



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: July 2011

## What's On in July:

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 11am  
**'Doubts and Confusions'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE: 'Karen Armstrong's  
12 Steps to a Compassionate Life'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 11am  
**'Spiritual Not Religious'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2-3.00pm  
**Nia Dance with Sonya Leite**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm  
**Adult RE: 'Karen Armstrong's  
12 Steps to a Compassionate Life'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 11am  
**'The Book of Books: the 400<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of King James Bible'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 12.30pm  
**'Finding Your Voice'  
Singing Workshop**  
Led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 11am  
**Service led by visiting UU  
minister Rev. Victoria Weinstein**

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:** 'The Happiness  
Project' by Gretchen Rubin

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July, 11am  
**'First Impressions'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
and Aimee Downs

## A Message from our Minister: Allowing

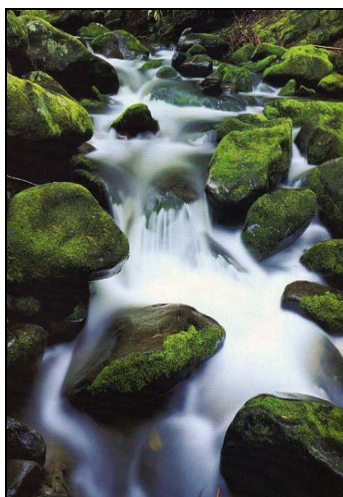


People sometimes ask "what does a minister do all day?" And the ones with a 'sense of humour' go on to mention that we only seem to work on Sunday mornings and then enquire how they can get a job with such good hours. We recently held a Ministry Inquiry day here at Essex Church for people thinking about applying for Unitarian ministry training and one of the exercises was to list different aspects of the job. The participants must have been observing their own ministers quite carefully because they covered many of the less obvious tasks – writing references, unblocking toilets, dealing with strange emails and phone calls etc etc. Someone recalled the old adage of 'comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable'.

Someone else remembered Edwin Friedman's description of a leader in a healthy organisation as being a 'non-anxious presence'. Friedman was a family therapist and rabbi who did much to bring the study of systems into work with families, religious groups, workplaces and other relational structures. In his description of human systems he used the metaphor of electricity that needs grounding to explain the task of the non-anxious presence. I wonder if that is what all of us do when we listen to one another, both in our joys and our sorrows. Are we encouraging the emotional energy, be it joyous or distressed, to move and flow, ultimately to be grounded and therefore released?

One of my favourite parts of a minister's role is that it justifies lots of reading. This poem by Danna Faulds is from her collection *Poems from the Heart of Yoga* and its description of 'simply bearing the truth' reminds me of the value that we bring when we 'simply' bear witness to one another's lives, when we help one another to accept and allow that which is.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



### Allow

There is no controlling life.  
Try corralling a lightning bolt, containing a tornado.  
Dam a stream and it will create a new channel.  
Resist, and the tide will sweep you off your feet.  
Allow, and grace will carry you to higher ground.  
The only safety lies in letting it all in -  
the wild and the weak -  
fear, fantasies, failures, and success.  
When loss rips off the doors of the heart  
or sadness veils your vision with despair,  
practice becomes simply bearing the truth.  
In the choice to let go of your known way of being,  
the whole world is revealed to your new eyes.

Danna Faulds

## In this month's newsletter...

\* 'Remembering Jo Mirov Cresswell' by Sarah Tinker and Sheila Prellberg \*  
District Quarterly Meeting at Meadrow \* 'The Big Voice' Project : Can You Help?  
\* First Chalice Awards Presented at Essex Church \* Poems by John Hands \*  
Charities We Support: Tree Aid \* 'Pentecost for Unitarians' by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
\* Walking Group News \* 'Music and Meditation' in August \* and much 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.



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Notting Hill Gate  
London W8 4RT

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

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



"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Leo Buscaglia

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

3 <sup>rd</sup> July:	Heidi Ferid
10 <sup>th</sup> July:	Veronica Needa
17 <sup>th</sup> July:	Natasha Drennan
24 <sup>th</sup> July:	Tristan Jovanović
31 <sup>st</sup> July:	Alice Lambert

### Coffee:

3 <sup>rd</sup> July:	Sheila Prellberg
10 <sup>th</sup> July:	Margaret Darling
17 <sup>th</sup> July:	Jo Ridgers
24 <sup>th</sup> July:	Gill and Howard Hague
31 <sup>st</sup> July:	Caroline Blair

### Greeting:

3 <sup>rd</sup> July:	Maire Collins
10 <sup>th</sup> July:	Jo Ridgers
17 <sup>th</sup> July:	Veronica Needa
24 <sup>th</sup> July:	Kathryn Reynolds
31 <sup>st</sup> July:	Jim Blair

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

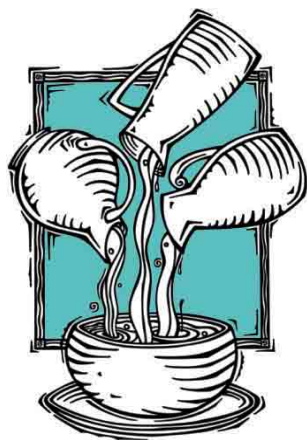
Please contact Jane with your email address if you are willing to receive this email once a month.

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

A Date for your Diary:

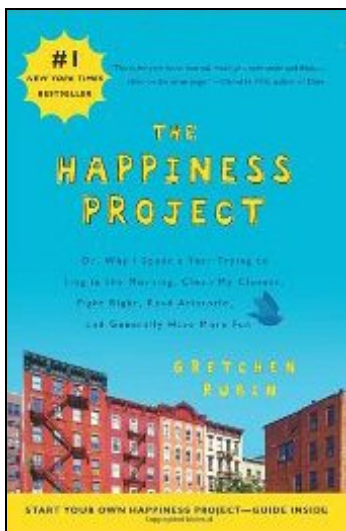
## Gathering of the Waters

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011



We will be having a 'Gathering of the Waters' service, as is our tradition here at Essex Church, to welcome people back after their various travels over the summer. Wherever you go over the summer months, we would ask you to collect a small amount of water from that place, and bring it back home for this simple ceremony.

