



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2010

What's On in July:

Saturday 3rd July, 10.30am
Walking Group: Blake's London
Meet at National Portrait Gallery

Sunday 4th July, 11am
"Freedom"

Led by Jen Hazel and
Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 4th July, 12.30pm
Congregational Picnic

Thursday 8th July, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'This I Believe' (1/3)

Sunday 11th July, 11am
"Responsibility"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 11th July, 2-3.00pm
Nia Dance: Holistic Movement

Sunday 11th July, 5-6.30pm
**'Songs and
Silence for the Soul'**

Thursday 15th July, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'This I Believe' (2/3)

Sunday 18th July, 11am
"Commitment"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18th July, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice' Workshop
Led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 20th July, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group:
'Watercolour Painting'

Thursday 22nd July, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'This I Believe' (3/3)

Sunday 25th July, 11am
"New Atheism and God"
Led by Rev Sarah Tinker
and Tristan Prooth

Sunday 25th July, 1.00pm
Social Action Group

Tuesday 27th July, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:
'The Case for God'
by Karen Armstrong

Thursday 29th July, 7.00-9.00pm
Committee Meeting

A Message from our Minister Hidden Waters



The Royal Parks' education department runs monthly walks in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park throughout the year. The walks are free and focus on different aspects of park life – history, geology, the trees, the seasons, bats, birds, ecology. I went on last month's walk which was called *'Water, Water, Everywhere'*, and we were led on a gentle stroll, exploring the hidden waterways of Hyde Park, learning more of their history as we walked. The stream that used to flow through the park was originally known as the Kilburn, from the Anglo Saxon Cye Bourne or king's river, and it later became known as the River Westbourne. Although this had once brought pure drinking water from Hampstead into London, by the 1850s it had become badly polluted and was eventually run underground into pipes so that the Paddington and Bayswater areas could be built. There are just a few places now where you can still hear that running water if you know where to listen, and there is one place – the cascade at the bottom of the Serpentine – where the Westbourne reaches the light of day for a short stretch. The Serpentine itself is now filled from the Thames. In the midst of the park there is a tiny grate where if you look down you can see the rushing waters of the Westbourne, now running through the unromantically named Ranelagh Storm Sewer, with the river twinkling away 20 feet or more beneath you. This becomes an impressive, roaring torrent during heavy rain – somewhere to visit on a wet Sunday perhaps?

Carl Jung, Swiss psychoanalyst, often wrote of the hidden waters of the spirit. He sensed that living waters ran through the whole of life but that too often they were repressed, dammed or covered over, both collectively and as individuals. This, Jung said, was the work of the individualising self, to discover one's own living waters and encourage them to run freely once more.

We're in the midst of a project here at Essex Church to uncover our own living waters – hopefully not literally. We're improving our signage and our notice boards, working to make the foyer area more welcoming and generally making sure that the world knows we're here. How many people remember how dilapidated the front garden used to be? But with a grant from the council, and much work by Jenny and Michaela and members of the gardening group, it now looks a delight. It says that we are a community that cares for its building and grounds.

Our building and gardens and signage speak of who we are as Kensington Unitarians. We as individuals also speak of our faith. We do that every time we have a conversation with someone about our church and our own faith journey and it's good to remember that more people join a church because a friend or neighbour has told them about it than for any other reason. We also speak of our faith in our deeds and in the ways we live our lives. How lovely to think of members of Essex Church as free spirited ambassadors for our liberal faith, encouraging others to discover and enjoy their own spiritual depths, enabling our individual and collective deep waters to bubble to the surface and enjoy the light of day!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Karen Armstrong's "Case for God" – Book Group and Lecture Reflections *
'How I Came to Essex Church' by Tristan Prooth * Notes on Richmond Park Walk
* Spiritual Bookshelf – 'The Zen Teaching of Rinzai' chosen by Anders Robinson *
'A None-Too-Spiritual Journal' by Caroline Blair * RE: 'Sacred Texts' 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
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Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Gathering of the Waters

Sunday 12th September 2010



We will be having our traditional 'Gathering of the Waters' service this September. Wherever you travel over the next few months – or even if you are staying at home in London – please remember to collect a small sample of water and bring it back for this service. We will hold a simple ritual on this day to gather everyone in after the holiday season.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

4th July: Nicholas Holzapfel
11th July: Alice Lambert
18th July: Howard Hague
25th July: Will Lyons

Coffee:

4th July: Kate Brown
11th July: Maire Collins
18th July: Gill Hague
25th July: Caroline Blair

Greeting:

4th July: Gina Bayley
11th July: Kathryn Reynolds
18th July: Arthur Krebbers
25th July: Jeannene Powell

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

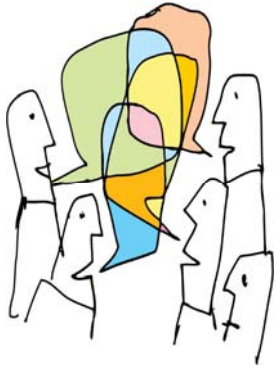
Congregational Picnic

After the service on Sunday 4th July



We will be having a big congregational summer picnic on Sunday 4th July. After the service (and coffee as usual) we will head off to a local park together. Please bring food and drink to share. All are welcome!

This I Believe – New RE Course Here at Essex Church



‘What Do You Believe Anyway?’

Thursdays 8th, 15th and 22nd July, 7.00-9.00pm

Have you ever been asked that question when someone discovers that you are Unitarian and they don't quite understand what that means? A few months ago in the newsletter we had a selection of statements that Kensington Unitarians had written about their faith – people sometimes call these statements ‘Elevator Speeches’ or ‘Lift Pitches’, with the idea that you might only have a minute or so in a lift to tell someone about Unitarianism.



But the question of what you believe is a somewhat different matter. There are all sorts of beliefs that shape the way we are in the world, all sorts of things that we've experienced or learned that affect what we do and how we do it.

In the 1950's Edward R. Murrow, a journalist, asked famous individuals to write 500 word essays about what they believe and broadcast them on the radio. Four years ago, a radio producer began it again. He describes the reason they took this up again:

“The goal is not to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, the hope is to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own.”

