



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: November 2010

## What's On in November:

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE:** 'Reclaiming the Bible'  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 11am  
**"Speaking of God"**  
Led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 12.30pm  
**Youngsters' Social**  
Lunch at a nearby pub or café.

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE:** 'Reclaiming the Bible'  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 11am  
**"Remembrance Sunday:  
Swords into Ploughshares"**  
Led by Rev Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique**  
Class led by Sonya Leite

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
**'Printmaking (II) - Printing'**

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE:** 'Reclaiming the Bible'  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November, 11am  
**"A Universal Message"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November, 12.30pm  
**"Finding Our Voice" - Singing**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:**  
**'Wolf Hall' by Hilary Mantel**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE:** 'Reclaiming the Bible'  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 11am  
**"Advent Angels"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 12.30pm  
**Social Action Group**

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1-2pm  
**Funeral Planning Workshop**

## A Message from our Minister:

### Knowing and Not Knowing

If you haven't yet managed to catch the Radio 4 broadcasts 'The History of the World in One Hundred Objects' you can still hear them via the BBC and British Museum websites and we'll soon have a copy of them here in the library at

Essex Church for you to borrow and listen to. Chosen and narrated by Neil MacGregor, the museum's director, these 100 objects, and the 15 minute programmes about each of them, give a sweeping overview of 2 million years of human civilisation from a stone chopping tool from Tanzania to a mobile phone and solar powered lamp.

Object no. 75 was this print of a rhinoceros taken from a woodcut by Albrecht Durer, made in 1515. Durer was working in Nuremberg when he heard of an extraordinary beast that had been given to the king of Portugal by an Indian sultan as part of a trade deal. Durer had never seen a rhino. He worked from a brief sketch and a descriptive letter to create this woodcut, which sold as many as 5,000 prints in his lifetime. As you can see, Durer got the anatomy almost, but not quite, right. His rhino has an extra little horn on its neck and its sturdy skin looks like a metal suit of armour. MacGregor said of this image, "It's exhilaratingly wrong. It reminds us how little we know about our world and how we must never stop trying to understand it."

This is reminiscent of the story of the Buddha being asked to tell arguing people which was the one true religion. He used the analogy of blind people trying to describe an elephant that they are touching. But because each of them can only touch one part of the great animal's body, their descriptions are limited. The one who touches the tusk thinks an elephant is like a smooth and curved plough whilst the one touching the ear imagines the elephant as a shade giving fan. The Buddha explained that we humans have just too limited a view to be ever able to hope to understand ultimate truth.

These struggles to explain the inexplicable, to answer the unanswerable, to describe the indescribable, sound quite like the spiritual path many of us are on as liberal religious people. We have a sense perhaps that there is more to this life than meets the eye and we enjoy the process of sharing our faltering, or indeed scintillating, ideas with one another. In our conversations we try to attempt a deeper exploration, considering issues from different points of view and accepting that there are some things we may never know for sure. In the recent Compassionate Communication course that we held here at the church, we discovered how wonderful it can feel to be listened to with empathy, when someone accepts what we have to say with a loving and open heart. It's worth making the effort to have such conversations from time to time I reckon, even if at the end of it we still can't quite draw that rhinoceros.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



## In this month's newsletter...

\* Reflections on Compassionate Communication Course \* Church Library News \* Walking Group News / Changes \* "How I Came to Essex Church" by John Hands \* "Elizabeth Gaskell Window at Westminster Abbey" by Howard Hague \* Congregational Writing Project - Please Contribute! \* Christmas at Essex Church \* "George Eliot" by Gordon Deaville \* "One World, Our World" \* and more...

# Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians meet to share experiences, to learn from each other, to explore our diverse faiths, to welcome spiritual seekers and offer companionship on life's journey.

The community meets for a service each Sunday at 11.00am. The format varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a children's group. Our wide range of activities includes religious education courses and spirituality workshops, meeting for fellowship, engagement groups on a variety of themes, community arts projects, regular chanting and dance sessions, and opportunities for quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

Many other groups share our church building. If you are interested in hiring one of our rooms for your own organisation or event please contact our warden by telephone or email.



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)

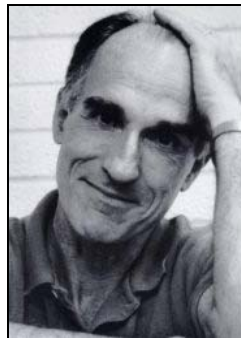
Web: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

"The Spirit of Peace is familiar to us through the actions of many inspirational figures throughout history... The wonderful news is that we don't have to be a 'saint' to embody it – each of us has complete access to that same power in our daily lives.

I've found that the Spirit of Peace is not some divine presence that will descend from the heavens to make everything miraculously right, but rather is an innate potential within our human experience, which can be awakened and engaged in the messy process of righting our broken relationships. It is the life force within that template, the living power of Peace that resides in every human heart, as available as the breath, as constant as the pulsing heartbeat...

Sometimes I experience the Spirit of Peace as a protective friend, like a guardian angel; sometimes as a teacher guiding my words and action. Often I experience the Spirit of Peace as the Divine Mystery, manifest in one of its several robes. It is the realisation of the promise, held by many of the world's major religions, that we are made in the image of God. It is an expression of our divine nature, our inherent wholeness."

Louise Diamond



"Since Einstein, we have learned that there is no centre; or alternatively, that any point is as good as any other for observing the world... there are no privileged locations.

If you stay put, your place may become a holy centre, not because it gives you special access to the divine, but because in your stillness you hear what might be heard anywhere. All there is to see can be seen from any point in the universe, if you know how to look; and the influence of the entire universe converges on every spot."

Scott Russell Sanders

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

7<sup>th</sup> November: Natasha Drennan  
14<sup>th</sup> November: Christine Joshi  
21<sup>st</sup> November: Arthur Krebbers  
28<sup>th</sup> November: ??????

### Coffee:

7<sup>th</sup> November: Sue Smith  
14<sup>th</sup> November: Mark Tribe  
21<sup>st</sup> November: Maire Collins  
28<sup>th</sup> November: Caroline Blair

### Greeting:

7<sup>th</sup> November: Sheila Prellberg  
14<sup>th</sup> November: Jo Ridgers  
21<sup>st</sup> November: Sue Smith  
28<sup>th</sup> November: Daffyd Young-Finch

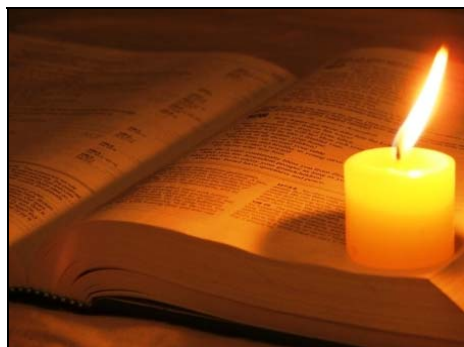
In recent months, we have been circulating the rota list via email, and this seems to be working well.

Please contact Jane with your email address if you are willing to receive this email once a month.

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

Next Adult RE Course: Dates for Your Diaries

## Reclaiming the Bible: Tackling Some Tricky Bits



**Thursdays 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> November**  
**7-9pm, downstairs in the library**  
**Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Taking the Bible as literal truth seems to be more common in some religious groups these days. All the more important, then, for religious liberals to be adept in utilising other strategies for Bible study. These four sessions will look at the work of feminist theologians, literary studies, post-colonialism, contextual theology and the like, to reclaim the Bible from fundamentalism.

We will be tackling the following themes:

- Stories of creation – how did it all begin?
- Sexual politics in ancient times.
- A coherent narrative? The Bible's structure and links between the Old and New Testaments.
- Jesus – the parts left out of the Ladybird books.

**Please book your place in advance** – we would like you to commit to coming to at least two of the sessions though of course all four are recommended – by emailing [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk), telling our minister, or leaving a message on the office phone: 020 7221 6514.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

“Writings of religious and spiritual teachers, biographies of admirable people, even many novels, are good medicine for our souls. They give us the courage to face the truth about ourselves, including any darkness within us, and to endure pain, suffering, and death. Consciously seek out moral mentors in your reading. Let their experiences become a source of inspiration and healing for you.”

**Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat**  
from 'Making Reading Sacred'  
on [www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com)

## Church Library News



In last month's newsletter we celebrated the completion of the new shelving unit downstairs in the church library. The books are now back on the shelves and I do encourage you to pop downstairs and investigate next time you're at church.

At the same time as we re-shelved the books, we organised them by subject, which we hope will make the library more appealing and easy to use. There are now labelled sections including inspirational material, theology, world faiths, myths, Unitarian history, philosophy, peace, and children's books.

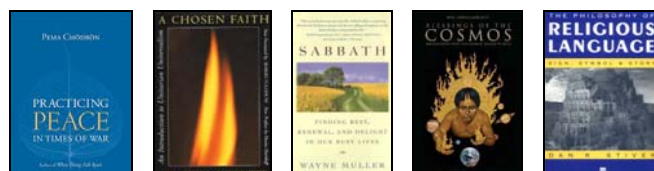
This might also be a good moment to ask you to check your own shelves to see if there are any books from the library that you have forgotten that you borrowed! We would be glad to welcome back any long-term loans at this point...



### Please Donate a Book from our 'Wish List'

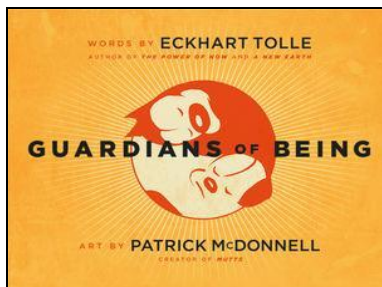
This process also alerted us to the fact that there are some obvious gaps in the library collection. We have drawn up a list of books that we would like to add to the library and have set up an Amazon wish-list from which members and friends of Essex Church might like to buy books to donate. This system is rather like a wedding list, as a shop holds a central record, and items are removed from the list as they are bought. If you are familiar with this system then you can just go to [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk) and search for our list with the name 'Essex Church'. Alternatively you can go to the library page on the church site and simply click through to browse the wish-list: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/library.html](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/library.html)

**Jane Blackall**





## Book Recommendation: 'Guardians of Being'



When I like a book I particularly enjoy buying lots of copies of it and giving them to friends for them to enjoy. And that's why I have donated a copy of 'Guardians of Being' to the library at Essex Church to go on the lovely new shelves.

The words are by Eckhart Tolle and drawings by Patrick McDonnell. Don't be fooled into thinking this is a picture book and so only for children. It is a heart warming celebration of the part animals play in our lives, especially dogs. Guardians of Being celebrates and reminds us of not only the oneness of all life but also the wonder and joy to be found in the present moment amid the beauty we sometimes forget to notice all around us.

Here's a quote from one page that shows a man and a dog staring up at the night sky; "We get lost in doing, thinking, remembering, anticipating – lost in a maze of complexity and a world of problems. Nature can show us the way home, the way out of the prison of our own minds."

Doesn't that sound welcome!

Jo Mirov



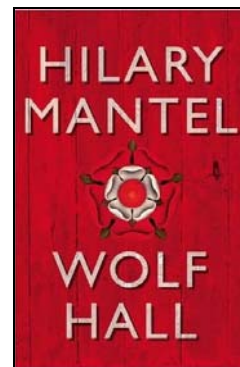
## Next Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before that date.

Thank you!!!

## Essex Church Reading Group 'Wolf Hall' by Hilary Mantel



**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 7.00-9.00pm**

The reading group's November session will be based on the 2009 Booker Prize-winning historical novel 'Wolf Hall' by Hilary Mantel. This book was chosen by Sarah Tinker.

Information from Amazon UK:

*"Lock Cromwell in a deep dungeon in the morning,' says Thomas More, 'and when you come back that night he'll be sitting on a plush cushion eating larks' tongues, and all the gaolers will owe him money.' England, the 1520s. Henry VIII is on the throne, but has no heir. Cardinal Wolsey is his chief advisor, charged with securing the divorce the pope refuses to grant. Into this atmosphere of distrust and need comes Thomas Cromwell, first as Wolsey's clerk, and later his successor. Cromwell is a wholly original man: the son of a brutal blacksmith, a political genius, a briber, a charmer, a bully, a man with a delicate and deadly expertise in manipulating people and events. Ruthless in pursuit of his own interests, he is as ambitious in his wider politics as he is for himself. His reforming agenda is carried out in the grip of a self-interested parliament and a king who fluctuates between romantic passions and murderous rages. From one of our finest living writers, Wolf Hall is that very rare thing: a truly great English novel, one that explores the intersection of individual psychology and wider politics. With a vast array of characters, and richly overflowing with incident, it peels back history to show us Tudor England as a half-made society, moulding itself with great passion and suffering and courage."*

The group takes special care to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to. Members come together to share our diverse views and appreciate our differences in a spirit of curiosity and respect. The group has a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere and newcomers are always most welcome to come along to any session. The group has been meeting monthly since 2003. We take turns in choosing a book for everybody to read so we tackle a wide variety of material. For more information see:

[www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html)

# Compassionate Communication at Essex Church

Over five Thursday evenings in September and October, fifteen of us took the time to attend a series of workshops on the theme of 'Compassionate Communication', led by Jill and Richard Broadbent. Here are reflections from some of the participants.



## Striving Towards Deeper Connections

I've found this course really useful in helping me develop a more open and understanding attitude towards people I've been struggling with in some of my communities.

One of the experiences that really stood out for me was the empathy roleplay. I usually find roleplay really difficult. However, I felt supported by the group, so I volunteered to work through a difficult experience I've had lately. In the roleplay, I was "a difficult person" in my life and the other person was me empathising with that person. It was a really powerful experience for me.

Firstly, roleplaying another person really made it a lot easier to see where they might be coming from: Instead of jumping into reactive thinking, with my head filling with criticisms of them, I had to really put myself in their shoes. Secondly, feeling a river of empathy flowing towards me, felt really good - the fact that they were roleplaying me and I was roleplaying someone else didn't interrupt that feeling.

Us, together, attempting to understand this other person in my life, to feel their values, to hear their needs, to know what they yearn for, made it possible to tell a different story, a story in which the protagonists became two people yearning for connection and understanding, a story in which the difficulties arose from forgetting that underneath it all, we were longing for the same thing - a deeper connection.

LILI Kathleen Bright

## A New Language for Family Relationships

As a mother of two I always strive to find ways to motivate my children and encourage them without criticising, sometimes more successfully than others! The compassionate communication course gave me a new language to work with. I realised the difference between half hearted empathy and empathising in a real way, with far reaching consequences. It has also opened doors for me in my family relationships.

Lucinda Lee-Steere

## Engaging on a Different Level

"Compassionate Communication" – two words that sound rather "60s" and "hippy" and would normally make me run a mile. And when suggested as a course that I'd have to go to after a full day's work? Well I wasn't the only one surprised when I put my name down. But hey, I thought, I've been on various development courses at work, I take golf lessons, but I've never had a lesson in one of life's basic skills – how to communicate with those you care about.

So what was this course like? Well for Adult Religious Education there was not much religion – much more practical advice was on offer! And unlike other courses, our tutors Jill and Richard were very softly spoken, welcoming you to come to them as opposed to brashly pushing their points. We spent a lot time "finding space" and "connecting" and while these words are not yet regulars in my vocabulary, it was a new learning atmosphere for me. One I found engaging, relaxing and just the right side of hippy...

So what was the message? The core that runs through the approach we learnt was that every deed and word that anyone does or says stems from their longing for something valuable. Both the child performing and the teenager screaming are looking for love. Somebody raging against the 'system' may be looking for freedom or choice.

It's not an easy message to accept. Neither does it excuse bad behaviour. But that simple fact opens a route to everyone. Rather than blaming and judging yourself or the subject of your irritation, simply pause and recognise that you are two people both looking for something precious. You may never know what that something is, but simply looking for it forces you to engage on a different, more 'compassionate' level.

As I say it's not an easy message and probably not an approach to use with a mortgage advisor. But for your friends and colleagues, I've discovered a little empathy goes a long way.

Mark Tribe



## Congregational Writing Project



The challenge is on. We need at least twenty members or friends of Essex Church to write a short statement to be included in a pamphlet we hope to publish next year.