## Essex Church Reading Group 'The Happiness Project' by Gretchen Rubin



**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011, 7.00-9.00pm**

The reading group's June session will be based on 'The Happiness Project'. This title was chosen for us by Jane Blackall. Description from Amazon UK:

*"Gretchen Rubin had an epiphany. One rainy afternoon on a city bus, she realised that she wasn't as happy as she could be. In danger of wasting her days - always yearning for something more, waiting for problems to miraculously solve themselves - she realised her life wasn't going to change unless she did something about it. On January 1, she embarked on her Happiness Project, and each month she pursued a different set of resolutions: to get more sleep, quit nagging her husband, sing in the morning to her two young daughters, start a blog, imitate a spiritual master, keep a one-sentence journal. She immersed herself in everything from classical philosophy to contemporary psychology to see what worked for her-and what didn't. Illuminating yet entertaining, profound yet compulsively readable, "The Happiness Project" is one of the most thoughtful and prescriptive works on happiness to have emerged from the recent explosion of interest in the subject. Filled with practical advice, sharp insight, charm, and humour, her story will inspire readers to navigate their own paths to happiness."*

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

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

## First Chalice Awards Certificates Presented Here at Essex Church



We are very proud of Alex and James who have worked hard to complete their Chalice Award certificates – bronze level for James and silver for Alex. They have completed various modules and have learnt more about the world and about Unitarians and liberal religion. Come and have a look sometime at the curriculum they are following. You might even want to study for a Chalice Award yourselves!

**Jordan and Jennie**



"Everything is material for the seed of happiness, if you look into it with inquisitiveness and curiosity. The future is completely open, and we are writing it moment to moment. There always is the potential to create an environment of blame – or one that is conducive to loving-kindness."

**Pema Chödrön**

## Essex Church Creativity Group 'Bring Your Own Crafts'

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011, 7.00-9.00pm



We have been experimenting with a new format for the creativity group since early 2011.

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

As ever, all are welcome, and the sessions are sociable and encouraging (with plenty of snacks to share).



## Walking Group News



We have decided for the time being to discontinue the walking group. Over the last few years we have really enjoyed the walks we have been on, but most of the regular members have had to stop coming; recently walks have been very poorly attended, and we don't like to invite people to travel across London only to find that hardly anyone else has turned up. We hope that from time to time walks will still happen; if anyone is interested, the best course of action seems to be to find three or four other people who would like to go on a walk, then announce it at the previous Sunday service.

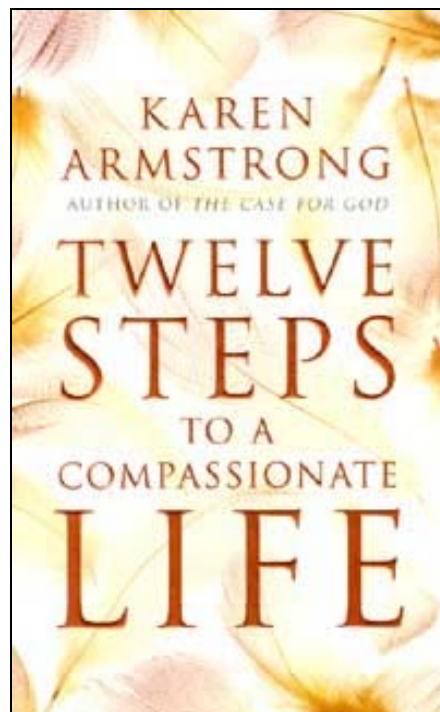
In the meantime, the walk on Wimbledon Common on 23<sup>rd</sup> July has been cancelled.

Caroline Blair

New Adult RE Course for the Summer:

## 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life'

Thursday Evenings until 14<sup>th</sup> July, 7-9pm



Based on Karen Armstrong's book, this course helps us to explore how to live more compassionately with ourselves, with others and with the world. The course started on 9<sup>th</sup> June and will continue on Thursday evenings at 7.00pm until 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

### The Charter for Compassion

The Charter for Compassion is a document that transcends religious, ideological and national difference. Supported by leading thinkers from many traditions, the Charter activates the Golden Rule around the world. It was a project initiated by Karen Armstrong in 2008. The book 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life' was written in response to requests for a step-by-step guide to help people put the charter's principles into practice.

At the 2011 meetings of the Unitarian General Assembly (GA) a resolution was passed to affirm the Charter for Compassion, to urge Unitarians everywhere to reflect on the Charter's humanitarian message and act in its spirit, and to resolve to become a partner organisation. This involves actively taking practical steps to promote the message of the Charter for Compassion. Groups such as the one we are running here at Essex Church this summer will help to spread the practice of compassion.

You can read more at and affirm the charter at:  
[www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org)

## Rev. Victorian Weinstein 'In Conversation with Unitarian Christians'



**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July, 7.15pm  
Golders Green Unitarians  
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS**

Rev. Victoria Weinstein, an American Unitarian Universalist Minister who is coming to the district in the summer, will be holding a 'Conversation with Unitarian Christians' at Golders Green Unitarians on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July. All are welcome to this event, although it'll be of particular interest to Christians.

Victoria Weinstein is a parish minister in Massachusetts and she teaches a popular course on liturgy at Andover Newton Theological School near Boston. She is a leading figure in the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship.