I think this work is the kind of thing that we can be doing here in our community. Whilst we say that we respect each other's beliefs, and that we are a diverse group of people, we don't often explore those differences. It's not always easy to talk openly about what you believe. And more often than not, when asked what we believe, the answer has to do with God and Jesus, with life after death or the virgin birth. It isn't about those daily moments that truly define what you believe. But our small groups here at Essex Church do give us a chance to explore at a deeper level with one another, to speak and to listen in a way that's different from everyday life. A number of us completed the Building Your Own Theology (BYOT) course at the end of last year and this new ‘This I Believe’ course is another way for us to explore our beliefs with one another. BYOT did what it said on the packet, or rather the course booklet; it encouraged us to share with one another our theological beliefs. ‘This I Believe’ is more about the smaller, intensely personal ideas and commitments that you seek to live out and that you hold to when the world gets tough perhaps or when you are making changes that challenge your identity.

You are each and all invited to join in reflecting upon what it is you believe, and to express it in a short essay. I will be leading a three week course at the church on the 8th, 15th and 22nd July where you can come and do some exercises to help clarify what you'd like to say, and where you can share with others in the process. If getting to the church isn't going to work for you, there is a workbook that you can use to create your own statement of belief, and we can email that to you or give you a paper copy.

Let's give it a go and try to say what we believe, and listen to each other that we may strengthen what it is that gives our lives meaning, and that we build the bonds between us. Our hope is that eventually we will put together a collection of statements that people have written for the BYOT course and / or the This I Believe course.

Rev Sarah Tinker

With many thanks to the Rev Linda Hart, minister with Richmond and Putney Unitarians, who has already run this course and has passed on all her materials for us to use.

“We have a faith that affirms life and knows that the life of every person matters.

We are a church of reason where there are no wrong questions. We are a place where differing beliefs are welcome, including yours. Our church is a community in which we choose to love alike and not necessarily to believe alike. We create in our Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations opportunities to seek the truth and love and to serve our highest values. We encourage people to live with authenticity and integrity. You are encouraged to share your truth and your beliefs that we might all be richer from the wisdom of each others' light, love and hope.

Jim Brown, one of our District Executives, was once asked what Unitarian Universalists believe. He said, ‘I cannot answer for all UUs. We have a diversity of beliefs, and I am a UU. I can tell you what I believe, and this can provide one voice and one vision that is within our movement’. Sharing our stories and sharing our faith journeys makes us each richer within a community of seeker. This is our way of faith.”

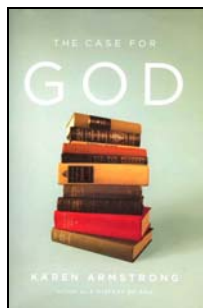
Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rev. Jim Eller



Essex Church Reading Group

'The Case for God'

by Karen Armstrong



Tuesday 27th July, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's next session will be on "The Case for God" by Karen Armstrong. Information from Amazon:

"The enormous popularity of books by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others shows that despite the religious revival that is under way in many parts of the world, there is widespread confusion about the nature of religious truth. For the first time in history, a significantly large number of people want nothing to do with God. In the past people went to great lengths to experience a sacred reality that they called God, Brahman, Nirvana or Dao; indeed religion could be said to be the distinguishing characteristic of homo sapiens. But now militant atheists preach a gospel of godlessness with the zeal of Christian missionaries in the age of faith and find an eager audience. What has happened? Karen Armstrong argues that historically atheism has rarely been a denial of the sacred itself but has nearly always rejected a particular conception of God. Tracing the history of faith from the Palaeolithic Age to the present, Armstrong shows that until recently there was no warfare between science and religion. But the meaning of words such as belief, faith, and mystery has been entirely altered, so that atheists and theists alike now think and speak about God - and, indeed, reason itself - in a way that our ancestors would have found astonishing. Karen Armstrong suggests that if we draw creatively on the insights of the past, we can build a faith that speaks to the needs of our troubled and polarized world."

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 and talk about so we tackle a wide variety of material. See our website for more info:

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/book.html

...a forthcoming event here at Essex Church...

Compassionate Communication Course



**Advance Booking for Special Autumn Course
Thursday Evenings Here at Essex Church
9th, 16th, 23rd September, 7th, 14th October**

THIS COURSE IS FILLING UP – BOOK SOON!

We have made arrangements for trainers in compassionate communication (or 'non-violent communication') to come to Essex Church and teach a five-session course this autumn.

You may already have read the article I wrote about my own experience of an introductory weekend on this subject, with Jill and Richard Broadbent who will be teaching this course, in the February newsletter. I found the training to be very inspiring and worthwhile and would highly recommend it.

Participants will be encouraged to make a small voluntary donation to help cover the cost of providing this training course. It would be highly beneficial if participants could attend all five of the sessions but this is not compulsory.

What is Compassionate Communication?

A response from Jill and Richard's own website:

"Everyday communication is often characterised by reactivity, misunderstanding and a lack of the connection we long for in relationship.

Compassionate Communication is a means of exploring how we make choices in our communication. It supports a greater understanding of how others may hear us and how we may hear others and so provides a pathway to the compassionate and empathic understanding of others and ourselves."

If you are interested in taking part I would very much appreciate it if you would register your interest and put the dates in your diary now as places are limited and we will be advertising the course widely across the district. Please contact me to sign up: rebelrebel@clara.co.uk.

Jane Blackall

Karen Armstrong at Friends House

Several members of our congregation went along to Friends Hours in June to hear a talk by Karen Armstrong. Here are their reflections on the event...

The main hall at Friends House was packed on a hot Wednesday evening in June when Karen Armstrong was giving a free talk about her latest book *'The Case for God: What Religion Really Means'*. It had been a long day and I feared that I'd soon be falling asleep but in fact the time swept by and I didn't drift off for a moment. All credit to Karen Armstrong for making theology relevant and alive, and for presenting her views so clearly. Her book is a response to two extremes in our world – the views of the new, sometimes 'militant' atheists such as Dawkins and Hitchens, and the religious extremists.



