



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: June 2015

What's On...

Tuesday 2nd June, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 4th June, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Those Who Inspire Us'
Led by Sarah Tinker & Niall Doherty

Sunday 7th June, 11am-noon
'Mission Possible'
Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7th June, 1-4pm
'The Art of Saying "No"' Workshop

Tuesday 9th June, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 11th June, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: Bring Your Own

Sunday 14th June, 11am-noon
'Liberty'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14th June, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Sue Smith

Sunday 14th June, 2-3pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 16th June, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 18th June, 7-9.00pm
Committee Meeting

Sunday 21st June, 11am-noon
'A Community of Spirit'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st June, 12.30pm
Essex Church AGM

Sunday 21st June, 3.30-5.00pm
True Heart Theatre

Tuesday 23rd June, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 25th June, 7-9pm
Women's Group (*continuing*)

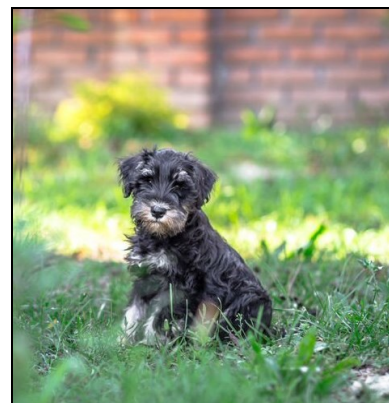
Sunday 28th June, 11am-noon
'Gaia, Mother Earth and the Oneness of Everything'
Led by Sarah Tinker and Jim Scott

Sunday 28th June, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 30th June, 6.45-9pm
Men's Group with Jim Blair

Meeting the Neighbours A Message from our Minister

Some of you may have met Cina the puppy who has been staying in my flat for a few weeks here at the church. She is a gorgeous creature who takes life at full pelt and then flops on the floor and falls instantly asleep (*see 'Things We Can Learn from a Dog' on the back cover*). She's remarkably skilled at getting her needs met. If you don't wake up early enough for her she nibbles any body parts sticking out from under the duvet. And so it is that I've been pacing the streets around the church somewhat earlier than I am used to appearing in public, attached by a lead to a friendly dog.



This has led to all sorts of interesting conversations with people I've never met before. We seemed to bump into one particular dog-human combo most mornings. The human had lived in our street most of his 70 years and wondered why we'd never met before. But then he answered his own question with a laugh, 'You've only just got a dog.'

Being out on the local streets has alerted me to all the many different groups of neighbours we have – the dog owners, families of small children being delivered to the nursery in our basement, older children zooming to school on their scooters, businesses going about their business all around us, all the different groups of people who use our church building for their activities, and the many people who rest awhile on our benches at the front of the church.

You don't need me to tell you what a crowded place London is. 'Outreach' is a necessary part of a healthy community life but quite how to go about this task of reaching out in such a busy city is a question to ponder. Living 'over the shop' as I do it's sobering to realise how few of the neighbours I know. Dogs and children are great connectors. They allow us to speak with complete strangers. They transcend language barriers. They give us a way to reach out to others. If we want to get to know our neighbours we could try and borrow a pack of fluffy puppies and cute children and hang around outside the church, engaging passers-by in conversation. Or we could get on with our everyday lives and be sure to let people know what Kensington Unitarians means to us. Some of our neighbours may be in need of a loving community, may be longing to find a place to be themselves and to work with others to create a world of justice and love. Let's be sure to tell them who we are and that they're welcome to bring dogs, children, or whoever and whatever is important to them.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Children's Leader Needed * 'Goodbye-ee' article by John Hands * Men's Group Reflections * Thank you from Tyler * 'What is Community?' and 'Our Living Stories' with True Heart Theatre * Unitarians at London Pride * Report from the Essex Church Management Committee * 'The Art of Saying "No"' workshop with Jeannene Powell * Reminder about mobile phones * 'The Power of Purpose' * 'First Things First' sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians are a community of kindred souls who meet each week at Essex Church in Notting Hill Gate to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey. We are proud to be part of a worldwide and historic liberal religious tradition.

Our main activity is Sunday worship and we hold a service each week at 11am. All are welcome. Services are usually themed and include readings from a variety of sources, prayers, music, singing, stillness, and a short sermon. Our children's leaders provide an alternative programme of activities for younger people.

Small-group activities are another key part of our programme. We offer courses and one-off workshops exploring spiritual and religious matters and considering life's meaning together with others on the spiritual journey.



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk



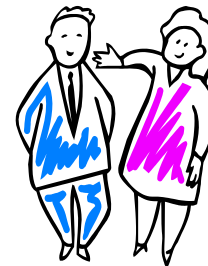
Let us pray.