Victoria has suggested the Conversation could focus on: how we nurture our spiritual lives as Christians within the Unitarian church; serving a Unitarian church when one has a fairly high Christology; and how to lead Bible study with Unitarians.

Rev Weinstein has quite a 'high Christology' herself. She has written: *"Who is Jesus Christ to me? He is both a teacher of the Way, and the Way itself. For one who has always had a hard time grasping the concept of God ... Jesus both points me toward a definition of God and then lives that definition ... Jesus is my soul's safety from all harm. He is the avatar of aloneness, a compassionate and unsentimental narrator of the soul's exile on earth, and proof of the soul's triumphant homecoming at the end of the incarnational struggle... I call myself a Christian because I am a disciple of Jesus Christ — not just Jesus-that-great-guy-and-teacher-with-the-long-hair-and-sandals but Jesus the living avatar of the great God and Jesus the Christ of Easter morning ..."*

This essentially mystical approach to Jesus is shared by several leading UU Christians – as well as by many Hindus and Buddhists. It could also be a trend among Christians in our diverse denomination in the UK, but perhaps difficult to acknowledge for fear of being labelled 'not Unitarian'.

The event is organised by the London District Liberal Christian Affinity Group. Do come and join the conversation! The church is 5 mins walk from Golders Green tube (Northern line, Edgware branch). For directions see: [www.ggu.org.uk](http://www.ggu.org.uk)

**Jim Corrigan**  
Co-convenor of the District Liberal Christian Group

## American UU Minister in London This Summer



Rev. Victoria Weinstein is a Unitarian Universalist minister currently serving a congregation in Massachusetts. She is also on the Adjunct Faculty of Andover Newton Theological Seminary on the outskirts of Boston, where she teaches a very popular course in Worship. She will be in London for a month, 8<sup>th</sup> July - 10<sup>th</sup> August, staying in the manse flat at Bethnal Green. In addition to taking services in London churches (including one here in Kensington on 24<sup>th</sup> July) she will lead two workshops and a residential retreat for ministers.

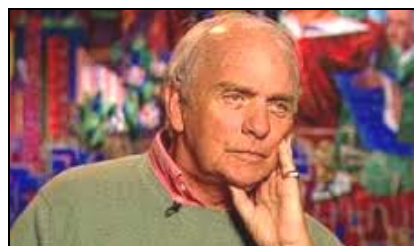
### **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2.30-5.30pm + "Moving Through the Liturgy"**

This will take place at Hampstead from 2.30 – 5.30pm, with the participants then leading the evening service at 7.00pm. An evening meal will be shared between the workshop and the service. Publicity about this is being sent to all Lay Worship Leaders in the District.

### **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1-5.00pm "Nurturing a Ministry of Activism"**

This will take place at Unity Church, Islington. This workshop will address the challenge of involving congregational members in the work of social activism.

**For any of these events, please book through  
Danielle Wilson at [danielle@daniellewilson.com](mailto:danielle@daniellewilson.com)**



"Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it's like to live in somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."

**Frederick Buechner**

# The Big Voice Project: Can You Help?



Jennie Blair, our children's leader (and Caroline and Jim Blair's daughter) is seeking funding for a big project called the Big Voice. It's a youth project, involving 40 young people from deprived areas of London, which aims to put them in touch with assorted legal organisations. They have had intensive seminars and lectures, including hosting leading human rights lawyers, national journalists, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chair of the Muslim parliament. They have worked closely with the Supreme Court.

It is hoped to achieve several things. Young people who would normally have no positive experiences of the legal process are being listened to by top lawyers, judges etc, and are encouraged to give points of view that are rarely heard. In turn they are gaining a powerful insight into all aspects of UK law. Their experience will involve work experience placements, which Jennie is arranging herself.

All this has already been funded but in September 2011 a small delegation of volunteers and young people will be travelling to South Africa, following an invitation from a judge from the South African Constitutional Court. They will meet legal experts, peer groups and talk to charities about law in South Africa. They will also set up video-links to allow the young people in the UK to interview experts in South Africa. Following this they will publish a short recommendations paper, which will be submitted to the Law Commission and leading lawyers.

This is where Jennie needs our help. She has to raise at least £1,000 to pay for her own expenses on this trip and we at Essex Church want to support her. At a recent committee meeting it was decided that we should try to raise as much as we could from individual donations, with the church making up the difference from its budget. So can you help us? Any amount, small or large, will help Jennie to know that we support this ambitious project that is helping to give a voice to young people who are too often marginalised in our society.

Cheques can be made payable to Essex Church, with a note on the back mentioning the Big Voice.

Thank you all.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

# Warden's Column What's Happening in Our Busy Building



This morning was the first day of the June session of Associated Board music exams. Ray, the Steward, texted at 8.50am to say he'd be a little late, so I went upstairs to welcome the examiner. Together we moved the grand piano into the middle of the Church - I remembered how squeaky the wheels have got and that I need to oil them. The examiner set up his table with a good sightline through the glass in the door so he could nod at Ray to bring in the next candidate. We clarified where he could find an armless chair if he had a cellist or someone else who needed one. I brought him a sorry looking music stand that appeared to have been turned inside out & he fixed it effortlessly. I made him a cup of tea. We put up various signs.

Eventually Ray arrived, very apologetic, but still before the first candidate. The first exam of the day is usually 9.30am. Candidates are advised to arrive 10 minutes before, but it's not unusual for a keen one to turn up at 8.45am. Lower grade exams take precisely 12 minutes, during which time the next candidate can warm up on the keyboard in the library. The Steward and Examiner need to keep things flowing really smoothly, because there can be 30 or more exams to get through in a day and it causes a lot of stress if they start running late.