She spoke without notes and came across as a deeply humane academic who lives her subject. I've read a lot about her Charter for Compassion, which we held a service about in May, and it's the lovingly compassionate message resting at the core of the world's religions that she returns to again and again. How we behave as people of faith is the important consideration, the nature of the divine is unknowable. Silence is the only appropriate response to the unknown and any attempts to speak about the divine will founder upon the inadequacies of our language. When asked about her own faith position Armstrong describes herself as 'freelance', but I couldn't help but think that she might find a home here with us Unitarians. She seems to combine a mystic's heart with a rational mind and a body that loves life – such an asset in one of our Building Your Own Theology groups!

Karen Armstrong is giving free talks wherever she can so if you would like to hear her speak, keep an eye out for future events and we'll advertise in our newsletter any that we hear of. You might also enjoy visiting the Charter for Compassion website, which is full of fascinating material. You can watch, and hear, Karen speaking about this project and read many accounts from ordinary people of kindnesses given and received. They are heart-warming and highly recommended for those times when you find yourself despairing about the state of our world.

Sarah Tinker

One thing that particularly struck me at the Karen Armstrong talk was the reaction of the audience. It was so heart-warming to see a collection of hundreds of people applaud with such excitement to ideas of religious freedom. Perhaps this was not to be entirely unexpected, given the location and target audience, but it was still encouraging to see. Another thing that made an impression on me arose during the question and answer session. Someone asked Karen Armstrong about scripture – how we should interpret the "difficult" bits – she appeared to argue that the key texts from each of the major faiths were intended to be appreciated through allegorical interpretation and that anything that does not add to compassion or kindness in the world should be disregarded. I found this to be a simple but powerful suggestion.

Karl Askew

God is not, as Nietzsche wrote in several instances, dead. According to Karen Armstrong, the word, the symbol for God is simply past its 'best before' date and is no longer useful. In her eloquent talk at Friends House on her new book *The Case for God*, Karen outlined her argument for the relevance of the human relationship to the transcendent experienced in every world religion. She does not attempt to explain God, but seeks to further an already begun shift of experiential theology.

This shift encompasses continual revelation, not beamed from outer space but welling up within. Response to this source is belief, a word Karen pushes towards its outdated meaning of 'commitment' or 'loved' (one can see traces of German and Dutch for love in the word). Jesus asked his disciples for commitment to bringing forth the Kingdom of God rather than an intellectual acknowledgement of a received theology. When one is thus committed, one can be compassionate, living out the Golden Rule all day, every day. Not least through *The Charter for Compassion*, Karen makes her commitment to living a compassionate life known through her regular retelling of a brief story about Rabbi Hillel. Some pagans approached him and said, 'We'll convert to the Jewish faith if you can recite your entire scriptures whilst standing on one leg.' The Rabbi stood on one leg and replied, 'Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you. That is the message of the Torah. The rest is just commentary, so go and study it.'

My own theology is made up of a lot of 'don't knows'. Karen's work allows this to be a viable position—but only to a point. One sees threads of humanism in her discussions, as she draws religion out to be a necessarily human response to life. One also sees panentheism in her work asserting the interdependent web of the Divine and all of humanity. This makes her epistemological shift very broad: as it should be. In believing in a compassionate, human, Divine-filled life, one cannot help but transcend labels. As people of a liberal faith, Unitarians (Universalists) we are allowed to think differently thus reject creeds so that none are excluded. Yet a suitable watchword for anyone of any faith runs through every world religion: compassion—we feel deeply and suffer with our companions, those with whom we share our bread on the journey.

Tristan Prooth

Warden's Column

We had our weekly staff meeting today: Sarah, Jane and I sitting quietly round a candle; checking in with each other on how our week had been and how we were feeling; brainstorming an agenda; moving forward on some items and getting bogged down in others – some of which have been on the to do list for many, many months – when we had a minor breakthrough

We'd been discussing how upset Gitana the cleaner gets about people resting toilet rolls on the support bar in the disabled loo, because once the roll's half empty they fall through and then people don't want to use them because they've been on the floor and they put them in the bin. She wanted to know why we still hadn't got any toilet roll holders a year after the new toilets had been officially opened.

Sadly, that's a long and painful story. The architect forgot to specify toilet roll holders as part of the original design and when we asked him to recommend some (for his significant hourly rate) he just suggested a double-roll holder from the John Lewis website. We wanted something more robust than that: which held more rolls but kept them covered so we started to do our own research on the internet.

We quickly discovered that most commercial multi-roll holders are designed to work with special non-standard rolls and we didn't want that: we wanted to be able to pop out and buy extra rolls easily if they ever ran out and we wanted to be free to choose more economical/ethical brands (depending on our future priorities). We also wanted the rolls to be on a spindle rather than just lying on top of each other.

Eventually we found a robust looking four-roll holder in brushed stainless steel that met all these requirements and thankfully ordered three of them. A few weeks later, the builders fitted the first one to the wall, and sensibly tried it out before fitting the next two. Unfortunately it turned out that our impeccably ethical toilet rolls (recycled paper in biodegradable plastic from a wholefood co-operative) were just slightly too fat and didn't dispense properly until you'd used the first 20% or so. Could we live with that? Should we buy less ethical loo-roll? We thought not.

We explained the problem to the supplier and they were sympathetic, but unable to give us a refund as we hadn't discovered the problem within three weeks. They did offer to swap them for another dispenser, but even though they're a wholesaler in contact with many different companies they couldn't source anything suitable for us. We could have kept the dispensers, but decided to return them anyway at our own expense so they could be resold.

Surely what we wanted wasn't that unreasonable? What did other people do? We started looking out for elegant toilet-roll solutions wherever we went. Sarah spotted some promising dispensers at the British Museum and I saw some in Kew. We carefully jotted down the brands – but her company had gone out of business and mine only supplied that type in Germany now. Hours and hours of internet research failed to locate another covered 3-roll dispenser of acceptable design. We were stuck.

I explained all this to Gitana and tentatively added that in desperation I'd considered a single-roll holder with a separate stick for spare rolls – but Sarah felt the spares would get peed on. Gitana agreed emphatically: anything standing on the floor of a toilet immediately gets dirty and can't be kept clean; she waved the base of the toilet brush at me in illustration.