It is very meet, right and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places, when the burden of them is intolerable turn our ***** mobile phones off. Amen.

Your very own Grumpy Old Woman
and ex-Anglican **Sue Smith**

Sarah adds: We'd really appreciate it if we could all switch mobile phones to silent for the worship hour or let the worship leader know in advance if for any reason you need to keep yours on. If you're not sure how to silence your phone do ask for assistance.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

7 th June:	Veronica Needa
14 th June:	Gina Bayley
21 st June:	Ted Nist
28 th June:	Melody

Coffee:

7 th June:	Liz Tuckwell
14 th June:	Jane Blackall
21 st June:	Melody
28 th June:	Roy Clark

Greeting:

7 th June:	Billy Jackson
14 th June:	Sue Smith
21 st June:	Runa Alam
28 th June:	Gina Bayley

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you are willing to be on the rota mailing list.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Finding Our Voice' Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



**Sunday 28th June, 19th July (note irregular date)
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

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

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 4th June, 2nd July, 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This will be followed by refreshments and fellowship.

Our June gathering will be led by Sarah Tinker and Niall Doherty on the theme 'Those Who Inspire Us'. If you would like to know more about these gatherings contact jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

A Date for Your Diary – please plan to be there!
we encourage all members and friends to come to

Essex Church AGM and Membership Service

Sunday 21st June 11am and 12.30pm



We would like to encourage all members and friends of Essex Church to come to church on Sunday 21st June when we will be having our membership service and AGM.

The service will include a simple ceremony, welcoming new members to the congregation, and inviting everyone to re-affirm their commitment to our Unitarian community. The AGM is a chance to review our activities, get involved in future projects, and make our dreams for this church a reality.

A Message from Sam: Children's Group News



Lots to report this month as we celebrated Carolyn's birthday, Tyler took part in a football tournament, Andrew was in a fencing event, Caio is going to be singing a song on radio 4 soon in a production by a well-known director of radio plays and Alyssia cheers us all up with her lovely smile and her clear sense of right and wrong. What marvellous full lives our children lead. I really appreciate them all and their contributions to our interesting chats on Sunday mornings. We learn so much from each other. I will be sad to be leaving Kensington Unitarians and we're doing all we can to find someone to replace me as leader.

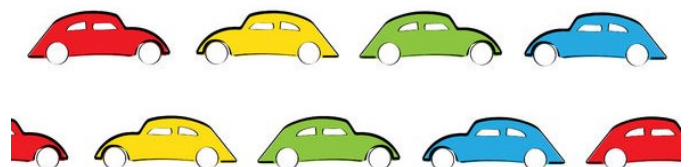
Sam Boyero

ADVERT: Children's Leader

Kensington Unitarians are looking for one or maybe two children's leaders to lead inspiring and fun sessions for our children's group on Sunday mornings, 11am to noon. Would suit a parent or someone with childcare or teaching experience. Good pay. Starting soon. We can give full support with ideas for activities.

For more information contact our minister Sarah Tinker on 07960 057567 or email info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Parking Near Church



The traffic wardens are fierce around the church and the rules about when parking is or is not allowed get changed from time to time. If you park a car in this area we suggest you check the signs on the street each time you park. In Palace Gardens Terrace restricted parking in residents' parking bays has been extended to 8.30am to 10pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 1.30pm on Saturdays but still no restrictions on Sundays. The rules seem a bit easier for the parking meters and single yellow lines but our suggestion is to check carefully before leaving your car.

Good Cause Collection of the Month
GA Weekend
The General Assembly of Unitarian
and Free Christian Churches



Collection on Sunday 28th June

With your support the General Assembly will: develop professional ministry and local leadership, represent Unitarians nationally and internationally, organise our annual meetings, produce publications, posters and leaflets, provide training and development programmes, support the first 2020 project for church growth, advise on buildings, legal and governance issues, promote religious education and provide a national youth programme, and more...

For more information see: www.unitarian.org.uk

Previous Charity Collections:

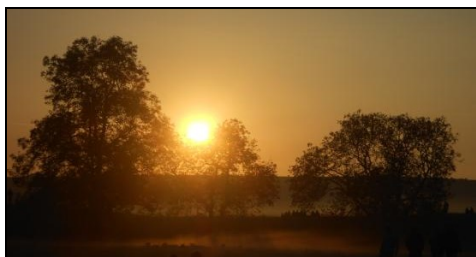
Thank you for your generosity in contributing to recent charity collections. I am pleased to let you know that we will be sending the following donations to good causes:

April – Simple Gifts – £126.04

Emergency collection for Nepal – £285.50

May – Acid Survivors – £125.60

Summer Solstice Circle



Sunday 21st June at 7pm at Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead

A group of congregation members at Rosslyn Hill Chapel have for many years marked the turning of the pagan wheel of the year in evening gatherings together. They are inviting other Unitarians to join them and I plan to go on June 21st so do get in touch if you would like to join us, maybe travelling together. And I wonder if some members of our congregation would like us to more actively mark these special festivals. Let me know if this is something you'd like to get started.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Report from the Essex Church Committee



Juliet Edwards has kindly agreed to step into the role of chair of congregation for now and the committee is grateful to her for taking another officer position.