I used to think Examiners were paid a huge amount – but now I know they earn it. We get quite a range of instruments here: strings, brass, singing – and some of the playing for higher grades is truly lovely – I remember the yoga class in the Hall once bursting into spontaneous applause after a Grade 8 piano piece. The board's bread and butter though is grade 1 & 2 piano – and we hear certain pieces so often it verges on cruel and inhuman treatment: the year they set the Pink Panther theme tune as a grade 1 piece springs to mind. The music board hold their exams here three times a year: roughly in March, June and November, each time for a five week block. It makes it difficult for us to take regular weekly bookings in the daytime, though we have managed to find several groups who can fit in around them, so we're currently experimenting with an exam-free day on Monday.

Music exam months are a busy time, but there's generally a nice buzz to the building and they pay us £200 a day, which can add up to more than £6,000 over the course of the year. I'm usually quite energised when they start – and always relieved when they finish!

**Jenny Moy**



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

Second Sunday of the Month  
from 2-3pm: 10<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> September  
(note: there will be no class in 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 now £8 (£5 members). **Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.**

## ‘Finding Our Voice’

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall

Sundays 17<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> August  
12.30 to 1.15pm, at Essex Church



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 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 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.

## Small Group Communion



Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 12.30pm  
Downstairs 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 church library. A number of members of the congregation expressed interest in having a regular opportunity for communion here so, since the autumn, we have been experimenting with services led by a variety of different people, and we have been very encouraged by the experience so far.

We hope that different people will take turns to lead the small-group communion services so that we can experience a number of different approaches. The line-up for the next few months is as follows:

- 10<sup>th</sup> July – Jane Blackall
- 14<sup>th</sup> August – John Hands and Sarah Tinker
- 11<sup>th</sup> September – David Francis Darling
- 9<sup>th</sup> October – Jane Blackall
- 13<sup>th</sup> November – Tristan Jovanović

If you would like to find out more about these small-group communions then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

## Music and Meditation

4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> August from 7.00-8.30pm  
Here at Essex Church



Come and enjoy our new sound system and bring some favourite music to share with others. We'll use the music as an aid to meditation and then have time to talk, with refreshments. Make a note in your diaries of the dates and let us know if you plan to join us.

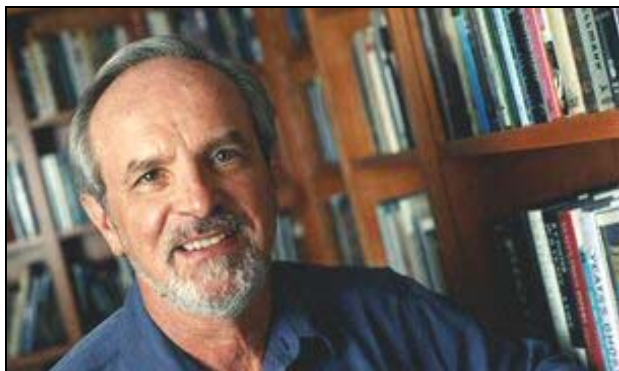
**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## The Good News



The Good News  
Is always arriving  
Here – now – and  
In the air everywhere  
Around us. In  
Cries of birds  
Colours of flowers  
Hidden in nests  
Waving to us  
From forests and fields  
Sound of waterfalls and  
Streams, calling us in  
Oceans thunder in  
Strident winds in  
Faces of children, even  
Animals declare it  
To us  
The Good News that  
Doesn't come from afar  
Needs no-one to interpret it but  
Is around us and in us:  
No distinction.

**John Hands**



“We tend to consider imagination too lightly, forgetting that the life we make, for ourselves individually and for the world as a whole, is shaped and limited only by the perimeters of our imagination. Things are as we imagine them to be, as we imagine them into existence. Imagination is creativity, and the way we make our world depends on the vitality of our imagination.”

**Thomas Moore**

## World Congress of Faiths (WCF) Forthcoming Events:

### ‘Compassion and the Future of Our World’

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July at 1.00pm**

Golders Green Unitarian Church  
31½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS

The World Congress of Faiths looks forward to having Karen Armstrong as our speaker at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 28 St. Johns Wood Road, London, on the evening of 7th December. As a preparatory event, we are co-hosting an afternoon on Karen Armstrong and the Charter of Compassion on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July. A representative of the Charter of Compassion is invited to a panel discussing the charter.

The programme will open with a service at 1pm led by the minister with Golders Green Unitarians, Rev. Feargus O'Connor. Rev. Richard Boeke, Chair of the British Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom, will give a sermon on ‘The Freedom to Be Compassionate’, drawing on these words of Martin Luther King, Jr: *“I cannot afford the luxury of hate.”*

The panel will follow at about 2pm, considering: How would you apply Karen Armstrong's book, *Twelve Steps to Compassion* in your life? Should there be any additions to the Charter such as recommended in this 12th May 2011 resolution of the British Chapter IARF: The Chapter Endorses the Charter for Compassion and Karen Armstrong's book, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* with the recommendation that there be an additional paragraph on "Compassion for Nature."

### **WCF Younghusband Interfaith Service Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July at 6.30pm**

St Martin-in-the-Fields  
Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ  
If you wish to attend please send  
an e-mail to [smartin@worldfaiths.org](mailto:smartin@worldfaiths.org)

### **WCF Interfaith Celebration of Animals Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 3.00pm**

Golders Green Unitarian Church  
31 ½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS

**Website: [www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org)**



# District Quarterly Meeting at Meadow Chapel, Godalming



The congregations that form our Unitarian General Assembly are linked in 16 District Associations and on a wet Saturday in June five of us from Essex Church headed off to the meeting at Godalming of our London District. We were joined by members of the Southern Unitarian Association and there were only just enough seats to fit us all in to the beautiful old chapel at Meadow. There were a number of highlights to the afternoon. Worship was led by the Rev Martin Whitell, who is minister of our Portsmouth congregation and also is the convenor of the Executive Committee that is responsible for our national organisation. Martin originally trained as a Baptist minister but found our liberal approach more to his taste. He started the afternoon off on a celebratory note by announcing his engagement to Lis Dyson-Jones, a lifelong Unitarian originally from Lancashire, (and also an Executive Committee member!) and by explaining that their engagement was totally unrelated to his arm being in a sling. This had been caused by corrective surgery after a fall earlier in the year. His service was all about the need to share what we have. The congregation did indeed share well with us by providing a delicious tea for us. But before we went for tea we split into mixed groups and discussed these questions:

- Remember the first time you came to your present congregation. What did you like/dislike?
- If you could change one thing about your congregation, what would it be?
- What is your favourite part of the service? Why?
- Describe the vision you have of your congregation five years from now.