Ah, but this stick was wall-mounted I said. She'd never heard of such a thing but was immediately enthused: it could be fixed to the white wall above the tile-line she said – better aesthetically and safe from splashes. This had never occurred to me, but I immediately saw it was an inspired idea & when I put it to Sarah she agreed.

A little more work on the internet located the sticks again (£30 each from Amazon marketplace) and there were even matching single roll holders in the same range. I'd like to say that means that by the time you're reading this all our loo-roll problems will be over – but we still have to work out how to fit the things to the wall, which is bound to be less straightforward than you might think...

All the same, there's some satisfaction in finally taking another small step forward. That seems to be the way things often happen around here. A problem comes up, you try to fix it, but it turns out to be much harder than you thought. You seek expert help, but it's not very helpful. Different ideas about how to proceed at first seem paralysing, but slowly over time priorities emerge and when the missing piece of the puzzle eventually turns up you're ready to recognise it.

The moral of the story seems to be: keep talking to each other; trust instincts and feelings; tolerate indecision; don't give up hope.



Jenny Moy

Ministry Inquiry Days

Two Inquiry Days are to be held this summer for anyone who would like to know more about training as a Unitarian and Free Christian Minister or Lay Pastor - whether they are at an early stage of considering this possibility or are almost ready to make an application for training.

The Days will take place on 24th July in Manchester and 21st August in London, starting at 11.00 for 11.30, and finishing at 3.30. For more information and to book, please contact Mary-Jean Hennis at Essex Hall. Phone: 020 7240 2384, email: mhennis@unitarian.org.uk by 14th July for Manchester and 11th August for London.

PLEASE NOTE CORRECT DATES HERE - WRONG IN PRINT

Essex Church Creativity Group

'Watercolour Painting'

Tuesday 20th July, 7.00-9.00pm



Juliet Edwards will be encouraging us to experiment with watercolour paints in the next session of the creativity group. If you have your own watercolours, it would be helpful if you could bring them along, but we should also have a few paint-boxes available for people to share.

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.



Adult RE at Essex Church:

Reading Sacred Texts

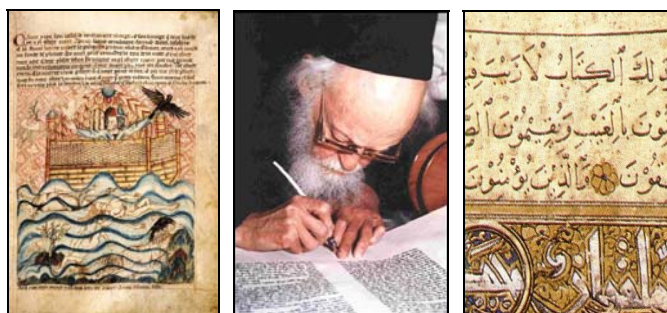
Thursday 19th August, 7.00-9.00pm



Most of the world's religions have sacred texts that underpin their faith. They are treated with reverence; their words may be learnt by heart and are often repeated.

For this special evening you are invited to bring your own sacred texts, which we will then read to one another in an atmosphere of openness and loving respect. What words are special to you? A favourite poem perhaps, some words from scripture, a song or even a silence?

This will be a worshipful and illuminating experience and we will be inviting friends from other faith traditions to join us, so do come along, bring your favourite readings and invite others who might like to share such a sacred time together. All are welcome but do be sure to let Sarah our minister know that you plan to come along – phone 020 7221 6514 or email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.



“The act of creation – whether a painting, a poem, a dance, a sermon, a lesson plan, or even a government report – this act of creating is one of the most spiritual things we can do. Why is this? Because our spirituality is, I believe, that part of our being which is continually evolving and growing in response to the world around us and the world within us. If we stifle our creativity, we run the risk of smothering our spirits. Spirit needs the lively interaction of creative hearts and hands and minds to keep it alive and growing. May we be blessed with an abundance of creativity, and use it to make this world just a little more beautiful, a little more exciting, a little more whole.”

Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rev. Barbara Wells

Essex Church Walking Group:

Blake's London

Saturday 3rd July – 10.30am meeting in the foyer of the National Portrait Gallery



July's walk is based on 'Blake's London': it takes us from the site of his birthplace in Soho in 1757 to various parts of the capital associated with his life, Poland Street, Leicester Square, Piccadilly and the Savoy where he died in 1827. Pavement walking, about 3 miles. Bring your camera! This walk will be led by Will Lyons.

The Essex Church Walking Group has made provisional plans for its activities over the next few months so please put these dates in your diary and plan to come along:

Saturday 7th August

– Grand Union Canal and Horsenden Hill –
(meeting 10am at Greenford station – led by Caroline Blair)

Saturday 4th September

– Two Tree Island – led by Jane Blackall –

Saturday 2nd October

– Hampstead Heath – led by Caroline Blair –

Saturday 6th November

– Hampton Court – led by Caroline Blair –

Saturday 4th December

– To Be Announced (please contact Caroline or Jane if you would be willing to lead this walk) –

We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length.

If you are intending to come on any of these walks please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email us on walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.

Music Hath Charms...



It was great to read in last month's Newsletter of the contributions by our musicians – the singers and pianists.

I often ask myself why I attend Unitarian services and I've got to admit that the music is a great attraction. The choir have really reawakened my love of English music by composers such as Vaughan Williams, Warlock and Rubbra. Our musicians' choice of pieces are ideally suited to the small(ish) environs of Essex Church.

Will Lyons

Songs and Silence for the Soul



Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church

Sunday 11th July, 8th August
from 5.00 to 6.30pm

NOTE: TIME CHANGE FROM JULY 2010

Suggested Donation: £2.00

We've been running this monthly Songs and Silence group here at for over two years now and one of its delightful features is how the group varies from month to month, depending on who comes along.

We always meet on the second Sunday of each month. We sing a wide range of chants from the world's faith traditions and sit together in candlelit silence. It's a gentle and healing, group-led space in which everyone is welcome to join. No singing skills are needed.

Phone Sarah via the church office on 0207 221 6514 or email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you would like more information.