We heard latest reports about our leaking church roof. A firm is planning to lift a piece of copper to see what's happening underneath. Our long-serving church heaters seem to be reaching the end of their working lives and cannot be repaired. They also cannot be replaced 'like for like' as such heaters no longer exist, combining as they do a gas fired heater with electric fans to blow the heat out into the large space of the church. You may have noticed that a new heater has been fitted. This was an experiment and has not been a success because it doesn't have the necessary fan. Are there any heating engineers out there who would like to advise us what to do next?

The committee expressed their sadness that Sam our popular and enthusiastic children's leader is leaving us at the end of the summer term. We wish Sam, Caio and Tommy the dog all the very best for their next steps and now the search is on for someone to replace Sam. Have a look at the advert elsewhere in the newsletter and do pass it on to anyone you know who might be right for the job.

Committee members praised last month's favourite hymns service and wanted to remind everyone that our musicians and worship leaders are always glad to receive requests for hymns and music you'd like to hear. Let Sarah or Harold know. We were also pleased to take part in an impromptu demonstration of our support for the 'migrant lives matter' campaign encouraged by our friends at Simple Gifts, a Unitarian social justice project based in Bethnal Green.

Our Unitarian community had been asked to make donations towards the Red Cross collection for those affected by the earthquake in Nepal. Our congregation sent £285.50 and this will join with contributions from other congregations up and down the country. We're glad to be able to offer the use of our space for free to other fundraising efforts for Nepal including a local choir practicing for a concert, our friends from True Heart Theatre, and a yoga group doing sponsored salutations to the sun.

The committee discussed the idea of offering people the chance to place memorial plaques in the church garden and we're going to do some further research on this idea and we're also going to explore the possibility of having curtains in library. Lots is going on and do feel free to talk to any committee member about our work here at the church.

London Playback Theatre: 'What is Community?'



**A Performance in Aid of the
Red Cross Supporting Nepal**
Thursday 11th June, 7.30-9.00pm
Here at Essex Church

London Playback Theatre is a multicultural team of highly experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators and therapists, who have been practising and performing together for many years. Through the spontaneity and vibrancy of improvisational techniques, we bring stories to life which have been volunteered by the audience and inspired by the theme of an event.

Recommended minimum donation £10
Bookings: londonplayback@gmail.com

'Our Living Stories' with True Heart Theatre



Sunday 21st June, 3.30-5.00pm
Here at Essex Church

We return to our West London home at Notting Hill for another afternoon of surprise and delight. It's mid-summer! And we welcome your stories of sunshine and rain, moonshine and shadows. What has happened since the beginning of this year? Triumphs? Disasters? We can cheer, laugh and cry together over our all too human stories.

Every time we gather for Playback Theatre it's a fresh and original experience. We create a safe and warm space for a playful creative conversation between everyone...with our gift of theatre as a mirror. And do stay for TEA after our show! Entry is by donation. Please book by emailing Veronica at: info@trueheart.org.uk

Reflections and Invitation to our Men's Group

I have very much enjoyed the first two Men's Group meetings. They have provided a beautiful space for friendship and discussion. Sharing is mixed with thoughtful reflection and laughter. Men being fully present for other men, a special space.

We have discussed how society expects men to behave, the influence of male figures in our lives, male energy and compassion; hardwiring versus nurture. We are exploring the qualities of the mature masculine as opposed the boyhood macho. Requests for the next session have included exploring identity at different life stages and how men relate to women.

We generally start with a theme, but mainly work with what is brought by the group. Whilst I have stated that this is not designed to replace professional therapy, we are a group of men committed to exploring our scars, confusions and uncertainties. This is a space where you will not be judged, but where you can breathe freely and feel valued.

Newcomers are welcome. The meetings provide a special space in an atmosphere of appreciation, attentive listening and self – discovery, offering men an opportunity to explore what it means to be a man, in a culture of trust and support. The next events will be held on a Tuesday between 6.45 pm and 9pm, on near the end of each month.