In my group there were members of seven different congregations and it was moving to realise how hard some congregations work to keep themselves going. Spare a thought for Billingshurst with six active members, none of whom live in the village where their chapel is. As always I was reminded that we are one of the lucky congregations. Yet the underlying themes we all raised were quite similar – how can we best ensure that all those who might appreciate or echo our liberal message actually know of our existence and feel welcomed to join us.



If you feel the urge do please answer these questions for yourselves and email your answers to me or to a committee member. Your insights might help someone else.

You may have heard of the ICUU – the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists, which was founded with the express purpose of bringing together liberal religious bodies from around the world into a network committed to education and development. 22 countries are represented in full membership, with more than a dozen further national groups in affiliation. The ICUU recently made 15 Founders Vision Awards to those who had worked so hard to establish the ICUU. One was given to David Usher our London District minister at our Annual Meetings and at Meadow Rev Celia Midgley, an ICUU executive member, presented Christine Hayhurst with her Founders Vision Award.



**Sarah Tinker**





## Remembering Jo Mirov Cresswell

19th December 1925 ~ 18th April 2011

I conducted Jo's funeral in May. You perhaps recognise her from this photograph. She had only joined our congregation two years ago after the death of her much loved husband Colin, who had needed much care and nursing from Jo in the last few years of his life. Jo had three children from her previous marriage and was proud of her eight grandchildren who live in America and Australia. At a time of life when many of us would be sitting back taking it easy, Jo threw herself into travel and volunteering in recent years, as well as being an avid reader of spiritual writings. She has donated some of her books to our library. She had worked for many years in psychiatric nursing and had a particular interest in art therapy. She loved colour and beauty and would notice small things with delight.

These words were spoken at her funeral by her grand-daughter Charlotte: "Jo embodied creativity and seemed to use the process of creating as a meditation. I appreciated her fascination with people and her engagement with exploring new ideas during all of her life. Her love of beauty was profound and I so enjoyed how she adorned herself with colour

and how she took pleasure in moments of beauty. An example of this is once we were walking in the London streets when in great excitement she stopped us to enjoy the way the light looked on some oil in a puddle. She was delighted with the iridescent rainbow of colour. I so loved her in that moment for taking such a mundane sight and joyfully appreciating it as art".

Charlotte quoted these words that Jo had heard at a Quaker retreat:

*"Every person should have two pockets - One saying I am as nothing and one saying for me the stars were made."*

Jo kept notebooks of newspaper cuttings, stories and quotations that inspired her. In one of her collections we found this quote from David W. Orr that sums up her approach to life -

*"Finally, we can attempt to teach the things that one might imagine the earth would teach us: silence, humility, holiness, connectedness, courtesy, beauty, celebration, giving, restoration, obligation, and wildness."*

Jo was buried next to Colin in the beautiful surroundings of Richmond Cemetery on a sunny, windy day - a perfect resting place for someone who loved beauty and so appreciated the natural world.

**Sarah Tinker**

I first met Jo in the 'New U' classes run by Sarah two years ago, and that's when our friendship started. She was going through a hard time, but managed to maintain calm and composure. She was very knowledgeable about a wide range of subjects, and had a way of phrasing things that really made you think.

We've had many happy times together since, sometimes just the two of us, but mostly together with Thomas and Alexandra and James. Jo injected enthusiasm, creativity, and light into all of our lives, showing us new ways to look at things and pointing out the beauty that is everywhere. We will all miss her, and are richer for having known her.

**Sheila Prellberg**



## One Light Spiritual Gatherings

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July, 6.30-8.15pm - Held monthly at Essex Church

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

Peaceful and Joyous connection with the Divine, the One Light at the Heart of All through music, meditation and inspiration from many spiritual traditions. Bring your beloved self, family, children, friends. This month including Subud wisdom. In Subud people come together for the spiritual practice known as the latihan, a direct personal experience of & connection with the highest universal power, something every human being has the capacity to feel and experience. All are welcome.

**For further information contact service hosts:**

Rev. Pamela Ramsden - 07966 478 980 / Rev. Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

## Unwatered



Alone, buoyed up by hope we silent stand  
Dumbly waiting for our lover's tending hand; he  
Peers keenly at us through his window every day,  
Then without a sign of recognition turns away.

John Hands

*A new initiative in the London District:*

## 'Rainbow' LGBTQI Unitarians in London and the South East



### Draft Calendar of Events, 2011

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August:** Social Trip to Brighton. Meet at Brighton Unitarian Church, 12 noon, for a short act of worship and meditation to start things off. For location details, see [www.brightonunitarian.org.uk](http://www.brightonunitarian.org.uk)

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September:** Building a Welcome for LGBTI Unitarians – ideas, priorities. Meeting here at Essex Church.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October:** Official Launch of Rainbow - Service led by Rev Ant Howe. New Unity Church, Islington, 5pm. For travel/location details, see: [www.new-unity.org](http://www.new-unity.org)

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November:** Planning meeting: goals and objectives for 2012, Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church, 5pm. For travel/contact details please see: [www.rpuc.org.uk](http://www.rpuc.org.uk).