Essex Church Walking Group: Report of Richmond Walk in June

This Saturday's walk was a little different from usual. Carole Grace, who was to have led it had a nasty chest cold and so I offered to lead the group. Other members of the usual group were off walking llamas or rehearsing for a concert and Mary had returned to Canada. So there were four of us; Andrew, Marijke, 2 year old Kareena (new to the walking group) and me. It was one of the hottest days of the year and we all made sure we were well sun-creamed. It was rather difficult walking through a Saturday morning crowded Richmond but once we got off the main street and on to Richmond Hill it was fine. We stopped to look from the viewing point down to the Thames, one of the London scenes that Canaletto painted. Kareena for whom this was a new and strange place told us that she would like to go home. I told her that we would be seeing lovely flowers in the park but she wasn't impressed. Then she asked about animals like hens and cows; no I couldn't promise those but we would see some animals such as deer and horses. She found that encouraging and we carried on past the Royal Star and Garter home for ex service men and women and into the park.



It took a while before we saw any animals and then the best we could manage were squirrels, jackdaws, parakeets and crows. We stopped for coffee and ice cream at Pembroke Lodge (childhood home of Bertrand Russell). It was lovely sitting in sunshine on the terrace overlooking Ham and the blue Surrey hills. I had thought that this might be as far as we wanted to go but it was agreed that we would go on to the Isabella plantation (a further two miles) and as we set off again we came across fallow deer grazing and apparently enjoying being admired and photographed. Soon after this we saw a young woman on a horse (talking on her mobile). I felt I had met Kareena's request for animals! We took the path for wheelchair users which enabled Kareena to use her scooter and appeared to cut off a corner. We got to the pond end of the Isabella plantation and were glad to sit there eating our sandwiches and afterwards feed the ducks.

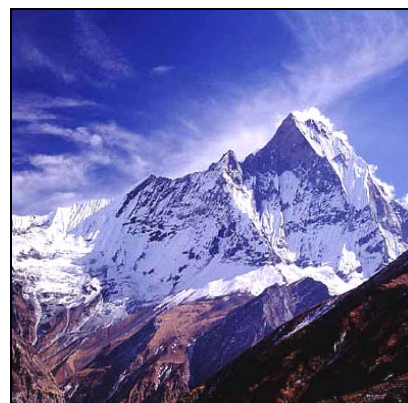


Suddenly we were all exhausted and didn't have the energy to go beyond the pond seeking rhododendrons. We went round the pond and left passing and inspecting an aged Morris traveller in the parking ground. Kareena had reached the stage of being tired but not giving in and as her mum carried her she demanded a story. Marijke told from memory and in verse the story of the Gruffalo, which I didn't know and was delighted to hear so animatedly told. Andrew was pleased because he was finally able to pick out Windsor Castle on the horizon on our way back and as we ambled through town Kareena fell asleep on his shoulder and then it was time for us to say goodbye...

Juliet Edwards

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

*This famous quote is generally attributed to **Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe**, but did he write it? Come along to the service on Sunday 18th July to find out more.*



Youngsters' Social

After the service on
Sunday 1st August



The next of our 'Youngster's Socials' will be after the service on Sunday 1st August. Until recently these events have been bi-monthly but we are experimenting with having a get-together – pub lunch or picnic – on the 1st Sunday of every month (in July there's a whole-congregation picnic). Please put the dates in your diary now!

If you would like to know more about these social events and be kept informed please email social@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

A Forthcoming Workshop at Essex Church:

Spiritual Paths to Help Deal with Stress

Sunday 22nd August, 1-3pm led by
Arthur Krebbers and Sarah Tinker



All the world's faiths have something to offer when it comes to dealing with the stresses and strains of everyday life.

In this course we will find out more about the messages of these faiths and explore ways to put their wise words into action in our lives. All are welcome. No need to book.

Bring a sandwich to eat before the course so that we can start promptly.

Multifaith Calendar

☪ 8th July – The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension (Lailat-ul-Isra' Wal Mi'raj) – Muslim

In the tenth year of his prophethood, Prophet Muhammad journeyed from Makkah to Jerusalem and through the heavens to the presence of God, all in one night. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem marks the rock from which Muhammad ascended. On the journey the Prophet received the command to pray five times a day.

☪ 9th July – Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Bab – Baha'i

This day remembers the death of the Bab, executed by firing squad at noon in Tabriz, Persia, on 9 July, 1850. Baha'is commemorate the day by gathering to read special prayers at noon. It is also a holy day of rest, when Baha'is should not work.

☪ 13th July – Ratha Yatra ('Chariot Journey') – Hindu

This festival is most notably celebrated at Puri in Orissa, India, where thousands of people push huge wagons (rathas) with images of Krishna, known as 'Jagannath' (Lord of the Universe), from which the term 'juggernaut' comes in English. Ratha Yatra is celebrated by Hindus in Britain with processions through some cities.

☪ 15th July – Chokhor (Chokor Duchon) – Buddhist

A Tibetan and Nepalese summer festival that commemorates the Buddha's first Turning of the Wheel, the first teaching concerning the Four Truths. Statues of the Buddha and copies of the scriptures are carried around with music and festivities, to symbolise the spreading of the Buddha's teaching. The whole community joins in the processions and picnics that follow.

☪ 20th July – Jamshedi Noruz (Qadimi) – Zoroastrian

Zoroastrian New Year's Day in the Qadimi calendar.

☪ 20th July – Tisha B'Av – Jewish

Tisha B'Av is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. A full day fast is held at the conclusion of three weeks of mourning and reflection, focusing on the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem, and other tragedies in Jewish history.

☪ 23rd July – Birthday of Haile Selassie I – Rastafarian

Haile Selassie was the Emperor of Ethiopia. Rastas believe Haile Selassie is God, and that he will return to Africa members of the black community who are living in exile.

☪ 24th July – Pioneer Day – Mormon

Commemorates the arrival in 1847 of the first Latter Day Saints pioneers in Salt Lake Valley.

☪ 25th July – Asalha Puja / Dhammacakka Day / Turning of the Wheel of Teaching – Buddhist

This is a Theravada Buddhist celebration of the First Proclamation by Gautama to five ascetics in the Deer Park near Benares. He taught about the Middle Way, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths.