We want to create a collection of statements of people's beliefs, which could be based on writings from the 'Building Your Own Theology' course or from the 'This I Believe' project. Feel free to tackle this in any way that you want. You may want to sum up your faith, or describe how your beliefs have evolved. You might want to write about what is most important to you in life or about lessons that life has taught you. The important things are that your words come from your heart and are true for you, that they are interesting for others to read or hear, and that you stick to a word count of under 500 words - around 350 would be ideal.

Don't worry about the quality of your writing as there are people who are willing to help with the writing task and to do some editing. Why not have a go at a first draft and let someone read it and give you feedback. Or ask someone to interview you and write your piece for you. Why should footballers be the only ones to have ghost writers?! So don't be left out - get writing and make sure you are part of this project.

The deadline for entries is March 1st as we hope to have the booklet published in time for Easter and for the denomination's Annual Meetings where we will be able to sell copies. Any profits made from this exciting publishing venture will go to our Swaziland Education Project. Contact our minister for more information.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**



"Go out into the highways and byways. Give people something of your new vision. You may possess only a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women. Give them not hell but hope and courage; preach the kindness and everlasting love of God."

**Universalist minister John Murray (1741-1815)**

*Forthcoming Events from the Art and Spirituality Network:*

## Darkness and Light: Two Central Mysteries

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2.00 pm to 8.30pm  
At Wanstead Quaker Meeting House,  
Bush Rd, Wanstead, London, E11 3AU**

A hands-on workshop exploring creativity, spirituality and self expression through the materials and words we use. Led by Maggie and Melvyn Freake. Cost: £25.

This workshop will be exploring our responses to the central mysteries of darkness and light in spiritually-led and creative ways, including through the art materials and the words we use. The workshop will start when the sun is high in the sky and will proceed through the gathering dusk into darkness. At a time of year when we are aware of the darkness drawing in, we can feel the need for celebrations of light. No prior artistic experience is needed and all materials are provided. But bring food to share and words, images that you associate with the themes of light and darkness.

## Using the Arts on our Spiritual Journeys

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 6.30 until 8pm,  
at London University of the Arts,  
272 High Holborn, London WC1V 7EY.**

How can we use the arts to inform, sustain and challenge our spiritual life, whether or not we belong to a religious group? Three members of the Art and Spirituality Network will each speak briefly about some ways in which they personally use the visual arts in their spiritual life and/or work, and introduce a wider discussion. John Harley is a Unitarian minister. He works with young people as both art teacher and youth leader. Sarah Liebert is active in the Church of England and a software developer who also paints and writes. Linda Murgatroyd used to work in social statistics. A Quaker, she also uses art as a tool for spiritual exploration and growth.

Members of ASN will introduce a wider discussion, hosted jointly with the London University of the Arts chaplaincy. All welcome, and the meeting is free, but booking is essential. Contact chaplaincy@arts.ac.uk or phone 07843 329 587.

*The Art and Spirituality Network aims to provide a supportive and challenging space for people to find spiritual fellowship and nourishment through making art. Our workshops aim to bring spiritual refreshment as well as fostering inspiration and creativity. They are open to active artists and those of no artistic experience. We welcome people of all faiths and none, and draw on a variety of wisdom and faith traditions and on the world around us. Workshops take different forms depending on the topic and who is running it.*

**For more information: [www.artandspirituality.net](http://www.artandspirituality.net)**



## Small Group Communion



**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 12.30pm  
Downstairs in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday in November we will be holding a small-group communion, after the main service, downstairs in the church library. A number of members of the congregation have expressed interest in having a regular communion at the church and so we are going to try this out for a few months (on the second Sunday of each month).

**Jane Blackall and Tristan Jovanović**

## Walking Group News



Over the course of this year, the number of regular members of the walking group has declined (variously due to people moving overseas, suffering ill-health, or having other commitments on the first weekend of the month), and several of the recent outings have been cancelled at the last minute due to low numbers.

For this reason, we have decided to make the walking group outings a quarterly activity for the time being, and we hope to have a core of at least four people committed to each walk in advance to ensure it will go ahead, come what may.

The previously advertised walks for the rest of 2010 have therefore been cancelled and we are in the process of planning a new programme for 2011. If you think you might be able to commit to being part of a core group of walkers to revitalise this group then please do speak to Caroline Blair or Jane Blackall.

## Christmas at Essex Church



### Carol Service and Potluck Christmas Lunch

This year we will be having a Carol Service and Congregational Christmas Lunch on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December. Please put the date in your diary now and plan to come along – maybe invite a friend! Heidi Ferid is co-ordinating the potluck lunch so please think about what food or drink you can offer to bring and let her know.

### Candlelit Christmas Eve Service and Dinner

As has become the tradition at Essex Church, we will be having a special candlelit service at 5pm on Christmas Eve, followed by tea and mince pies. Juliet Edwards is organising a meal at a local restaurant (hopefully the Persian restaurant, Hafez, in Bayswater) after the evening service. We need to book soon so please let Juliet know if you would like to be counted in.

### Please Note – No Service on Boxing Day

There will be no service on the last Sunday in December as it falls on Boxing Day this year and public transport will be quite limited.

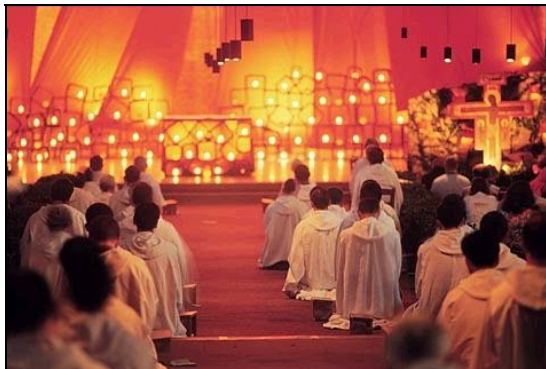


“A place where I find soul, one of the strongest places, is in the presence of other people whom I meet at soul level. It happens whenever a dialogue takes place in which both people are truly present, tuning in to really hearing each other and reflecting back.

A sense of discovery occurs, as when musicians get together and improvise a musical dialogue, a dialogue that depends on letting go of ego and defences. To voice something you're feeling and put observations into words with another person who is totally present is a creative act embodying soul and love.”

**Jean Shinoda Bolen**

## A Taste of Taizé A Workshop for All-Comers



**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 11am - 3.30pm**

**Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel,  
3 Pilgrims Place, Hampstead, NW3 1NG.**

A gentle introduction to the ethos and worship style of the ecumenical community, based in a small village in Burgundy, which has influenced congregations around the world.

The Rev Jeff Gould (Moderator, Unitarian Christian Association) and Mrs Catherine Fozard (UCA Treasurer) will introduce the background and contemporary practices of Taizé. Different chants will be taught, and the day will end with a complete service. Participants will be equipped to lead worship in their own congregations.

### **Schedule:**

**11am** - arrivals and coffee/tea

**11.30am** - introduction to and exploration of Taizé worship

**1pm** - Lunch [please bring a packed lunch]

**2pm** - Further work and celebration of a complete service

**3.30pm** - tea and departures

All are welcome! Tea and coffee will be provided, but please bring a packed lunch. Organised by the District Liberal Christian Affinity Group.

Further information: Jim Corrigan – 020 8361 1843.



## Almost Nothing

I've lived eighty years – yes  
Eighty years! And still I know  
Almost nothing. I know almost  
Nothing of flowers  
Nothing of plants  
Nothing of trees  
Nothing of rocks  
Nothing of clouds  
Nothing of birds  
Nothing of insects  
Nothing of stars  
Nothing of space  
Nothing of blood  
Of bones and muscles  
Of glands, or eyes or  
Ears – indeed my ignorance  
Is almost profound!

How could I  
Have lived  
So long  
Knowing  
Almost nothing?

**John Hands – September 2010**

## Autumn Psalm of Fearlessness

I am surrounded by a peaceful ebbing,  
as creation bows to the mystery of life;  
all that grows and lives must give up life,  
yet it does not really die.

As plants surrender their life,  
bending, brown and wrinkled,  
and yellow leaves of trees  
float to my lawn like parachute troops,  
they do so in a sea of serenity.