[www.unitarian.org.uk/rainbow](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/rainbow)

## Committee News



1. Maire Collins has had to resign from the committee because she is now working in Paris. Even though she was only with us for a short time, we appreciated her enthusiasm and positivity, and would like to wish her the best of luck.
2. We would like to thank Michaela for all the work she has put into the back garden. It is a lovely place to sit on a fine day.
3. The congregational book 'Kindred Pilgrim Souls' is selling well. Sarah did particularly well selling it at the General Assembly Annual Meetings, and feedback has been very good.
4. The collection for The Parkinson's Trust raised over £100. In addition the Church has donated money to Womankind Worldwide and the Unitarian National Youth Programme.
5. The committee are still trying to find a realistic way of stopping the roof from leaking. Sarah is making renewed attempts to local detailed plans so we can better understand the structure of it. Unfortunately it looks as if some quite major work may have to be done at some point.

Caroline Blair

## 'Treasures of Heaven' Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe

**British Museum – 23<sup>rd</sup> June to 9<sup>th</sup> Oct 2011**

The exhibition features over 150 objects from more than 40 institutions including the Vatican, European church treasures, museums from the USA and Europe and the British Museum's own pre-eminent collection.

Treasures such as these have not been seen in significant numbers in the UK since the Reformation in the 16th century, which saw the wholesale destruction of saints' shrines. The exhibition offers a rare opportunity to glimpse the heritage of beautiful medieval craftsmanship that was lost to this country for centuries.

Website: [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)



## True Heart Theatre Open Sunday Performances

*A project involving our own Veronica Needa*

### Monthly Sunday Workshop/Performances Third Sunday of each month, 3-5.30pm

at Faraday House, 48-51 Old Gloucester St  
London WC1N 3AE (nearest tube: Holborn)

A warm welcome to everyone for an afternoon of multicultural connection through playfulness, improvisational theatre, true stories & music.

**Bring something to share at tea-time!**

True Heart Theatre specialises in the practice & performance of Playback Theatre – an improvisational/storytelling theatre form – as a service to the UK Chinese community and the wider British public. It's a way of making our stories visible, and enabling cross-cultural encounter and understanding.



[www.trueheart.org.uk](http://www.trueheart.org.uk)

Book your free place by emailing  
[truehearttheatre@gmail.com](mailto:truehearttheatre@gmail.com)

## Singing in Community with Jo McAndrews



**Weekend of 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> October 2011**  
**Saturday 10am-5pm & Sunday 2pm-6pm**  
At Essex Church – Organised by Veronica Needa

This is a weekend full of song! Singing together creates connection, deepening of listening, and opening of hearts. We welcome everyone with an inclination to sing whether experienced or a beginner. This is an opportunity to learn many and playful ways to make harmony together as a large group – a capella!

For anyone who loves singing, this is a wonderful chance to fill the beautiful space of Essex Church – the home of the Kensington Unitarians – with our voices and meet people from all over the world. For playbackers as well as other facilitators/group workers this is a weekend to learn lots of songs and song-games to generate a deep sense of community to support our work. As an optional extra, on Sunday morning, those of us who wish to can make an offering of some of our songs during the 11am-12noon Service at Essex Church.

This is a workshop open to everyone; no prior experience of Playback Theatre is required.

**Fees: £65 & £45\*\***

\*\*Concessionary fee for low-waged, students & OAPs; unwaged by donation; all welcome.

Call +44 (0) 7221 2694 or email:  
[playbackschoolUK@gmail.com](mailto:playbackschoolUK@gmail.com)

**About the Trainer:** Jo McAndrews has a warm, playful and inclusive approach to singing. She is interested in the sheer enjoyment of singing in harmony with others and has developed an encouraging and informal style of teaching. She leads StroudSong community choir and was part of the extraordinary a capella group Naked Voices based in Bristol. She has sung with community choirs for 11 years and runs singing workshops around the country. She has been involved in Stroud playback for some years and loves the way playbackers throw themselves into singing for warm ups and group building.

[www.playbackschooluk.org](http://www.playbackschooluk.org)



## Charities We Support: Tree Aid

*As part of a new column for the newsletter we invite you to write in about a charity that you support that you would like to tell people more about*

My dad was never an easy person to buy presents for and when asked what he wanted would always say that he'd be happy with a Bounty Bar. Instead of desert island confectionary products I used to try and find a charity to support that in some way linked with his interests. He loved tigers. We sponsored a tiger. He cared about whales. We joined Greenpeace. He was very fond of trees so imagine my delight when I discovered a charity called Tree Aid that at the time was offering to plant 50 baobab trees for £50 and sent you your very own baobab seed to have a go at propagating it. Most charities with projects in economically developing parts of the world are keen to make a difference in the lives not just of individuals but of whole communities and Tree Aid does a good job of that. Planting trees makes sense all round. It improves the soil, it gives shade, it provides on-going work and trees provide people with lots of business opportunities.

For example, Awiiga Achoanya is proud to be part of a Tree Aid project in her homeland of Burkina Faso – her local Village Tree Enterprise Project is transforming the local landscape and local people's livelihoods along the way. She first got involved when she was trained as a nursery attendant, tending the seedlings as they grew and the young trees planted in the fields. Now trees touch many aspects of her life. The dawadawa trees provide her with products to sell at market. Communal orchards offer mango and guava fruit which her five children love and which add important minerals and vitamins to their diet. Soon she hopes to plant trees of her own. The project gave her access to credit in order to start growing her own seedlings at home. She is expanding her small business each year.