Session 3 – Tuesday 30th June
Session 4 – Tuesday 21st July
Session 5 – Tuesday 19th August

We meet in the downstairs library at Essex Church, the home of Kensington Unitarians. This is located at 112, Palace Gardens Terrace, London W84RT, next to Notting Hill tube station. Just turn up. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Jim Blair

Email: jim_blair_rhino@hotmail.com / Mobile: 07734511921

Sculpture Exhibition

Featuring Heidi Ferid
Thursday 2nd July, 6-9pm
St Pancras New Church

Our very own Heidi Ferid is taking part in a sculpture exhibition in early July. You would be welcome to come along to the private view in the Crypt at St. Pancras New Church, Euston Road, London NW1 2BA (nearest station Euston) on Thursday 2nd July from 6-9pm.



Goodbye-ee...

Almost unbelievably, for years now – from my early adolescence onwards – I have been carting around with me, from one address to another, piles of personal letters I have received. Mostly from friends, but also even a few official notifications and playbills. Of course I HAVE managed to throw some of these away – or perhaps more precisely they have simply left me; dropping by the wayside, like rags from a scrap-iron dealer's horse and cart; or in an unguarded moment thrust into a nearby wastebin. Of course from time to time I've also done a little perfunctory sorting, filing them into envelopes and bundles. Then quite recently, seeking for confirmation of a rather painful incident in my life from years ago, I met again three old friends whose few letters to me I never want to be parted from.

They are from Don, one of the very few friends I made in the rural Elementary school I attended during the war. Don lived in an ancient half-timbered house deep in the Worcestershire countryside. Then there are those from Bill I met in the College for Working Men On the Bourneville Estate in 1951. Finally there are letters from Pamela, who I met while on holiday in the Rhineland in 1958. Don's letters are the oldest, and the most entertaining. Did we REALLY talk and think about things in THAT way?...

'When I come over to your place I should start out early so that I could get to your place early then we could perhaps go to Brum and have a "gas and a mooch". I am very interested in those Ex US army implements and I should like to get a gas-mask as a war souvenir. I have got already a waterbottle – a helmet and a bottle tunic...'

Re-reading Don's letters to me from just after the war in the mid-nineteen forties, prodded a number of memories which I'm sure neither of us would have been likely to mention again in our letters. For example a few years earlier, in touring around the Worcestershire lanes on our bikes, he told me about the Facts of Life in a way which made it all seem weird, almost incredible, and even now somewhat fearful and disturbing. Apparently he had got these vital details from an older "Kid" who had been recently married, and who made it all sound like a peculiar form of stock-breeding.

Bill Wootton, about four years older than me, was born into a Quaker family, and was a Conscientious Objector during the war. From the Working-Men's College we both went on to become part of the second and third intake of Keele University in the Potteries. Bill was a very fine poet, whose work I have been trying to promote ever since his death in 1999. I was always aware of what a lonely life he lived – even more so when he retired from his work as a teacher of English at a neighbourhood Comprehensive School. He seemed to retire more and more into himself, and after the death of his sister, his only sibling, he became partially-sighted, and slowly descended into domestic squalor.

Pamela was one of the most learned young women I had ever met at University or elsewhere. She was Head of a small department of German, at what was seemed to be an exclusive girls' school in or near Lincoln. As we steamed sedately down the Rhine she gave me an absorbing account of Goethe's life and work. I also learned from her a good deal about English Middle and Upper-middle class life from the lengthy letters which, after our return from Germany, we continued to send each other. Occasionally we met in

London, and one or two cathedral cities in the south-east. But it became increasingly clear to both of us that ours had been a decorous holiday encounter, not quite a romance, which could not be grounded in the worlds we were both living in.

On re-reading her highly articulate letters it's clear she was a young woman of kindly sensibility, tempered with more than a little social snobbery, but also with a deprecating and self-deprecating sense of humour which makes most of her few letters to me a delight to read. From them too it's clear that more than a little of Jane Austen's social atmosphere still survived in the Anglican cathedral-city of Lincoln in which, in nineteen fifty eight, she lived and taught. In one of her last letters she said she was feeling increasingly restless, and thinking of giving up her teaching and going abroad.

There is something about each of these letters from friends who have long-since left the stage of my life, without much indication of when we left off, which haunts me still. No doubt this is why I have not been able to dispose of them, or re-read them until now. And perhaps there is another explanation for this too. Our personal letters are evidence of what I will call our unofficial, informal lives, which like poetry testify to our particular human capacity for elaborate, complex feelings. And more than this: to feel inspired, uplifted through particular aspects of our experience, and our struggle to give satisfactory expression to this.

I suppose I am simply drawing attention to my advancing years when I say that the fewer gadgets or electronic appliances we have to interfere - even intervene with - this delicate process of relating to others through our written (or indeed spoken) words, the more satisfactory we are likely to feel our efforts to do this. But however this may be, if e-mails are likely to be our only or main source and evidence of our personal lives, let's make sure they are not heedlessly discarded. Let's print them out, fold them up, and file them carefully away. Each one of us needs to share our memories and feelings with other people, and in the course of time re-discover what it was to be a human being in relationship with others in our particular time and place in society.