I hear no fearful cries from creation,  
no screams of terror,  
as death daily devours  
once-green and growing life.

Peaceful and calm is autumn's swan song,  
for she understands  
that hidden in winter's death-grip  
is spring's openhanded,  
full-brimmed breath of life.

It is not a death rattle that sounds  
over fields and backyard fences;  
rather I hear a lullaby softly swaying upon the autumn wind.

Sleep in peace, all that lives;  
slumber secure, all that is dying,  
for in every fall there is the rise  
whose sister's name is spring.

**Edward Hays**



## Getting More Involved

It's something we're proud of here at Essex Church that so many of our members like to lead worship on a Sunday morning. But there's always room for more and we're keen to encourage anyone who would like to get more involved to do just that. Here are some possibilities:

- let me or one of the committee members know that you would like to do a reading.
- choose a reading or even the theme of a Sunday service.
- let us know your favourite hymns or songs.
- think of a subject you might like to speak about sometime.
- play an instrument or sing for us.
- lead a meditation or a prayer.
- suggest something we could do differently for a change.
- volunteer as a greeter or steward or provider of drinks

It would be good to hear your ideas.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



## How I Came to Essex Church

My experience of attending and leading Growth Groups often included times of profound emotion, during which it seemed impossible to express the depth of communion to which we had all arrived. Conscious that my regular full-time work as a dramatherapist was drawing to an end, I asked myself where could I find a group or groups in which I might find the same depth of profound fellowship I had experienced in therapy groups?

Obviously it occurred to me the possibility of finding what I was seeking might be discovered in a church of some denomination. As I was then in my late fifties I had already somewhat paddled about in the Sea of Faith, and had discovered that I wouldn't want to actually bathe in most of it. I have always had a strong feeling of God's presence, which if you are a sceptic you might reasonably claim I have inherited from my parents, both of whom were Spiritualists. However that may be, I certainly felt I had no affinity with atheists, even Humanists: fine as friends but not as fellow communicants.

I had attended a few Anglican and United Reform Services, but always felt adverse to aspects of their creeds and rituals, or chilled by their patent lack of warm fellowship. Then one day, after Heidi and I had removed to Hampstead, I decided to try attending Rosslyn Hill Chapel. Actually it didn't LOOK like a chapel, as I thought chapels were supposed to look like – more like a Victorian Gothic church – which actually it is. But the content of the Service I attended, led by the Rev David Usher, and the informal chatty friendliness of its congregation, quickly drew me in. I soon became one of its more active and participating members, until David left for America, and changes occurred which I didn't feel happy with. So I went walk-about (or rather ride about) again.

I attended one or two Unitarian congregations – then one summer Sunday morning in 1993 I rode to Essex Church. Almost immediately I felt welcomed like a long-lost son, as if I had been away overseas or somewhere, and they had been expecting me back! Naturally I felt wanted and liked, and decided to stay and enjoy the five mile or so cycle ride needed to reach it, as part of my Sunday devotions.

This should be a short article, so I will conclude with one or two observations or reflections. First, primarily and foremost I believe a church should be a place where people come to enjoy God's presence in the presence of others. If you prefer the appellation "God" should be omitted, that's fine with me. But what is essential for me is the fullness of feeling the presence of a divine being – in which we all share in some way and to some extent, and a divine being moreover who is personal to us, and shares in our thought-feeling of being a person relating to other persons.

This is what I experience – not always, but sometimes, with my fellow communicants, and this is what holds me to the Church. And this is what I interpret Unitarianism to be – a meeting of persons of many different forms of intellectual conviction, and many different religious and spiritual backgrounds and interests, but united in our search for spiritual and religious meaning, and our conviction that fellowship should be first and foremost.

(As a parting aside I would like to add that to me it seems a pity about our name: reminds me of a name for an institution. How about "Unity Church" and "Unity Way" instead of yet one more dismal "ism"?)

John Hands



"In my life I have met many angels, and an unlikely lot they are.

An angel can be the first person you fall in love with, who lets you down gently and lightly and helps you go forward into the risks of light and love. You can hear one in a bus queue whose name you will never know, but who says something which answers some inner questions, some need which is barely understood. It can be that intimate and strange figure, one's guardian angel.

The analyst who came to my aid at a party was a messenger to me of deep significance. So was a charwoman; so was a Carmelite nun I only saw behind a grille. So was an East End horse. Through a few creatures, human or animal, we are redeemed from our limitations and learn to meet what is strange and unfamiliar, and this is not quite natural – it is a little more, therefore it is supernatural."

**Rabbi Lionel Blue**



## George Eliot: News of Wreath Laying and Griff House

### Wreath Laying at Westminster Abbey

Before I became hospitalised, back in July, Judith and I attended the wreath-laying by the George Eliot Fellowship at her memorial in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

Was the classic novelist George Eliot a Unitarian? I once gave a talk with this title to Lewisham Unitarians. She was never a formal Unitarian but her views developed similarly to the Unitarians of her day. It's worth reading her life story.

George Eliot was born in 1819 and grew up under the influence of evangelical teachers and clergymen. In her early twenties she met progressive intellectuals and, in 1841, read Charles Hennell's 'An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity', which led her to question her religious faith. The next year she had a 'Holy War' with her father when she refused to attend the established church. She had lost her Christianity and her views and values tended towards Unitarian ones. She combined a formidable intelligence with imaginative sympathy and acute powers of observation, and became one of the greatest, most influential novelists (and liked by me!)

At the wreath-laying a superb address was given by Professor Kathryn Hughes after she had laid the wreath. It was a very solemn, absorbing and then chatty early evening event. It was so successful that the fellowship are now likely to hold a George Eliot wreath-laying every two years.



### 'Mill on the Floss' House in Poor State

George Eliot grew up in Griff House, Nuneaton. Today it is a Beefeater Restaurant. In George Eliot's 'The Mill on the Floss' much of her childhood in this 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse can be identified though, of course, real names have been changed, so it is a very important heritage building. The George Eliot Fellowship, the local Conservation Officer, and the manager of the restaurant are concerned about the exterior of Griff.

Major repair work should already have begun. The roof is in a poor state and park seats beside the Round Pond look as though they have seen better days. The dovecote shown in one of the George Eliot biographies is suffering badly and the outside porch to the oldest part of this historical farmhouse seems to be supported by plywood.

Responsibility for this listed building lies with Whitbread who run, among other things, the Beefeater chain of restaurants and Premier Inn hotels. Many of us commend to them a greater appreciation on their part of the value of literary tourism and the places like to see.

The 'Mill on the Floss' (1860) tells the story of Maggie Tulliver. Brought up in Dorlcote Mill - which closely resembles Arbury Mill at Nuneaton where George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) played as a child - and playing in the attic, which is the attic of Griff House, Maggie Tulliver worships her brother Tom and is desperate for the approval of her parents, but her passionate, wayward way and her fierce intelligence bring her into constant conflict with her family. As she reaches adulthood, the clash between their expectations and her desires is painfully played out as she finds herself torn between her relationships with three very different men: her proud and stubborn brother; a close friend who is also the son of her family's worst enemy; and a charismatic but dangerous suitor. With its portrayal of sibling relationships, this is generally thought to be George Eliot's most autobiographical novel; it is also powerful and moving. If you haven't already, you'll enjoy reading 'The Mill on the Floss'.

**Gordon Deaville**

A Forthcoming Event at Essex Church...

## Soul Poetry for Advent led by Carole Grace and Friends

Thursday Evenings at Essex Church:  
2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December from 7-8pm

Downstairs in the Library – All Are Welcome

Put these dates in your diary and come and join us for a series of poetry evenings when we will share with one another some more of our favourite poems.

Advent brings as gifts for us some particularly rich themes - waiting, hoping, darkness and light, promise and potential.

Let us explore together how these and other themes are expressed in the written word and poetic form.



## Warden's Column

It certainly does feel like a busy building at the moment. We have two workmen in today – Jas installing three new heaters in the Church (finally!) and Fraser cutting back various things in the garden and putting up the new leaflet racks in the foyer. We had a yoga group in the Hall this morning and a Unitarian panel in the library all day and this evening we have a full house: Qi Gung in the Church; Psychologists in the Hall and Buddhist meditation in the Library.