Tree Aid now wants to plant one million new trees across Africa. Working in some of the driest countries on the continent – Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso, Tree Aid hopes that in time their tree planting activities might even hope to change the climate. £35 pays for a Forestry Know How training session for villagers to learn how to care for the trees, using them to improve the quality of their soil. You can contact Tree Aid via their website ([www.treeaid.org.uk](http://www.treeaid.org.uk)) or by writing to them at Brunswick Court, Brunswick Sq, Bristol, BS2 8PE.

2011 has been designated the United Nations International Year of Forests yet even as I write this column more trees are being cut down than are being replanted. Perhaps with Tree Aid's vital work we could reverse that ultimately world-destroying trend. My dad never did manage to germinate that baobab seed but over his lifetime he planted and cared for many trees, most of them only to be enjoyed by future generations rather than himself. I hope someone will say the same about me.

**Sarah Tinker**



## The Return of the Natives



Can't stop

It's such a joy to be here!

Can't stop

Got to catch a thousand insects before nightfall!

Can't stop

Got to look out for a suitable spot to build a nest

Can't stop

Got to watch out for those other fierce insect-catching types

Wheel and turn

Bank and steer

In and out

Around and through

This is our home

We're here at last.

**John Hands**

# 'Pentecost for Unitarians'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011

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

Yesterday we hosted a day conference here at the Essex Church – jointly organised by the World Congress of Faiths and the Alister Hardy Society – on Spirituality, Understanding and Compassion. Alister Hardy was a marine biologist with a deep interest in spirituality. He set up the Religious Experience Research Unit, which was originally housed at our Unitarian training college in Oxford. The Unit's collection of accounts of religious experiences is now held at Lampeter University – where they hold well over 5,000 personal accounts of religious or spiritual experiences. As part of my ministry training I did some work on religious experiences and discovered that various research studies have repeated a finding that around 70% of people, will report having had a spiritual or religious experience. Defining such an experience is the task of an academic paper not an address such as this, but one key way of defining a religious experience is that it is an occurrence that will have had an effect on a person's life. A researcher might enquire, "Did you feel changed in some way by what happened? How has your life been different after this experience?"

With that definition we can then say that on the day of Pentecost that we heard described in the reading from Acts of the Apostles earlier on – Jesus' followers had a major religious experience that changed their lives forever. This was the turning point. This could be considered the start of a new religious movement. As we look back from 2000 years in the future, we can't be sure what happened but we can be more sure that something happened to empower this small Jewish group to start preaching the radical spiritual messages they had learnt from Jesus, and preaching them not just to the Jews but to the whole Greek and Roman world.

We've just started a study group here at Essex Church – reading Karen Armstrong's latest book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* and Karen Armstrong is going to be speaking at the UUA's General Assembly next week in North Carolina. It's hardly surprising that she has become a popular academic for religious liberals because one of the messages of all her work is that in our modern world we do religions a disservice if we try to take them literally. Again and again she reminds us that until relatively recently religious believers were able to operate at a mythic level. People did not need to take sacred texts as literal truth, but rather as mythic truth.

Now if we bring such a viewpoint to the account of Pentecost whole new possibilities emerge. We can, as the Rev Robert Hardies does in the sermon we heard an extract from earlier on – entitled *Found in Translation* – we can consider the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as a metaphor, as a symbol. Hardies uses it as a metaphor for the pluralism we find in our own religious communities. He emphasises the importance of us finding a way through language – through speaking and listening, to bridge the differences that we inevitably find within our congregations. We know, don't we, that even in a liberal religious community such as ours, it takes an effort sometimes to understand each other, that both speaker and listener have at times to yield to one another in order to reach an authentic understanding.



We cannot just hope to batter away at people in our own language and expect them to know what we mean. We cannot in that classic British manner, when finding that someone does not speak English, just say exactly the same words but **louder and slower**. As I found myself doing only the other day outside the church whilst trying to direct a group of tourists to Kensington Palace. "Go along the road and turn right!" I embarrassingly found myself repeating using ever greater decibels in an attempt to get my message across.

As Hardies points out – the miracle of Pentecost is not the fire or even the speaking – it is the understanding. People from all over the world came and heard the message – heard and understood – isn't it a marvellous description of the onlookers

*'Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.'*

Our task then as religious liberals is to overcome the trends of our post modern world, the fragmentation, the sense of separation and alienation – and use the power of communication to bridge the divides that separate so many parts of our world. What we practice in our church communities we have then to take out to the world in which we live, and this of course is exactly what Jesus' followers had to do all those years ago.

Remember the realities of their situation and how we are coming to hear about it. The events of Pentecost are said to have happened around 30AD or Common Era, in the Jewish capital city of Jerusalem. But when was this event recorded and by who? The biblical book known as the Acts of the Apostles is generally considered to have been written by Luke the gospel writer – and written around 80AD. That date in itself is significant. The story of Pentecost is set in Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish faith and community, the city of the temple of Solomon. Yet the temple was destroyed by the

## 'Pentecost for Unitarians'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker *(continued)*

Romans in 70 AD and Jerusalem, a city that had enjoyed a few years of independence, was once again returned to Roman rule. The Jewish uprising was crushed with great cruelty and loss of life. By this time the new religious movement had long since moved beyond Jerusalem yet none the less they would all have felt the dreadful loss of the Temple. The news would have reverberated around the Graeco-Roman world.

In the joyful description of Pentecost there is a sub text – the line “there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem” gives a clue. Now that Jerusalem has been destroyed the task is clear – to spread the good news to all the nations of the world. This new religion is no longer solely for the Jews, it must be made available to everyone. There was another matter as well. If you read the books of the New Testament closely there is a recurring message that the kingdom of God is near, that the day of the Lord is on its way. The early Christians were a Messianic movement and clearly believed the end of the world was nigh. They gave up their possessions, they lived communally, and they waited for Jesus to return.