☪ 26th July – Night of Forgiveness (Lailat-ul-Bara'h) – Muslim

The Night of Forgiveness (Lailat-ul-Bara'h) takes place two weeks before Ramadan. Muslims spend the night in prayer seeking God's guidance and forgiveness for their sins. Many Muslims believe that a person's destiny is fixed for the coming year by God, on this night. In some parts of the world Muslims visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional.

The Spiritual Bookshelf

#14: 'The Zen Teaching of Rinzai' by Irmgard Schloegl

This is the latest in our occasional series of articles where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them...

This Translation by my teacher Venerable Daiyu Myokyo Zenji, of the Record of Rinzai, is of a very old Chinese text compiled by Master Rinzai's monks who wrote down the teishos (or sermons) of their teacher. Rinzai (or Lin Chi, in Chinese) lived in the ninth century A.D. during the golden age of Zen in China. Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in India, the birthplace of the historical Buddha. It was brought to China by the semi-legendary monk Bodhidharma, whose teaching was "Not taking a stand on words or phrases; a special transmission outside of the scriptures; a direct pointing to the heart; and becoming Buddha." Thus, Zen always places a strong emphasis on direct experience, over the intellect or piety. The masters of Zen, including Rinzai, used words sparingly to guide their students to that which lies completely beyond words. This is called genuine insight, the Original Face, or the sound that one hand makes.

The text has a very modern resonance to it. This is because Rinzai is simple, direct and profound. One of his sayings was: "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill the Buddha." This is not to be taken literally, of course. If you take the Buddha as something outside yourself you have already lost the way. The same can be said of any ideal or anything we hold on to as pure or perfect.

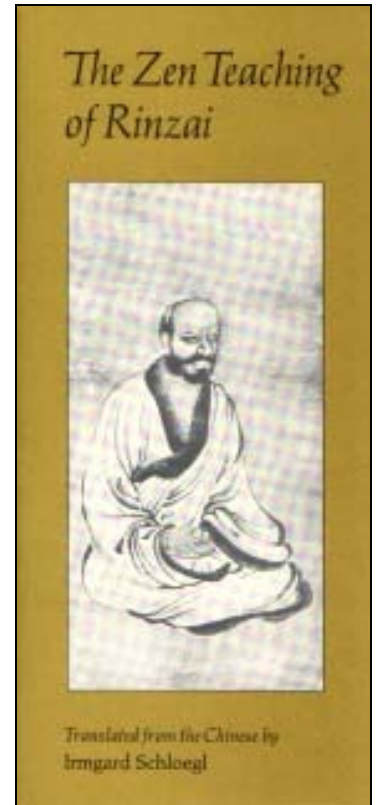
The text is divided numerically into 87 passages in three parts which are not necessarily chronological. They usually involve a short question and answer session, known as a mondo. For example, in passage 1b, the text reads: "A monk asked: What is the essence of Buddhism? The master gave a Katsu (Rinzai's shout, a teaching device). The monk bowed. The master said: This one can hold his own in debate."

Master Rinzai goes on to say there is no Buddha, and no Dharma to seek. This is coming from a Buddhist monk. The point is that there are two truths. From a relative standpoint there is me with my problems and suffering (the First Noble Truth), and there is a further shore to be reached by diligently practicing the way. From an absolute point of view, there is no attainment, no separate "I", and no Buddha.

I believe this book is a welcome addition to any "Spiritual Bookshelf." The Buddhist Society offers classes on Introducing Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. www.thebuddhistsociety.org.

Anders Robinson

This book is currently out of print but can be read online or downloaded from the following website: www.thezensite.com



"The most powerful anchor on our potential to soar high in life is the past. The past contains the dead weight of experience, learned beliefs and all our mistakes. Life cannot truly begin until we are able to say goodbye to the legacies of yesterday at will. Like a filing cabinet, the past is a resource of information for learning, but it is not a place to live. When you go to work do you spend your day in the filing cabinet? How often will you/did you live in the past today? Say goodbye and make it final. Saying farewell to yesterday, last month and last year is the sign of a person who wants to live for today and is truly alive to all the possibilities of 'the moment', while fully aware that all they think, say and do right now, creates tomorrow."

Brahma Kumaris - Thought for the Day

The Brahma Kumaris movement offers free courses in meditation as well as this thought for the day' programme. Visit their UK website www.bkwsu.org/uk/ to read more.



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

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm
(11th July, 8th August)**

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 Essex Church members)

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

‘Finding Our Voice’

Singing Workshop with Margaret Marshall

Sunday 18th July, 12.30 to 1.15pm

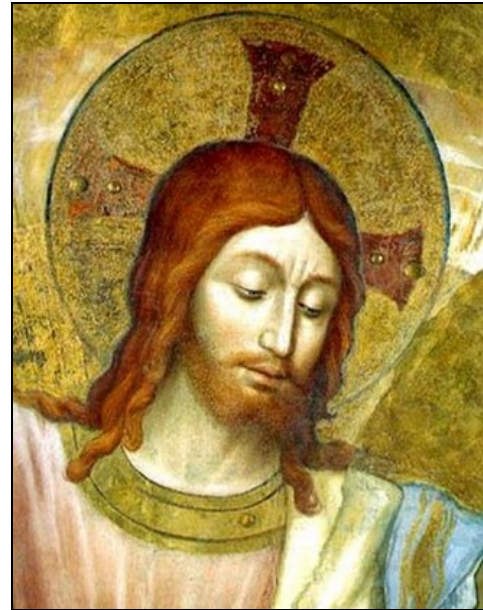


Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. Along with Harold Lorenzelli she has been singing in our choir here at Essex Church for over thirty years now and we’re delighted that she is now offering to lead a monthly session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

**Unitarian Christian
Association**



Summer Meeting

Saturday 17th July, from 12.30 to 4.15 pm.

**Golders Green Unitarians,
31½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS.**

Nearest station: Golders Green (Northern Line, Edgware Branch). For fuller details of how to get there, see the congregational website: www.ggu.org.uk

Outline of the Day’s Events:

12.30 – 2.00 : Arrivals and lunch (please bring a packed lunch; tea and refreshments will be provided).

2.00 – 3.00 : Welcoming Service with communion: Celebrant: Jim Corrigan. A simple sharing of bread and wine (for those who want to partake).