Most of our lives are given to Corporate tasks or experiences, and we are becoming increasingly absorbed in the requirements and demands of technology. But we have other modes of being, in which our thoughts and feelings are more delicately married to each other, in which we can turn for inspiration to the languages and modalities of the various forms of Art. The triumphs and conveniences of science and technology tend to make these modalities of feeling seem of only secondary value, even trite and unimportant.

But this evidence from our personal letters show me at least, that this is not so. Not only what we feel to be great Art, but also ballads, ditties, the popular songs of a period are also a testimony of personal feeling, sometimes even more so. At this time our society is much captivated by the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of those who lived through, and often lost their lives in the first world war. Often the simple words of a soldier's song from that period say it all for me. Let them too sing on their way all of those dear friends we once loved, and shared some portion of our lives with.

Goodbye-ee goodbye-ee / wipe the tear Baby dear from your eye-ee / Though it's hard to part I know / I'll be tickled to death to go. / Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee / There's a silver lining in the sky-ee / Bonsoir Old Thing / cheer-i-o chin-chin / Nahpoo! tidley-boo! goodbye-ee!

John Hands



Accommodation Needed:

Due to a change in circumstances our own Amanda Clark and daughter Alyssia are desperately seeking a new home. They have to leave their current address in West Kensington at the end of June. Alyssia is looking forward to starting nursery in Hammersmith in September. If anyone knows of a suitable flat or flat share that is available please contact Amanda on: T: 07551 006516 / e-mail: amandadc@hotmail.com



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
14th June, 12th July, 9th August**

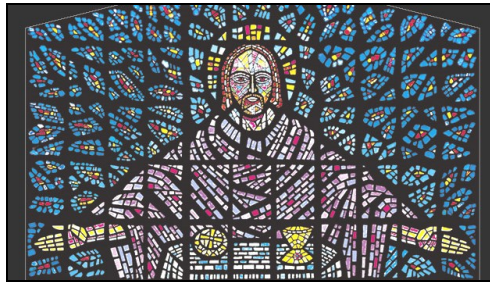
Midweek classes on TUESDAYS - 12.30-1.30pm

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

Cost £10 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

In The Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament



Swish... swish... swish: his lame foot scores the chapel pavement, bathed
In red, blue, and orange sunlight pouring through the
Stained-glass corona haloing Christ's head.

Alone at the end of the aisle

His mother prays. Swish... swish... swish: his cumbersome boots

Snag the pavement. His eyes seem inwardly engrossed, his

Spruce moustache belies his infantile activity. The Herculean Christ

Stretches his arms to embrace all-comers, firm and the infirm, believers

And heretics alike. Somewhere hidden and remote the latter-day monks

Busy themselves about their farm, their beads, their wine-making.

A flood of sunlight swirls over the benches

White and orange entwine on the floor. Swish... swish... swish:

His lame foot drags over the pavement: far off, remote at the edge of the world

His mother prays.

John Hands

(Buckfast Abbey, Devon)



Please think about giving to Nepal...I'm sure many of you already have. There is such a need for on-going support there. The photo above is a mural done back in 2001 when I was at Daleki School in Kathmandu. It was sent to an organization called Art for Miles Murals.

Julia Alden

Flat in Spain Available to Rent



Booked your hols yet? If not perhaps you might like to rent my apartment in Andalucía for either a holiday or a mini break.

I have a 2 bedroom flat in beautiful Jerez de la Frontera, Home of Sherry, Flamenco, Dancing Horses... and much else besides. It has wonderful Moorish architecture, great food and is a short hop from the coast.

Cádiz, Seville and Cordoba are all within a short driving distance and are also accessible by train and bus. Jerez has its own airport and direct flights are available from London with budget airlines.

The flat sleeps up to 5 and is ...well... very nice! It is available from June onwards. Rent is negotiable but is very low (I only rent to friends). If interested call, txt or mail me. Alternatively of course you can always have a word with me at church.

Roy Clark

E: royclark@email.com / T: 07903625408



'Once we listen with our entire body and mind, loving action arises. Loving action is right action. It's as simple as giving a hand to someone who stumbles or picking up a child who has fallen on the floor. We take such direct, natural actions every day of our lives without considering them special. And they're not special. Each is simply the best possible response to that situation in that moment.'

