each established a colourful front garden.

Last year I began to feel tired of all the watering and I chose not to replace plants. I still have about 30, large and small and this year since I have hurt my foot I have been sitting in my garden without feeling obliged to do anything. I love the variety of leaf shapes and watching flower buds day by day as they slowly open. I'm particularly enjoying a self-seeded poppy with beautiful leaves and I have thrift, which take my mind right back to Anglesey and the cliff top walks.

UniFEST presents

PEACE

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a family event with adult workshops, a kids programme and intergenerational worship

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25th – 27th October 2019

kids go free!
(sponsored by the Nightingale Centre)

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kids programme is for participants aged 0 – 11 years of age

Highgate Cemetery



gravestones lean uncared
ivy twined wildflower bound,
solitude, drifting with shadows
beneath the trees, respects neglect;
that ghosts might dance
freed from forgotten graves,
souls sound notes, released
from inflexible epitaphs,
into a chord with children's cries
beyond the boundary walls.
will my ghost dance some day
in a wild corner over bluebells,
ring my soul's clear notes
to join children singing;
an ancient bass line
to a new and soaring tune?

Brian Ellis

Unitarian Women's Group Conference Weekend of 18th to 20th October 2019 The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow 'Women and Ageing'



Women of all ages are welcome to this weekend of friendship. We will be looking at the joys and concerns of ageing through workshops, discussion, story-telling and women's experience. The conference will be facilitated by Cathie Masztalerz and Sara Wilcox. Alongside exploration of the issues raised, there will be fun and laughter!

Single or shared standard room	£132
Single occupancy of standard room	£142
Shared or single en-suite	£142
Single occupancy of twin en-suite room	£152

Conference fee (payable on arrival): £10

Booking: Stella Burney: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk
or 01298 871218 (accommodation) and register with
Margaret Robinson: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

'For faith to be alive and to deepen we need to use our power to inquire, to wonder, to explore our experience to see what is true for ourselves. This requires us to approach life with an inquisitive, eager, self-confident capacity to probe and question. It requires us to examine where we place our faith, and why, to see if it makes us more aware and loving people. To develop a verified faith we need to open to the messiness, the discordance, the ambivalence, and, above all, the vital life-force of questioning.'

Sharon Salzberg

A Holiday Bonus



*Rina, Rachel, Hansje, Veronica, Belinda
and Pritem at a Frascati pizzeria*

Recently I went on holiday with 5 dear old school friends of mine. We have known each other since the 1960s in Hong Kong. And now that their children are all grown up, we find time each year to meet from across the globe (Canada, England, Holland and Israel) and have a holiday together.

This year it was Italy in a very elegant countryside hotel and spa near Frascati. It had been requisitioned as HQ for the Gestapo during the war, and now served as a very stylish characterful place for weddings and thankfully suchlike more cheerful events. The most significant experience I had during this time together with my mates was the loss of my mobile phone during our first full day of touring.

All of us were looking at our mobile phones, researching where to go next. Or, having decided where to go, using our phones to navigate on Wayz or Google Maps, with three of us each in two cars. And when one of our cars went on a different track, madly phoning or sending messages to sort out where they were in relation to where we were planning to go. Towards the end of this day I was exhausted, and must have left my phone in a beachside bar toilet! Of course, I was in shock-horror when I discovered this an hour or so later, with even more wearying retracing of steps checking last known likely location when I had the phone at the end of my hand.... and then finally locating the nearest police station (near the holiday home of the Pope – Castel Gandolfo – as it happens) to file a report on its loss for insurance purposes.

There the police were very helpful and very anxious that - though my friends and I spoke 7 languages between us – we did not speak Italian! Nothing to worry about, as the document I needed to fill in was in 5 languages, one of which was English. Phew! It was a delightful encounter. Once the paperwork was completed, and we said our *arrivederci*, I felt much lighter.

This feeling of lightness grew exponentially over the next 5 days. In fact I was enabled by this loss to be blissfully and fully present to my surroundings and my companions. It was a mindfulness practice that was blessedly gifted to me by circumstances.