It's not even an exceptionally busy day: tomorrow's fairly quiet, but on Friday we have a large public consultation for Kensington and Chelsea Mind and Saturday's a full house again – scarcely an hour when any room is free from 10am to 10pm.

Of course in many ways it's good to be so busy, but it can also be a strain: on the building, on me and Sarah and also on the user groups themselves when there's conflict between their different activities. I'm currently putting a lot of energy into trying to help a meditation group find a modus vivendi with our Sufi chanters; working out how early our Saturday evening users (who now run three services a week) can get in to set up for them and fitting in a new yoga group around our existing Friday bookings. Then later this month the music exams start again . . .

Oh well, on the plus side, various refurbishment and redecoration projects are proceeding apace -

The new library shelving has been much admired and has transformed the look of the room; we're thinking of commissioning another bespoke shelving unit for the Church so that hymnbooks and everything needed for services can be stored more attractively and effectively than in the current cupboards.

The external noticeboards now have lighting and are looking very attractive and the foyer noticeboards and leaflet racks will soon be operational too. The other big project for the foyer is to source some soft furnishings that will work with our curvy walls – the current deadspace behind the sofa seems to have a magnetic attraction for junk.

Elsewhere though, junk is definitely on the retreat. Inspired by having such effective storage now in the library, I've gone through the whole building working out what should be in each room and where and sticking a plan to that effect on the door. On the whole user groups have been very co-operative in returning the furniture to these configurations.

So, all in all, I guess it's a virtuous spiral: more users, more money; more money, more scope for improvements; an improved building, happier users, a better working environment.

Jenny Moy





**A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms  
Sessions led by Sonya Leite**

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm  
14<sup>th</sup> November, 12<sup>th</sup> December**

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 £7 (£5 to members). **Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674**

**‘Finding Our Voice’**

**Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2010,  
from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

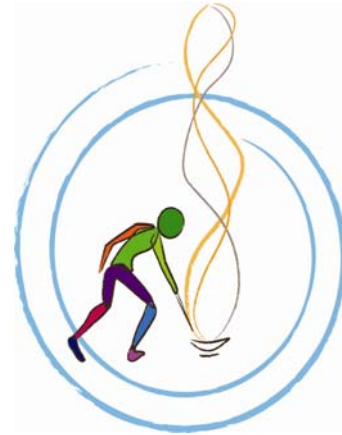


Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. Along with Harold Lorenzelli she has been singing in our choir here at Essex Church for over thirty years now and we’re delighted that she is now offering to lead a monthly session to help us all find our voice.

This session is for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound and 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.

**‘Light the Fire!’  
Discovery Weekend**



**“A time to dream, scheme,  
and build our future”**

**28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2011  
in Aylesford, Kent**

The LDPA (the association of Unitarian congregations in the South East) is bringing together lively and committed members of the district to create our future together.

The weekend will be an opportunity to explore new ways of experiencing Unitarianism, through worship, discussion, music, laughter, networking and imagining. The programme is being planned by Louise Baumberg, Kate Buchanan, Miriam Lahage, Andy Pakula and David Usher. The weekend is open to everyone who wants to dream about our future together and to join in the work of making those dreams a reality.

Generous subsidies are being offered to those under the age of 35, or who have become Unitarians within the past three years. To register, visit [www.ldpa.org.uk](http://www.ldpa.org.uk) or email [louise.baumberg@googlemail.com](mailto:louise.baumberg@googlemail.com)

**Cost:** £160 full adult, £100 concessions for under 35s and new Unitarians (including full board). Discounts are also available for children.

**Note: Our congregation will also be offering subsidies to anyone who wants to attend this event – speak to Sarah for more information about this – you will need to book soon!**

**Venue:** The Friars, Aylesford, Kent. The Friars is the home of a community of Carmelite friars, first established in 1242 and offering beautiful accommodation just three miles north of Maidstone.

**London District Website: [www.ldpa.org.uk](http://www.ldpa.org.uk)**

# How Children Were Invented by the Victorian Churches



Once upon a time, children didn't really exist. They were small adults, and few concessions were made to their childishness. I was startled once to find *A Collection of Hymns for Children* (1808), perhaps the very first designated children's hymnbook: it was full of hymns like:

*Oh! What a wretched heart have I, how full of guilt and shame!  
How justly I deserve to lie in one eternal flame!  
Lord, what a loathsome wretch am I! How brutish and unclean!  
Here, blushing at thy feet I lie, a filthy heap of sin!*  
(Haven't sung this one at Essex Church for a while by the way; surely time for a revival?)

Over the course of the following 50 years or so, children were totally re-invented. Far from being mini-adults who could appropriately sing about their loathsome sinfulness, they became innocent, prattling creatures. They were naughty rather than wicked, full of innocent chatter rather than sanctity. Political activist and Unitarian writer Frances Power Cobbe was moved to attack Sunday School books as being 'written by women of sickly sentiment, full of trivial, baby-house morality.'

As children became more...childish...the emphasis on domestic virtues increased. Novelist C M Yonge wrote that '*No merely spiritual advantage ought to be weighed against filial obedience*'. There was also a class element. Working class children had a sin invented for their own special use: trifling. Where the middle-class children of E Nesbit's books (*The Treasure Seekers* etc) are portrayed as spending most of their time in gloriously unrestricted play, working class children had no such expectations. One of the very few pleasures that the poorest children seem to have had is that of playing on their way to and from school, once universal schooling had been introduced in the 1870's. But here is the disapproval of *Hymns and Moral Songs for Use in Board Schools* (1885):

*When Mother sends me off to school I must not stop to play,  
Nor stand about to chat and laugh, nor loiter on the way;  
But I must hasten onwards, tis better far to wait  
A little while than run the risk of ever being late.*

With this new emphasis on every-day, domestic virtues, parents declined from being of godlike authority to being, frankly, wimps. Unlikely to be welcomed today is this hymn from *The Children's Sabbath Hymn Book* (1861):

*Be kind to thy father, for now he is old, his locks are commingled with grey;  
His footsteps are feeble, once fearless and bold; thy father is passing away.*

Frances Power Cobbe was no more impressed by the infantilized spirituality than she was by the baby-house morality: "*Starting with the wholly false conception of the religious life as if it were one perpetual sickly anxiety and worrying about the soul, they are uneasy if their child enjoys a healthier state and weeps only for a real fall instead of puling continually from over-tenderness of conscience.*"

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a lot of the religious energy put into (mainly working class) Sunday School education was diverted into the temperance movement. Alcohol was dirt cheap and wreaked havoc in poor homes where there was barely money for food. The Band of Hope worked heavily through the Sunday Schools to get children to sign 'the pledge', promising to abstain from drink forever. Sunday school hymnbooks started to contain hymns called 'I Love Water' and 'The Drunkard's Deathbed'. It was hoped that in this way, not only would future generations stick to soft drinks, but erring fathers would be so moved by the sound of infant voices lisping 'Father, dear Father, Come Home' that they would also be led to sign the pledge. There was also a small but determined branch of children's religious literature that showed children converting Roman Catholics to the true Protestant faith. Adult Catholics were no match for the wisdom of these small, lisping children. As Gillian Avery put it, "*Many an English child must have felt that if only he could have the ear of the Pope for five minutes, all the errors of a thousand years could be put right.*" Catholic educationalists obviously did not agree: "*Catholic children must not only be more religiously, but more intellectually educated. They must be better armed than their opponents...*" (Orestes Brownson).

Meanwhile, children continued to be children, and to care little for any controversies raging over their heads. Final word on the subject goes to Flora Thompson, reflecting on the outside lavatory: "*One woman even went so far as to mail up a text as a finishing touch – 'Thou God seest me' – most embarrassing to a Victorian child who had been taught that no one must even see her approach the door.*"

Caroline Blair

# Multifaith Calendar

## ✠ 1<sup>st</sup> November – All Saints' Day – Christian

All Saints' Day was originally known as All Martyrs' Day, and is also called All Hallows'. The work and witness of all Christian saints is remembered with thanksgiving, recognising that not all are known or celebrated.