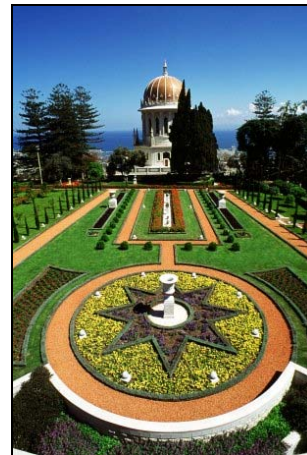
By the time Luke is writing Acts of the Apostles and his gospel, his good news, we have a second generation. Most of Jesus' original followers will have died having passed their stories, their experiences, on to the next generation – and it is they who start to write these accounts down and in their very act of writing – they start to shape the religion. And shape it in oh so human ways. Did you notice the mention of some people doubting what they had heard and sneering and saying the apostles must be filled with new wine. A few verses later Peter defends them all by saying they cannot possibly be drunk because it is only 9 o'clock in the morning. What a human response.

And so what of us, we seekers and questioners, we too who may have doubts? Pentecost was, and still is, a Jewish festival – also known as Shavuot, a harvest festival coming 50 days after Pesach or Passover, and commemorating Moses' receiving of the Ten Commandments. Pentecost is a key Christian festival, coming 50 days after Easter and commemorating the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles. Maybe we can make our very own holy day of Pentecost, where we recognise that there is indeed something of the Holy Spirit in each of us, a day in which we remind ourselves that we too have something of that spirit to take out into our world – perhaps the message that we say here at Essex Church each year in our membership service

*We trust the power of honest communication, creativity, and kindness, to heal and hold us always.*

Isn't that just the sort of message that a fragmented people in a fragmented world might want, and need, to hear. Amen.

## Multifaith Calendar



*The Shrine of the Báb, Haifa, Israel*

### 9<sup>th</sup> July – Anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb – Bahá'í

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

### 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 15<sup>th</sup> July – Asalha Puja - Dhammacakka Day – Turning of the Wheel of Teaching – Buddhist

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

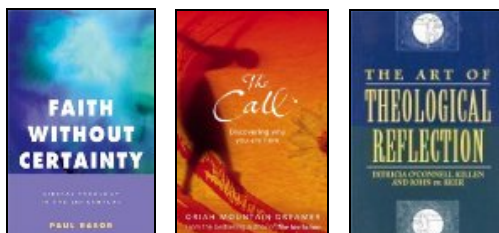


*Buddhists on Asalha Puja – Dhammacakka Day*

### 17<sup>th</sup> July – The Night of Forgiveness (Laylat al Bara'at) – Muslim

The Night of Forgiveness (Laylat al Bara'at) 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.

## Donate a Book to Essex Church Library



Regular readers may recall that some time ago we set up a wish-list of books we'd like to add to the church library. These are a mixture of books which would be useful for members of the congregation preparing worship, some books for people to study matters of religion, theology and philosophy, and a selection of recommended personal development titles which may be of value for the spiritual journey.

### Titles on the wish-list currently include:

'Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life' by Frederic and Mary-Ann Brussat

'Staying Alive – Real Poems for Unreal Times'  
Edited by Neil Astley

'Faith without Certainty: Liberal Theology in the 21st Century' by Paul Raso

'Living a Life That Matters'  
by Harold S. Kushner

'Adventures in the Spirit: New Forays in Philosophical Theology' by Philip Clayto

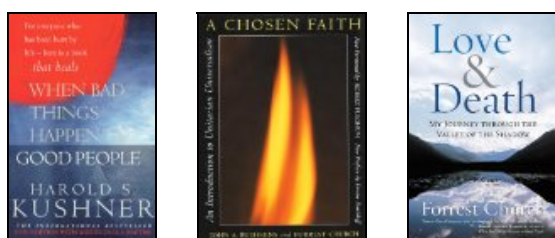
'Blessings of the Cosmos'  
by Neil Douglas-Klotz

At the moment there are thirty-six books on our list costing as little as £1.15. If you would like to buy a book to donate to the church please use this link:

[amzn.to/essexchurch](http://amzn.to/essexchurch)

We would be most grateful for any item on this list. Feel free to speak to me if you would like to know more about the project for improving our library.

Jane Blackall



## Sunday Services at Essex Church

3<sup>rd</sup> July, 11am –  
"Doubts and Confusions"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

"The impeded stream is the one that sings" writes poet Wendell Berry. How can adversity and uncertainty be turned into helpers along the spiritual path?

10<sup>th</sup> July, 11am –  
"Spiritual Not Religious"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Increasingly people describe themselves as spiritual rather than religious. What does this show about 21st century society and what do people mean by these terms? How can we at Essex Church best provide a welcome for spiritual seekers?

12.30pm - Small-Group Communion,  
led by Jane Blackall (lasting ~30 minutes)

17<sup>th</sup> July, 11am – "The Book of Books: the  
400th anniversary of the King James Bible"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this service we will consider the long and painful fight to have the Bible translated into English as well as the profound effect this influential translation has had on our English language and our religious heritage.

24<sup>th</sup> July, 11am –

Service led by Rev. Victoria Weinstein

Victoria Weinstein is a Unitarian Universalist minister currently serving a congregation in Massachusetts and who will be visiting the London district this summer. She is on the Adjunct Faculty of Andover Newton Theological Seminary on the outskirts of Boston, where she teaches a very popular course in Worship.

31<sup>st</sup> July, 11am – "First Impressions"

Service led by Sarah Tinker & Aimee Downs

Aimee is here in London for the summer working as an intern with Unitarian congregations. We'll be exploring the power of first impressions in life and how to discern which are useful and which are shaped by our own fears or misperceptions.

## Summer Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue (a double issue for August and September) is **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or a committee member before that date.

Thank you!!!