Since my return, I have replaced my mobile phone with a less fancy version – plenty sufficient for purpose. And now, when at home, keep it at more than arm's length away from me. I value its purpose for keeping me in touch with friends and news from around the world, but am wary at how it can trap my mind into thinkingness, rather than allow my bodymind to sink into real mindfulness of being which is one of the true gifts of our incarnation in this world.

Veronica Needa

Swing Dance Fundraiser to help immigrants and oppose concentration camps in the US



**Sunday 1st September, 2-5pm
Here at Essex Church – Save the Date!**

Come and swing dance to support RAICES (www.raicestexas.org), a group working to oppose concentration camps in the US and help immigrants -- including children -- detained at the US border with Mexico.

Johanna and their friends are bringing Lindy Hop to Essex Church in September for this special fundraising event. Never danced lindy hop before? There will be a fun taster lesson at the beginning to get you moving! Save the date and look out for more information in the next newsletter.



'White Butterflies' – a painting by our own Heidi Ferid.

Heidi sent in this picture to connect with our monthly theme of 'Curiosity and Wonder'. She comments: 'I do not know if butterflies are curious, but they certainly make me feel curious. How do they manage this amazing process of transformation?'

'God is calling each one of us in our own way to help build "an Ark", a community of love where love conquers hatred, inclusion conquers exclusion, unity conquers division.'

Jean Vanier

Services at Essex Church in July



Sunday 7th July, 11am 'Powers of Ten'

Service led by Jane Blackall

Inspired by Ray and Charles Eames' classic short film, 'Powers of Ten: A Film Dealing with the Relative Size of Things in the Universe', we will consider the spiritual value of zooming in and out, and taking the time to focus on things around us, whether large or small, at multiple scales and different levels of magnification.

Sunday 14th July, 11am 'Trial and Error'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As the world marks the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death, we'll consider the importance of experimentation in life and celebrate Da Vinci's many achievements.

Sunday 21st July, 11am 'Science and Religion'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Unitarians have long regarded science and religion as compatible. How can progressive religious people best work alongside science in the 21st century and counter-balance simplistic notions that place science and religion in opposition to one another?

Sunday 28th July, 11am 'Why? Why Not?'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Let's re-discover the child's ability to ask searching questions and challenge 'the way things are'.



Warden's Column



I am writing this from not very sunny Spain - where it poured with rain all morning and has been mostly cloudy since (though still 26 degrees). Luckily I'm not here to sunbathe, but to dance - for which cooler weather is preferable generally. This weekend is a reunion of friends from a summer dance project we ran for 3 years and discussion of where to go next. I'll then be spending a week in Portugal with some of the same people at a meditation retreat centre - total silence for a week - just dancing, eating and art. I haven't done anything comparable before, so I guess it will either be heavenly or unendurable!

Meanwhile, back at the church, my friend Arda (pictured above) is staying in my flat to hold the fort. I think he and Brian have some painting plans, so look out for some changes in the back garden.

Regular bookings continue through July with a few bonus extras. The Lloyd Williamson School summer concert is on 4 July and Cypher Coders holiday camp will be back with us from the 8-26th. I'll be back for the last two weeks of that, but Arda will look after them for the first two. Many classes take a break during the school holidays, so the building will start getting quieter from 15th July onwards and be very quiet during August. We don't have any major building projects planned, so it should feel like genuine "down-time".

May all of you also have a relaxing and re-energising summer break this year.

Jenny Moy

'Wonder causes us to gape. We can no longer keep such a tight hold on life when, just as in yawning, our mouth is wide open. The more I have come to realize how little I know of this life, the more curious I have grown. If we are curious, we at least know that our heart is still beating. Curiosity opens doors and connects us to the larger life of the world. It is a key as much to this moment as to some grand project that can last a lifetime. It allows us to follow our nose, and there's pleasure in that. We wonder what lies around the corner or over the hill; we wonder what the empty canvas, the unhewn block of stone, conceal that our imagination may reveal.'

Roger Housden