## ✠ 2<sup>nd</sup> November – All Souls' Day – Christian

On All Souls' Day those who have departed this life are remembered and prayers offered on their behalf. From the beginning Christians have prayed for the dead. In the year 998, All Souls 'the faithful departed' began to be remembered in the Church calendar on this day.

## 🌀 5<sup>th</sup> November – Kathina Day – Buddhist

In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, Kathina Day is celebrated by the lay community offering monks new Kathina robes at the end of their three month Rains Retreat. The date of the festival varies according to when the rainy season arrives in different countries.

## 🌀 5<sup>th</sup> November – Divali (Deepavali) – Hindu / Jain / Sikh

Divali (Deepavali) is the Hindu New Year celebration lasting from one to five days. A festival of light, celebrated with fireworks, Divali is generally associated with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, or with the victorious return of Rama and Sita after their exile. Divali has special significance for Jains, as on this day in 527 BCE Mahavira gave his last teachings and attained ultimate liberation. Lamps are lit and children are given sweets by their parents. Some devout Jains fast for the two days of Divali. Sikhs also celebrate Divali, as the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, was released from prison on this day. He refused to accept release unless fifty-two imprisoned Hindu princes were also released. The Emperor set a condition that only those who could hold on to his cloak could leave prison, so the Guru had a special coat with long tassels made.

## 🌀 12<sup>th</sup> November – Anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah – Baha'i

The founder of the Baha'i Faith was born in Tehran, Persia, in 1817, the eldest son of a Persian nobleman.

## 🌀 14<sup>th</sup> November – Remembrance Sunday

The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day (11th November), when those who died in the two World Wars and subsequent wars are remembered.

## 🌀 16<sup>th</sup> November – Eid-ul-Adha / The Festival of Sacrifice – Muslim

This major Muslim festival marks the end of the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Makkah). Animals are sacrificed by pilgrims at Mina, on the way back to Makkah from Mount Arafat, in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. Muslims around the world share in the celebrations, sacrificing an animal if they can afford it, the meat being distributed to the poor and shared with family and friends.



*Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith (see 12<sup>th</sup> November).*

## 🌀 21<sup>st</sup> November – Birthday of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru (1469) – Sikh

Important anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus are referred to as Gurpurbs. They are marked with an akhand path, an uninterrupted reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, completed on the morning of the festival, kirtan (musical recitation of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib) and katha (lectures on Sikhism). The congregation will share a meal (langar) from the free kitchen, and the celebrations often include firework displays and illumination of the gurdwara.

## 🌀 24<sup>th</sup> November – Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1675) – Sikh

In 1675, the ninth Guru was executed in public, in Delhi for upholding an individual's right to worship in the manner of his or her choice.

## ✠ 28<sup>th</sup> November – Advent Sunday – Christian

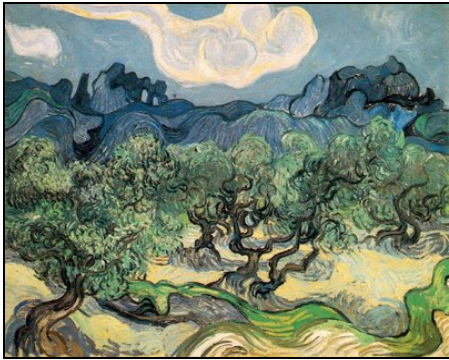
Advent is the time when Christians prepare for celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The four Sundays of Advent are often marked with the lighting of candles on an advent crown, culminating with the Christmas candle on 25th December, symbolising the light of Christ coming into the world.

## ✠ 30<sup>th</sup> November – St Andrew's Day – Christian

Andrew was the first disciple to follow Jesus. He was present on the day of Pentecost, but little is known of his life afterwards, until he was crucified at Patras, in Greece. St Andrew is the Patron Saint of Scotland, and his day is celebrated by Scots around the world.



# Pruning Olive Trees in Autumn



The trees are old, the man is old  
The olives may never be harvested:  
So why does this old man flex his knees  
Bend his back, hack away, saw away  
Chopping and sawing, sweating and coughing  
Grunting at every pause -- why  
Tell me why?  
The Ingleses who come to dive in the pool  
Laughing and splashing, they don't care about  
Raw olives – perhaps just a few pickled ones served  
Up with salsa, as they wait for their costly meal;  
They didn't come for the olive trees, nor pomegranates, nor quince  
Nor even figs or chirimoyas; they paid for the blistering sun  
The pools, the barbeques on the beach, the golf-courses  
The hang-gliders - the fun! So why does this  
Ignorant old man who probably cannot read or write  
Hack so heavily away at these ancient olive trees?  
Why does he pause to tilt back his cap and wipe his brow  
And bare his yellowing teeth at the blistering sun?  
I can't tell you, he can't tell you, you can't tell you.  
When he dies the trees will steadily wither  
And stifle themselves with unpruned suckers:  
The cactus and the poisonous ivy  
Will weave their way through the shrivelled orchard  
And the harvest will never be done.

John Hands  
"Aniram" Andalusia

# Universal Spiritual Gatherings

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November, 6.30-8.15pm  
Held at Essex Church



*The Universal Spiritual Gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.*

**Sacred Sex and Sensuality:** The sensual expression we have one to another is beautiful and pleasurable - a spiritual force that binds us together, that comforts us and builds us up - a force of caring and tenderness. Join with us as we experience our sexuality and sensuality as a conscious meditation - a flowing together of the physical, erotic and cosmic energies. Our service this month will include inspiration from many spiritual traditions as well as wisdom from Jo King, founder of the London Academy of Burlesque.

## Future Dates:

### 10<sup>th</sup> December – Gifts of Light

Celebration for all the family – with seasonal refreshments before and vegetarian supper after.

### 14<sup>th</sup> January – New Beginnings

Including Yoga meditations from Felice Rhiannon.

For further information contact service host:  
Reverend Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

*'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'*

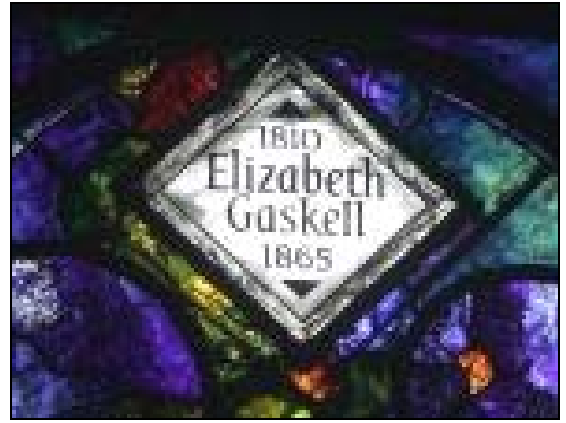


"...while hospitality calls us to recognize our common humanity and our deep connection to one another, it challenges us to appreciate our inherent differences. And that's why hospitality - true, radical hospitality, keeps us off balance. As we struggle simultaneously to rest in our similarities and to delve into the depths of our differences, it feels like we're riding two horses at once, neither of which is completely under our control.

Hospitality doesn't seek to make you more like me, or me more like you. The essence of hospitality - and of the public life - is that we let our differences, our mutual strangeness, be as they are, while still acknowledging the unity that lies beneath them. True hospitality, then, is about simultaneously exploring both our commonalities and our differences, while holding the expectation that mutual learning, growth and transformation will spring forth from our new and deepening relationship. When I am hospitable, I can be me, you can be you, and we can both discover new truths together."

UU Minister, Rev. Peter A. Friedrichs

# Dedication of a Window in Westminster Abbey to Elizabeth Gaskell



The writings of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) have seen something of a revival in recent years, in part no doubt due to the success of the Cranford series on BBC television. One result was the announcement a few months ago that a window would be dedicated to her memory in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, a considerable achievement on the part of the Gaskell Society. This took place on Saturday 25 September 2010, and I decided to go along. It had been stated that the ceremony

would take place after Evensong at 3pm, the clear implication being that you were expected to attend Evensong first! In fact I don't think you would have got in otherwise, since in effect the Abbey closes to other visitors just before this event, something which was causing some disappointment and confusion to a number of tourists there.