Bernie Glassman

Unitarians at London Pride 2015

Saturday 27th June – Meeting from 12.30pm, marching until 4.30pm



We have received the following information Julia Reid of the Social Action Committee at Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel (hirstjulia@hotmail.com):

Come and join fellow Unitarians on Saturday 27th June to take part in the London Pride Parade to celebrate the LGBT+ community, and to show our support for equality. Fancy dress is welcome, but not essential - the theme this year is 'Pride Heroes'. We will be meeting from 12.00 midday at Portman Close (exact meeting point to be confirmed –contact Julia at the email above) - please arrive by 12.30pm. The parade begins at 1pm and ends at 4.30pm in Whitehall.

More information about the actual parade is on the website: prideinlondon.org

An external course which you might be interested in:

The Power of Purpose

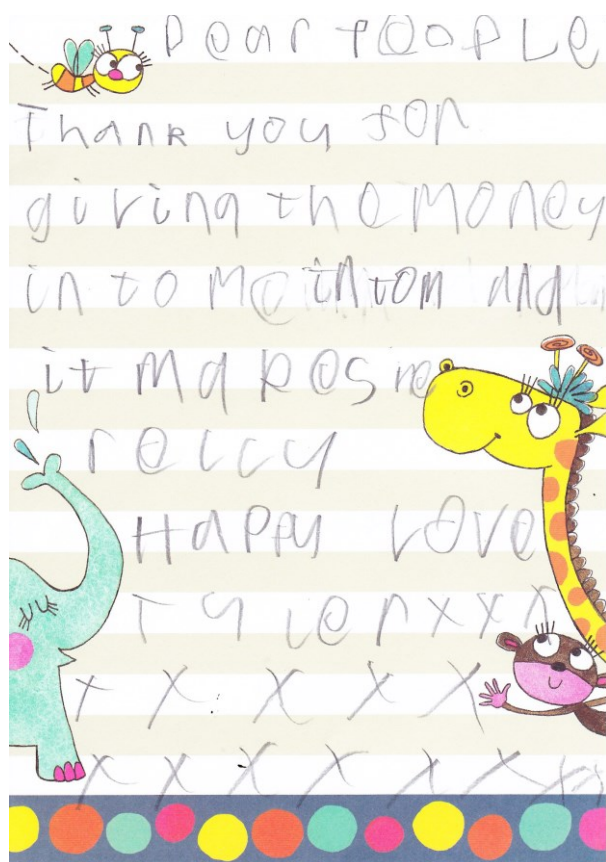


**Mondays 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th June & 6th, 13th July, 6.30-9.30pm
3 Belsize Crescent, NW3 5QX with Oskar Marchock**

The Power of Purpose is a practical exploration of what it takes to create results in our lives. By taking this course you will uncover your wants and bring into focus what matters to you most. You will also reveal the unconscious motivators that can lead to self-sabotaging behaviours. As you progress through the course you will examine the different ways you can motivate yourself and how that effects your experience. You may be surprised by what you discover. The course will empower you to take what you learn in the classroom and apply the practices to your life from the very first session. If you are at a crossroads unsure of where to take your next step, this course is an opportunity to sift through the possibilities on offer and get focused and clear about what you want to do now. You also may experience high levels of stress at work and find it difficult to switch off from day to day pressures. We will explore the causes of stress and learn how to let go of tension to maintain a work/life balance. You may be satisfied with your life and happy with where it's going and yet there are still areas of your life that aren't quite happy with. This course is £110 as a special introductory offer. To discuss how the Power of Purpose could benefit you or your team contact Oskar on oskar@lifeskillslab.com to arrange a meeting.

Thank You from Tyler

Tyler has sent in the following letter to thank everybody who sponsored him on his run earlier in the year. With your help Tyler raised a splendid £118 for school books.



Small Group Communion



**14th June, 12th July, 9th August
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**

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

14th June – Led by Sue Smith;
12th July – Led by Tristan Jovanović
9th August – Led by Mike Eichler and Elisa Melgosa

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

The Art of Saying "No"

A Sunday Afternoon Workshop at Essex Church



**Sunday 7th June, 1pm until 4pm
(12.45pm registration)**

Come and learn tips and techniques to say, "No" more effectively. There'll be discussion, guided meditation and various exercises in a small, supportive group space.

£10/£5 according to ability to pay.

For more information and to book, contact Jeannene:
jeannene@innerworldouterlife.com or 07944 204 389

Creativity Group: Bring Your Own Crafts

Thursdays 11th June and 9th July from 7-9pm



Our creativity group meets once a month and is open to all. You are welcome to bring along whatever art or craft project you're working on and do your own thing whilst enjoying the good company of the group. Participants are often happy to share their skills and recently we have been helping each other learn to knit, to make lino prints, and to do crewel embroidery.

One of the particularly enjoyable features of this group is the space it offers for fellowship and conversation while we are each working on our individual projects alongside one another. Alternatively we have some basic art materials available if you would just like to play with pens, pencils, and paints during the evening. If you know anyone who might enjoy coming along to these sociable evenings then please do help us spread the word.