3.00 – 4.00 : ‘Bible Poverty’, a workshop led by the Rev Jeffrey Gould, moderator of the Unitarian Christian Association. Has Scripture lost its prominence in Christian worship and private devotion? Unitarians were once leading contributors to Biblical scholarship. Is it time for liberal religious movements to re-engage with Scripture?

4.00pm : Tea and departures.

This event is supported by the London and SE District Liberal Christian Affinity Group. All are welcome!

**For further information please contact Jim Corrigan
on 020 8361 1843 or jim@corrigan.myzen.co.uk**

Latest News from the Committee



1. A few improvements should be visible to our building. The new curtain in the hall has been rehung on a better track, and looks very warm and attractive in spite of some slightly controversial finishing.
2. The kitchen and loo floors have been resealed, but must not be attacked with anything abrasive or the seal will all come off, just in case anyone drops a pot of ink on there.
3. The garden is looking really nice at the moment, thanks to Michaela, and she has further plans for improving it. The random collection of (mostly concrete) tubs in the back garden will be replaced with nice wooden planters.
4. Jim, Caroline and Iona Blair are hoping to visit our two sponsored orphans, Patience and Fortunate, in Swaziland in July. One Sunday's cash collection will be put towards their next year's sponsorship, and we have the Christmas card money in hand, but any further donations/suggestions re raising the money will be gratefully received.
5. The church library will be completely revamped soon to make it more attractive, useful and comfortable. Patricia Walker left some money to the church which we can use for this, so we hope the newly beautiful library can be a fitting tribute to her.

The next meeting of the management committee will take place at 7pm on Thursday 29th July.

"Pressed, I would define spirituality as the shadow of light humanity casts as it moves through the darkness of everything that can be explained. I think of Buddha's smile and Einstein's halo of hair. I think of birthday parties. I think of common politeness, and the breathtaking attempt to imagine what someone else is feeling. I think of spirit lamps."

John Updike

How I Came to Essex Church



Coming to Essex Church felt like coming home. Typically wanting to be prepared, I listened to a few of Sarah's sermons on iTunes and familiarised myself with the community website, so I already had a good feeling. I also had an idea of what to expect, having been involved in Unitarian Universalist communities when I lived in Iowa/South Dakota and then California. Most importantly, when I did roll up, I felt immediately welcomed into a very joyful place of worship and fellowship.

I had, a month or two before, decidedly abandoned the Anglican Church after a period of tension, unable any longer to deal with the hypocrisy surrounding sexuality, institutional hierarchy and creeds I could no longer say with integrity. Why I did not leave earlier is another story entirely but I knew that if I continued to wake up on a Sunday morning needing to force myself out of bed to walk the five minutes to my parish church, only in order to feel gut punched for an hour, my spirit for traditional religion would finally transition from a dry patch to Death Valley.

My disciplines of study (I am on the final stretch of a degree in anthropology at UCL but have for years enjoyed studying theology) and prayer were what carried me on my 'church search'. I felt that I had to return to liberal religion and that I could not afford to be too nervous to try things. In the meantime, I was able to ask myself about what I really believe. There were no easy answers and some are still unanswered — I believe in spiritual adventure. I re-read some books that had been instrumental in shaping my faith and spent a lot of time in silence. I listened to my mind and heart, then got off the cushion to do some discovery.

Now, I am riding two horses past the desert oases to the pastures: the first being the freedom of the Unitarian faith I initially encountered by accident twelve years ago, full of all the joy of song, readings and chants that we can draw from the wealth of the world's traditions, underpinned by a deep appreciation of the individual and a compassionate vision of a better world. The second is the freedom of the Quaker faith, which appeals to the contemplative activist inside of me for the same reasons. I see these two traditions as beautifully complementary: neither detracting from but rather adding to each other from the richness of their traditions. The issues I struggled with in the Church of England no longer plague me: no creeds, no problems with gays or women, no bishops and no doctrine. In these two communities, we minister to each other in joy and concern and rely on every individual's search to guide us to Truth.

And that is what is most important to me: the fact that as Unitarians we form our own theology, spirituality and community, remaining open to their evolution. Now on Sundays, whether I am to be at Essex Church or Friends House, I wake up excited and feel adventurous. Wherever I am, I hold the other in my thoughts and thank God that I am so blessed to have such affirming and generous spiritual homes. There are still some packed boxes in the corner but piece by piece, I can unwrap treasures and settle in.

Tristan Prooth

Elizabeth Gaskell Bicentenary



**Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey
25th September 2010**

All Unitarians are invited to attend the dedication of a pane of glass to Elizabeth Gaskell in the memorial window in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey on Saturday September 25th following the evensong service, which will start at 3.00pm. The dedication ceremony will begin about 4pm. There will be time to look round the Abbey free of charge before it closes at 5.00pm. This event has been arranged by the Gaskell Society who have funded the cost of the design and installation of the window along with a one-off payment for its future maintenance. The dedication will probably have the highest profile of the many events planned for the bicentenary year. Further details are available from the Gaskell Society- www.gaskellsociety.co.uk.

Rev Dr Ann Peart (via Gordon Deaville)

...a free lecture you might be interested in...

What Does “Eureka!” Feel Like? Discoveries in Science and the Arts

**Thursday 1st July 2010 at 5:45pm
Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank, SE1 8XX**

Science is classically depicted in books and films as being all about Eureka! moments – but what's it like when one actually happens? Do Eureka! moments only occur in science or are artistic discoveries made in the same way? Can a perfect string of notes, set of brush strokes or turn of phrase be conceived in the same way as an extraordinary leap forward in scientific thinking?

This 'Café Scientifique' event will explore the differences and links between a scientist's and a poet's perspective on true moments of genius.

Join Jocelyn Bell-Burnell, who had her own Eureka! moment discovering pulsars in the 1960s, and poet Jamie McKendrick to discuss the nature of how we make discoveries about ourselves and the world.

Thoughts on the 'Soul'



The dictionary gives several meanings for the word 'soul':

'The immaterial part of a person;

the actuating cause of an individual;

deep feeling or emotion and the human embodiment of something: "the soul of discretion".