It was the first time that I had attended Evensong at the Abbey, though I have had in mind for some time to attend this service at St Paul's Cathedral before we leave London. Firstly I was surprised how many people were there, probably helped by quite a large contingent from the Gaskell Society, a good number of Unitarians, and also members of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations. It would be interesting to know whether Evensong usually attracts so many people, or whether it was because of the extra event taking place later. Secondly the music from the choir was heavenly, helped in a way by the fact that I couldn't see the choir from where I was sitting, so the music seemed to come from some ethereal plane. Being more or less a born Unitarian I am not very familiar with Anglican practice, and I was surprised how little the congregation was involved in the worship, except for a lot of standing up and sitting down again. Fortunately this was all indicated in the very comprehensive order of service that was provided. There was just one hymn at the end of the service. Also (naïve man that I am) I hadn't realised that participants were asked to face east when they spoke the Apostles' Creed.

After Evensong, those staying on for the Gaskell ceremony were invited to gather in the south transept where Poets' Corner is to be found. The dedication service was conducted by the Dean of Westminster, and it was very 'Anglican' in style, with no concession made to Elizabeth Gaskell's Unitarian views. A reading was given by the Chairman of the Gaskell Society and then there was a short address by Jenny Uglow ( who is EG's biographer). Rosemary Dabbs who is Elizabeth Gaskell's great-great granddaughter spoke the words "I ask you, Mr Dean, to receive into the safe custody of the Dean and Chapter, here in the South Transept, this memorial in honour of Elizabeth Gaskell". The Dean responded "To the greater glory of God and in thankful memory of Elizabeth Gaskell, and of all that she achieved, I dedicate this memorial: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen". Not often you get those words in a Unitarian publication! Rosemary Dabbs then laid a wreath under the window. I should say that the memorial was only one small panel in a larger window. After the service those who had tickets were invited to attend a reception at Westminster School.

The following day our minister Sarah led a service at Essex Church to mark the 200th anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth, exploring her life and work. One of the points she made was that we really can claim her as a fellow Unitarian, unlike other eminent people like Charles Darwin and Charles Dickens who had Unitarian connections but probably wouldn't want or accept the label. She was married to the Rev William Gaskell, who was the minister at our Cross Street Chapel in Manchester for many years. There is now a campaign to save their family home in Plymouth Grove and open it to the public ([www.elizabethgaskellhouse.org](http://www.elizabethgaskellhouse.org)). Most of her books were written there, and many literary figures were entertained there. Let us hope the campaign succeeds.

**Howard Hague**

"The UU Church of Tampa contains members whose preferred religious language is Liberal Christian, Secular or Religious Humanist, Buddhist, NeoPagan, and – in my case – Pantheist. We regularly remind each other that, in using our own preferred religious language, we are not requiring the other to use or prefer it. We are, instead, inviting the other to listen back of our words for the common human experiences we share but express in differing ways. We have found that learning to hear each others' language has deepened and informed our own. So it is that we do not merely tolerate theological diversity. We cherish it.

We tend to doubt that anyone approaches religious maturity who has not learned to be – at least to some extent – religiously multilingual. We try not to use language that we know will offend, for offense is not what we are trying to communicate. But we occasionally have to remind ourselves too that, when we respond with negative emotion at another's use of a word that is for them authentic, our own emotional response may be telling us where WE need to do some growing. Sermons use multiple metaphors and look at religious issues as they are expressed in the differing languages of various traditions emphasizing the common human experiences behind the language."

**Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rev. Mike Young**

# 'Entertaining Without Believing'

**Mediaeval Mystery Plays**  
at St Clement's Church, Eastcheap

22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> November 2010



*Contemplation (Judith Elbourne) pleads for God to forgive mankind.*

You do not have to accept the dogma portrayed to enjoy England's Mediaeval Mystery Plays. The mystery comes out of the words being by members of the trade guilds in mediaeval times. And great fun they are too. The secrets of each trade were kept a mystery, only being told to apprentices. They are very entertaining.

Believed to be the only company presenting a selection of these plays each year (for over 60 years) is the Players of St Peter. Their director, Olive Stubbs, translates the plays to be understandable today but still with a mediaeval flavour. There is much humour, enhanced by the comic acting of these excellent players. Remember the words of these Bible stories come from trades people.

The Players productions also include music and song, similar to that sometimes sung at Sunday services here at Essex Church by our choir. My friend Judith Elbourne always looks forward to taking part.

See and hear for yourself. This year's selection of Mediaeval Mystery Plays is being presented at St. Clement's Church, Eastcheap, City of London from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30 and 8.30pm each evening. The 6.30 performances are normally sold out each evening and need to be booked in advance.

**Gordon Deaville**

*Gordon is a Patron of the Players of St Peter*

For more details see: [www.theplayersofstpeter.org.uk](http://www.theplayersofstpeter.org.uk)

## Essex Church Creativity Group 'Printmaking II'

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 7.00-9.00pm



Due to popular demand, we have been repeating our block printing activity this autumn, with a view to making our own greetings cards this way. Some of the prints (made by Juliet Edwards, Jane Blackall, and John Carter) we created earlier in the year are shown above.

Those who were present at the October session started work on designing and carving blocks. In the November session we will be using these blocks to make our prints.

As usual you are welcome to come along to the group even if you are not particularly interested in the activities on offer – bring along your own craftwork – or simply come along to relax and enjoy the good company.

## Changes to the Creativity Group

Regular members of the creativity group have recently considered the plans for the future sessions and decided to try a change to the group starting in the New Year.

Instead of having a specific organised activity every month, which takes quite a lot of planning, we have decided that (most months) participants will simply be invited to bring their own art and craft projects along and enjoy the support and fellowship of the group. We are still intending to offer a specific activity once a quarter and will work on projects for the church from time to time.

## Funeral Planning Workshop

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1-2pm  
Here at Essex Church

This is the second of two informal workshops intended to give you the opportunity to spend time thinking about – and putting in writing – your personal funeral wishes. We will have copies of a worksheet on hand which will help you consider the issues. Even if you are unable to attend this session we can give you a copy to take away.



# One World, Our World

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 17<sup>th</sup> October

When I was a teenager, a long time ago, there were certain items of clothing that you just had to have and when I look back it's hard to imagine that I wanted them so very very much. One of these essential items was an afghan coat – a beautifully soft sheepskin coat covered with bright embroidery. I've never forgotten the conversation I had with my mum one day when I said 'mum, mum, I really need an afghan coat,' and she looked at me in that kind but parental sort of way and said "Sarah, you don't need a coat, you want a coat – and they are two very different things".

Here is the story of the holy one and the magic bowl – from the Islamic tradition.

*Once upon a time a holy man came to the court of a great King with a beggar's bowl and asked the King if he could fill his little bowl.*

*The King looked at the holy man with disdain and thought to himself: 'Why is this holy man asking me, a rich and powerful king, to fill his tiny little bowl?' He proudly and confidently said, 'Yes, I will fill your bowl!'*

*But the bowl was not an ordinary bowl - it was a magic bowl. Hundreds and thousands and millions were poured into it; but it simply would not fill up. It always remained half empty - its mouth wide open for more and yet more!*

*When trying to fill it made the King begin to feel poor, he said: 'O Holy Man, tell me – are you not a magician and is this not a magic bowl? It has swallowed up my treasures and yet it is still empty.'*

*The holy man answered quietly: 'O King, if the whole world's treasure was put into it, it would still remain empty. Do you know what this bowl is? It is the 'want' that lives within us human beings, the yearnings and desires that can never be fulfilled, will never be satisfied'.*

This story of our never ending human wants reminds me of Mahatma Gandhi's words that "our world has enough for everyone's needs but not enough for our greed". The challenge of our time is then how to share the world's resources more equitably – the cause for hopefulness in our time is that there is enough to go round and we have our marvellous human capacity for inventiveness and problem solving to help us find the way. My personal hope is that political and economic strength may be added to the commitment made by many people the world over to reduce poverty, because I believe that the root causes of many conflicts lies in the unfair sharing of resources – be that land, or food or water.

We learn in childhood that we can't have everything that we want, but let's live in hopefulness that we can and will meet everybody's needs.