Jane Blackall

'First Things First'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – adapted from service given on 17th May 2015

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

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love." Rumi

We heard the story of Higgins the drop of water earlier on – who found his great purpose in life. He inspired others to join him and, despite being just one drop of water, made a big difference to the world. He made a difference for the better we need to add as, of course, it's always possible to make a difference for the worse – and I guess most of us would rather avoid that if possible. In this address I'm offering two contradictory viewpoints and in true Unitarian fashion will leave us dangling somewhere between the two of them, free as usual to make up our own minds. I've had some fascinating conversations with some of you in recent weeks about this topic of how we choose our priorities in life – thank you for your input.

Some of the ideas I'm exploring are included in the yellow handout you were given along with today's order of service – if you're listening to this service at a future date on a podcast, or reading it online or in our newsletter, then send us an email and we'll get the handout to you. It includes various quotations and I'm hoping that some of those will have you responding – 'oh yes I agree with that' – and some will leave you growling in irritation. If you have a red pen in your hand you could start crossing some of them out right now. Those quotations on the handout express potentially contradictory ideas:

- The first is the idea that life is empty and meaningless.
- The second is that life is made more fulfilling by having a sense of purpose.

At the end of a week exploring this topic I think that both of these ideas can be true. I'd even go a step further and say that by finding ways to hold these contradictory viewpoints as true – at the same time – we are likely to feel more happy, more peaceful, certainly more real. Because if anyone tells us that there's only one way to live life it's probably a good idea to have our doubtful bells ringing. Reminding us to 'hold on a minute – isn't there another way to look at this?'

There is something very appealing about the idea of going with the flow, isn't there. Guy Browning's reading on the subject from his delightfully titled book *How To Be Normal* makes it sound rather hip and fun. (You can access the reading online: www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2007/oct/27/weekend.guybrowning)

John Lennon's oft quoted 'Life is what happens as we're busy making other plans' is a useful reminder to those of us who carry endless 'to do' lists around with us, a reminder that we might not be quite as much in charge of the show as we'd like to imagine. The longer I live the more I think that chance plays quite a part in our lives – things just happen and we humans then attach meaning to what happens. We attribute sense to the senseless – a feeling that we were meant to meet a certain person or choose a particular course of study or discover a place, find a house, etc etc. I guess many of us have our own versions of these.



But let me introduce you to someone who holds a different point of view. Rick Warren, evangelical Christian church leader, who led prayers at Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009, author of best-selling books *A Purpose Driven Life* and *A Purpose Driven Church*. I only wish he could be with us today because if he was I suspect we'd have some conversion experiences. He's an inspiring preacher, he speaks from the heart and he's surprisingly convincing – even to a religious liberal like me. Rick Warren has a particular theological stance. He believes that there is a God – a God who has created you and who has a plan for you and your individual life. Everything that happens to you is part of that plan. If you find yourself in a tough place, Warren brings comfort by saying there are things for you to learn in this tough place and from that learning you will be better able to minister to others, to help them in their life struggles.

This is not my theology, though the idea that we can empathise with and assist others through our own struggles has certainly proved to be the case in my own life, with all its ups and downs. I agree with Warren that life gives us opportunities to learn and grow. And I appreciate his heart centred approach to life and his key message that if we live for ourselves alone our lives may indeed be bleak. His headings - *connect, grow, serve, share, worship* – can all be translated into secular ideas for living life well:

- Connect with other people
- View life as a process of learning and growing
- Use our own unique gifts to better the world
- Think of others and act to improve their lives
- Be grateful for life, appreciate the world we live in

Rick Warren's work has some similarities for me with the work of another best-selling author – Stephen Covey – author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. It's Covey we have to thank for the title of today's service – First Things First – step three in his system. You can entertain yourselves by imagining what the other six steps might be, or indeed pondering upon the eighth step which he revealed in a later book. Or you can find them listed and explained online. We can also thank Covey for this useful quadrant diagram (*see opposite page*).

'First Things First' *(continued)*

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	I Crisis Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects, meetings, preparation	II Preparation Prevention Values clarification Planning Relationship building True Recreation Empowerment Exercise Time for the people you love
NOT IMPORTANT	III Interruptions Some phone calls Some meetings Many pressing matters Many popular activities	IV Trivia, busy work Junk mail Some phone calls Time wasters Escape activities

He suggests that all human activity belongs in one of these four boxes – depending on whether it's important or not and urgent or not. It's a simple but revealing system that points out for most of us that we spend much of life responding to crises like a burst water pipe (urgent and important), or to interruptions like emails and phone calls (generally seeming to be urgent but not actually important), or lying around on the sofa worrying about all the things we ought to be doing (neither urgent nor important, yet strangely compelling), when really we'd all be better clarifying what's important in our lives and making sure we give time to what's important but not urgent.