Attempts have been made to establish the soul as existing and having a physical presence (see 'Weighing the Soul' by Len Fisher in the Essex Church Library).

In the Christian tradition there are many festivals celebrating the idea of 'soul': 'All Souls' or 'All Hallows' in which all the known and unknown Christian saints are remembered. The same festival has, of course, its Eve and is known as 'All Hallows Eve' or more commonly as 'Hallowe'en.' It is a festival linked with the Celtic end of summer festival 'Samhain'. This concern for the soul (however conceived and in whatever number) is not confined to the Christian Church. That these 'All Souls' festivals are still 'celebrated' or acknowledged in both secular and religious ways across the UK and the world bears witness to the concern with the soul and its 'fate'.

For me, as a humanist, soul is 'memory' and as such not a physical thing, and not everybody has one, as conventional religious thinking would have us believe. Witness how 'still present' someone seems who was close to one or who made a deep impression on one's consciousness. Buddha said 'Since neither soul nor aught belonging to soul can really and truly exist, the view which holds that this 'I' who am 'world', shall hereafter live permanently, persisting, unchanging, yea abide eternally: is not this utterly and entirely a foolish doctrine?'

Submitted by Will Lyons



"Insights from myth, dreams, and intuitions, from glimpses of an invisible reality, and from perennial human wisdom provide us with hints and guesses about the meaning of life and what we are here for. Prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action are the means through which we grow and find meaning."

Jean Shinoda Bolen

A None-Too-Spiritual Journal

(Genuine diary extracts from my teens)



"In Junior Church looked at x-rays of dogs that had swallowed spoons and turtles."

"Spring cleaned my bedroom. Found a lot of junk, including my Bible."

"Went out to buy some white school socks but couldn't find any, so I bought a book about violence instead."

"In church, Mr Smith told us about fish breeding. He brought along some cardboard models to demonstrate."

"Went to the vicar of Wittlesford's house for dinner. The vicar's wife had a black eye and wore a wig. She played the mandolin."

"Auntie Fan's wedding. The bridegroom's son was best man. He is 65!" *(I may possibly have meant the bridegroom and not the son here)*

"We had a man instead of a minister at church today."

"Had a meeting of the Urchins (URC youth group) to plan a service. People suggested sitting the congregation in a circle facing outwards, then removing one of the chairs at intervals."

"Had an Urchins meeting to discuss 'The Church in 1984'. People voted that sermons should be less boring in future."

"Trip to the National Portrait Gallery. London was full of eccentrics and mad people. I do wish I could live there."

Caroline Blair



"Doubting is not a sin. Nor does it denote a lack of faith. Lack of faith is a pure and simple disbelief. Doubting is an invitation to enter into the mystery more deeply, to go beyond the superficial."

John Aurelio

Essex Church Audiobook Library



The Audiobook Library is kept in a zipped disc wallet in the library and will be added to as titles become available. These discs can either be listened to in the Library on the equipment provided or borrowed against a signature.

Audiobook Catalogue:

'A Short History of Myth' - Karen Armstrong (3 discs)

'The Origin of the Universe' - John D. Barrow (2 audiotapes)

'Connections' - James Burke (1 disc)

'The Ancestor's Tale' - Richard Dawkins (7 discs)

'The God Delusion' - Richard Dawkins (6 discs)

'The Six Wives of Henry VIII' - Antonia Fraser

'Evolution and Extinction' - Stephen Jay Gould (2 discs)

'The History of English Poetry' - read by Derek Jacobi (1 disc)

'Uncertainty-Einstein, Heisenberg and Bohr' - David Lindsay (1 disc)

'Doors Open' - a novel by Ian Rankin (4 discs)

'Science and Religion' - Bertrand Russell (1 disc)

'Humorous Poems'- Various voices (1 disc)

'Classics of Western Philosophy' - Various voices (3 discs)

'The Story of Poetry' - Various voices (2 discs)

'Well Loved Poems' - Various voices (2 discs)

Will Lyons

Universal Spiritual Gathering

Friday 9th July, 6.30-8.15pm
Held at Essex Church



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

This month: contemplation of the Source of All, the healing presence at the heart of all sincere spiritual traditions on the theme 'Beacons of Light' with guest contributor Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, President of the World Congress of Faiths (www.worldfaiths.org).

The service begins with Kirtan (chanting the name(s) of the Divine) led by Illumina (Sean Shoket and Lila Cohen) and will include music, eternal wisdom and devotion from many faiths and spiritual traditions. All are welcome.

Future Gatherings:

Friday 13th August:

Stillness: including silent Quaker meditation.

Friday 10th September:

Healing the Shadow: including 'Drop the Judgement'
with Rev. Rebecca Young

For further information contact service hosts:

Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980

Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'

Summer Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 11th July**. 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!!!

Sunday Services at Essex Church

4th July – "Freedom"

Service led by Jen Hazel
and Rev. Sarah Tinker

The freedoms we enjoy today were won by other people's struggles. In this service Jen will be giving us an American's perspective on the symbolism of Independence Day and we'll be exploring the gift of freedom in the world of faith.

11th July – "Responsibility"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With freedom comes responsibility, but what does spiritual responsibility entail? The ability to respond perhaps? And how can we hold our responsibilities lightly yet reliably? In this service we will honour, in a simple ritual, some of the responsibilities we are proud to hold.

18th July – "Commitment"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With responsibility comes commitment. What does it mean to commit oneself to a cause or task, relationship or community and how does commitment to our faith help us in our journey through life? Some people claim that it is too easy to be a 'spiritual butterfly' in this day and age, always ready to fly off to a more tempting resource. Is this a helpful metaphor and can, and should, Essex Church try to avoid becoming a Buddha?

27th June – "New Atheism and God"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Tristan Prooth

In this service we will be focusing on the writings of Richard Dawkins and Karen Armstrong as we consider the recent debates about religion. Can we as Unitarians help in bridge building between the atheists and people of faith or is it better to avoid the conversation altogether?

Taking Part in Services



People are always welcome to take an active part in worship here at Essex Church. If you have something you would like to contribute to any of the services listed above – a reading, a prayer or meditation, choosing a favourite hymn, offering some music or perhaps a subject for a service in the future – let our minister know.