Isn't it refreshing when you meet someone who is disarmingly honest about their failures. Last year I went to hear Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, speak about 17th century poetry, on which he is very knowledgeable. And at the end, when there was time for questions, the subject strayed from poetry to the Anglican church. He was asked how he thought his efforts to keep this community together were going, maintaining links between the African churches with their needs along with the very different needs of north American congregations. He gave a rueful smile, rubbed his head and said that he felt he was not doing a very good job at all. And at that moment my respect for him grew. Rowan Williams is also a fine writer and communicator – these words of his were written in response to the environmental problems that assail our planet

*"...the fundamental question is who we are, where do we belong, do we belong anywhere in this world? Because we behave as if we didn't, and one of the underlying, evasive, moral and imaginative questions that arises in thinking about climate change and the wider environmental agenda is this habit, this ingrained tradition of behaving as if we didn't belong, as if we were not part of an interactive system, as if we were brains on stalks. So the moral question is not simply ... about what you do, it is about imagining who we are, reviving that sense of being part of a system, not one that imprisons or crushes us, but one in which we become who we are by interaction... we are now in an environment in which local resolution, local decision has to open out into global perspective."*

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

The theory has been proposed that humanity's relationship with the earth changed forever the day that the now iconic photo was beamed back by the American space mission – you can perhaps visualise it now – that glorious photo of the planet earth spinning in dark space, the earth with its swirling white cloud patterns and the rich blue depths of its oceans. By all accounts that view had a profound effect on the astronauts who saw it and I think in some way it has touched us all. We may know intellectually that we live on a spherical, rocky globe spinning in space but to see that is in some sense to know it within your body as well as your mind, for the first time.

*(continued on opposite page)*

## One World, Our World (continued)

What that image leaves me with is a sense that this is it – we are here now, the planet is as it is, it has its magnificent qualities, the gifts with which all life is supported – we belong on it – there's nowhere else to go, there is no external agent to rescue us – we are here now and the planet and all of existence is in our hands as the song said at the start – this is where we belong and this is our task to behave, as Rowan Williams said, as responsible and interacting parts of the whole system, living in harmony and balance with the whole.

As we all watched the dramatic rescue of the miners trapped deep in that mine in Chile this week I think we were reminded once again that we live on one planet and that global media links join us with people on the other side of the world. What a powerful story this rescue has been. It's so rare for us to have good news beamed at us from our TVs, isn't it? And the whole event was so carefully managed from a media point of view. One commentator said that this story and the way that it was managed will soon be appearing in media studies text books, not least because of the skilful way that the new president of Chile has utilised what seemed at first a disaster to be instead a rallying cry for a new Chile that has shaken off its old image of dictatorship and repression. And why not? Perhaps we too can use this event for our own purposes – to seek symbols in our own lives of good emerging from bad, of that which was trapped and hidden being released.

Meanwhile I read yesterday that an explosion in a coal mine in central China has killed at least 20 miners and trapped 17 more. The drama of human life goes on and people working in a perilously dangerous industry will continue to risk their lives. And yet... perhaps another benefit of being part of a world community is that the news media that encircles our world will be able to shine the light of awareness into places that have previously been hidden, kept secret. Maybe the newly invigorated government of Chile will enact much needed mine safety legislation. Perhaps the Chinese government will want to be seen as being fully in charge of its countries many industries. And so as I now start to pass this globe round and invite you if you wish to say something you want to celebrate about our world community – I'd like to start by giving thanks for our media with all their flaws – who still do their bit to spread good news and to shine light in places that were once closed.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**



**Eliot Parsonage Women and Their Unitarian World**

*Rick Taylor writes: "I wrote a short review of a new book on women in the American Unitarian movement called 'No Silent Witness'. Cynthia Tucker has written a lot about women and religious movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century." An abridged version of the review follows.*

In portraying the "full-throated wives and daughters" of the men who were most prominent in the Unitarian Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the author offers some sharply focused details about the challenges women faced and the different types and degrees of oppression they suffered as they struggled to be heard as members of their religious communities. As almost all 19th century documentary accounts reveal, women's lives were inevitably consumed by disease, the death of children, and the constraints placed upon them by marriage. That some of these women could become religious leaders, advocate for women's suffrage, and defy even the expectations of their own congregations is a remarkable testament to their courage and resilience.

One of the troubling through-lines in the narrative is Unitarian resistance to women's influence in the church. Instead of celebrating the remarkable creativity and energy of the women who were such a central part of the early success of the Unitarian movement, leaders of the movement self-consciously sought to "masculinise" it by purging women preachers, downplaying women's contributions, and appropriating rhetoric from the cult of masculinity that has loomed so large in the American lexicon. The result of this strategy was a near-catastrophic decimation in the church's numbers by the turn of the century, with a large number of women permanently alienated and finding new homes in other emerging religious traditions or in a more liberalized "mainstream" Protestantism.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Unitarian Universalism is a relatively small liberal religious organization proud of its historical commitment to social justice and its rejection of doctrinal dogmatism. It is now, as in its formative days, a spiritual home for powerful and unorthodox women committed to social justice and to breaking taboos against women's religious leadership. 'No Silent Witness' is a helpful corrective to the tendency to romanticize Unitarian history. Although this book is ostensibly about the contributions women made, it is also about the resistance they faced from their preacher-husbands and fathers and from their congregations. Not surprisingly, the narrative is replete with the fractious theological and denominational disputes, rivalries, and even scandals that seem inevitably a part of human experience and which we erase from our historical memories at our peril.

**Rick Taylor**



# Charity Collection

At the service on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010

**Trinity Hospice**  
*Living every moment*

We will be having a special charity collection, to raise funds for Trinity Hospice, at the service on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

At the suggestion of the Social Action Group, we will be having a charity collection whenever there are five Sundays in the month, and all the cash collection on that day will go to the named charity. If you are not expecting to be at church that day you can also send donations in for this collection.

Our very own Doris Campbell has been a long-term supporter of the Trinity Hospice and indeed, as some of the congregation already know, Doris has spent some time in Trinity Hospice and has experienced their care at first hand.

## Information from the Trinity Hospice Website:

Trinity's specialist nursing care supports 2,000 dying people every year enabling them to live their lives with dignity, free from unnecessary pain and anxiety. We help families and friends to cope too. It will cost nearly £8 million to provide these vital services this year and, with an aging population, we face ever increasing demands. Just one third of our funding comes from the NHS, which means we rely heavily on voluntary support.

Trinity's end of life care aims to help people, and their families and friends, to 'live every moment' and get the most from their lives. Given the choice, most people prefer to be cared for in the familiar surroundings of home and Trinity's specialist nursing support helps people to achieve this. Trinity cares for the 'whole person' which means that we help with physical, emotional, social and spiritual concerns, as well as with practical advice and support.

For more information see: [www.trinityhospice.org.uk](http://www.trinityhospice.org.uk)



"Each life is sacred. Each person is unique and valued and has a piece of the truth. What we do with our lives matters.

Hope and love are for everyone, no matter what despair there has been, no matter what we have done or not done, no matter what has been done to us.

Healing and wholeness are always possible. This is not only individual salvation but communal. Universal worth and universal love call us to work for justice, for equality in humankind, for beloved community, for heaven on earth."

**UU Minister. Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway**

# Sunday Services at Essex Church



## 7<sup>th</sup> November – "Speaking of God" Service led by David Francis Darling

Our very own David Francis Darling will be leading the first service in November. David was one of the team of theme speakers at this year's Summer School (on 'Speaking of God: Unitarian Adventures in Theology') and this week he will be bringing his talk back to Kensington.

## 14<sup>th</sup> November – "Remembrance Sunday: Swords into Ploughshares" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for our annual Remembrance Sunday service in which we will pay tribute to those who give their lives to protect our liberty and consider the ways in which human societies manage to move on from times of war to times of peace.

## 21<sup>st</sup> November – "A Universal Message" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

We will be welcoming Jenna Nicholas to talk to us in this service about the Baha'i faith and considering the importance of a Universalist message that speaks to all people, without exclusions.

## 28<sup>th</sup> November – "Advent Angels" Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

On the first Sunday of Advent this service will consider the imagery of angels and celebrating their role in the world's religions.