I have a lot of respect for Covey's work because what he's suggesting we all get clear on is what really matters to us – what are our values. Once we are clear what our values are – the deep, underlying principles that guide our existence, we are in a much better place from which to assess our priorities. We can start to put first things first. Getting clear about our values isn't a one off exercise, it's the work of a lifetime and in a lifetime our values are likely of course to change and develop. Amongst all the other things we could be doing I think it's worth stepping back from time to time and checking what's motivating us, what's driving us, what matters now. It's also worthwhile checking that our values aren't contradicting one another. How many of us place a high value on connection with others, for example, and yet also value freedom

and independence. That's not a problem unless it confuses us or gives confusing messages to others. Our values may pull us in differing directions and we may gain a useful understanding of ourselves and others if we investigate a little more deeply.

And it's into this process of self-reflection that I'd put some Zen-like zest, the possibility that life is utterly empty and meaningless. Consider the possibility that we are fragile, flawed and short-lived creatures floating on a planet in space and that nothing about us matters, not one bit. Chance has brought us into being and chance will end our lives. Nothing matters. There is no meaning or purpose to life. Such an existential approach can leave me despairing or exhilarated depending on my mood. But for me it's a healthy reminder that each of us has a freedom to create our own meaning in life.

This search for what's important is an age long search for humanity. As creatures who can choose – once our basic needs for safety and nourishment are met – we have a great gift and an equally great responsibility. We could say that it both matters profoundly how we choose to spend our days and it doesn't matter in the slightest. So let's be guided by those whose messages appeal to us, let's take time to reflect on how we spend our hours and our days, let's support one another in putting first things first and living fully this empty and meaningless, utterly intriguing thing called life.

'I am fascinated by what it takes to stay awake in difficult times. I marvel at what we all do in times of transition — how we resist, and how we surrender; how we stay stuck; and how we grow. Since my first major broken-open experience — my divorce — I have been an observer and a confidante of others as they engage with the forces of their own suffering. I have made note of how fiasco and failure visit each one of us, as if they were written into the job description of being human. I have seen people crumble in times of trouble, lose their spirit, and never fully recover. I have seen others protect themselves fiercely from any kind of change, until they are living a half life, safe yet stunted. But I have also seen another way to deal with a fearful change or a painful loss. I call this other way the Phoenix Process — named for the mythical phoenix bird who remains awake through the fires of change, rises from the ashes of death, and is reborn into his most vibrant and enlightened self.'

Elizabeth Lesser

Services at Essex Church this June

**7th June, 11am
– ‘Going Deeper’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Using Neil Douglas-Klotz's translation of the Beatitudes, this meditative service will explore what really matters to us in life.

14th June, 11am – ‘Liberty’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Communities around the country will be marking the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta today with a LiberTea celebrating our rights to justice and freedom. Church bells will ring out in the afternoon to mark the occasion. Join us for today's service and explore what liberty means for you.

**21st June, 11am
– ‘Mission Possible’**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With a respectful nod towards the Mission Impossible TV series of the 60s, we'll consider the meaning of mission for a liberal community like ours. We don't offer eternal salvation but there's plenty to discover about a Unitarian sense of mission. We'll also be looking at our national 'Vision for the Future' document.

**28th June, 11am
– ‘Gaia, Mother Earth and
the Oneness of Everything’**

**Service led by Sarah Tinker
and celebrated UU musician Jim Scott**

Jim has written some of our favourite hymns and is appreciated for his work on the Green Sanctuary program in the States. Come and enjoy his tuneful approach to peace, justice and loving the earth on which we live.



Things We Can Learn From A Dog

poem adapted - author unknown



We heard this reading in our *All Our Relations* service, which celebrated the part that animals play in our lives. Some people asked if we could reprint it in the newsletter. Someone else said they're working on a list of what might be learnt from a cat.

Never pass up the opportunity to get out and about.
Allow the experience of fresh air
and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
Take naps and stretch before rising.
Run, romp and play daily.
Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.
Be loyal.
Never pretend to be something you're not.
If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
When someone is having a bad day, be silent,
sit close by and nuzzle them gently.
Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
No matter how often you're scolded,
don't buy into the guilt thing and pout...
run right back and make friends.
Bond with your pack.
Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.

Missing Books

At our May 17th service Sarah put a couple of her books in the hall for people to look at but they disappeared. If anyone borrowed either of them or knows where they went could you let her know: 'How to be Normal' by Guy Browning and 'The Shrink and the Sage' by Macado and Baggini.