



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: May 2017

What's On...

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

Thursday 4th May, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul':
'The Hand I Hold' led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7th May, 11am-noon
'The Touch of a Hand'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

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

Sunday 14th May, 11am-noon
'The Art of Conversation'
Led by Roy Clark and Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14th May, 12.30-1.00pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 14th May, 2-5pm
Inclusive Tea Dance
With Rachel Sparks Dance

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

Sunday 21st May, 11am-noon
'Spirituality in the Digital Age'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st May, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 21st May, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

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

Sunday 28th May, 11am-noon
'Deepening Our Connections'
Led by Jeannene Powell
This will include a charity collection for Christian Aid Week

Sunday 28th May, 12.45-2.00pm
Conversations on Connection

Wednesday 31st May, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 17th June – District Quarterly & 'Working on Our Welcome' Training

Sunday 25th June – Church AGM

Sunday 23rd July – 40th Anniversary of our church building – service & lunch

Only Connect

A Message from our Minister

This suggestion, 'only connect', is found in E.M. Forster's novel *'Howard's End'*. It's a statement of the human condition, of our yearnings and our resistances, of the limitations and possibilities of communicating, one with another. In its simplicity, it can guide us into deeper explorations of what it is to be alive on a planet with over seven billion other people and multiple other species. We might ask ourselves what connection really means.



Perhaps its meaning can be explored through considering its opposites. What does it feel like to be disconnected? Disconnection cannot be always considered bad and connection therefore good. Haven't most of us experienced unhealthy connections that tied us down, limited our self-expression, left us feeling less than we truly were? Isn't there a joy sometimes in independently stepping out in life, alone and unencumbered?

Yet even then we are probably enjoying a sense of connectedness – with ourselves or with our environment. It seems to be part of the human condition to move towards and then away from others, in a dance of existence. We yearn for both intimacy and space to breathe. The closest of relationships are marked by separation and isolation as well as deep experiences of oneness, of merging. For, ultimately, we are individual creatures. Our lives are an exploration of such polarities. We connect, we disconnect, we connect. And most of us will have our preferred experiences. Some of us prefer our own company, whilst others seek the company of others.

In the mystical tradition the student seeks an experience of oneness with the divine. A Taoist might describe this as 'flow', a being at one with that which is. It may be an ecstatic state or a peaceful awareness of connection with everything, no separation. People in our congregation have described being in such a state when dancing, singing, gardening, cycling, being in nature, playing with children, sitting with a loved one nearing their end, making love, studying a fascinating topic.

I look forward to hearing what connection means for you in the month ahead and your ideas for ways we might deepen connections here amidst the communities that meet in our Essex Church building and our congregation of Kensington Unitarians.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



'Everything that is in the heavens, on earth, and under the earth is penetrated with connectedness, penetrated with relatedness.'

Hildegard of Bingen

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Why an Angel?' by Juliet Edwards * LGBTQ+ Inclusive Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance * New Facebook Page for Kensington Unitarians * Reports from the General Assembly ('GA') * Cultural Outing - 'My Country: A Work in Progress' * 'Walking for Health' by Veronica Needa * Social Justice Themes for Kensington Unitarians * 'Not Only, But Also' Unitarian Survey * LDPA Congregations Word Search * Reflections by Julia, Brian and Sarah * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

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



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

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

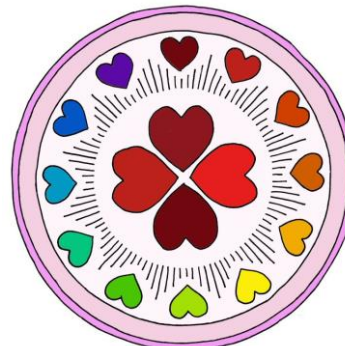
Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 4th May, 1st June,
13th July (note irregular date), from 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This month's gathering will have the theme 'The Hand I Hold' and will be led by Sarah Tinker. This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

A Date for your Diary: Anniversary Service

Sunday 23rd July 2017 at Essex Church



We will be holding a special service on Sunday 23rd July to mark the 40th anniversary of our church building's opening. The service will be followed by a simple shared lunch. We hope that friends old and new will join us to mark the day.

Volunteering Rotas:

Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

7 th May:	Veronica Needa
14 th May:	Alice Lambert
21 st May:	Juliet Edwards
28 th May:	Michaela von Britzke

Coffee:

7 th May:	Jo Tye
14 th May:	Helena Coope
21 st May:	Sue Smith
28 th May:	??? (<i>can you help?</i>)

Greeting:

7 th May:	Sue Smith
14 th May:	Gina Bayley
21 st May:	Brian Ellis
28 th May:	Liz Tuckwell

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

Facebook Page for Kensington Unitarians

A new way to spread the word about our church!



We now have a new Facebook page where we will post podcasts of our weekly services, reminders of forthcoming events, and photos of our activities. If you are active on Facebook please 'Like' the page and 'Share' some of the things we post to help us gain a bit more visibility. We think that there are lots of people out there who would appreciate our weekly podcasts so if you've particularly enjoyed a service share it with friends!

www.facebook.com/KensingtonUnitarians



Rachel Sparks Dance Presents Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance

Sunday 14th May, 2-5pm

Here at Essex Church

with a rumba lesson for beginners at 2.15pm

Join us for a tea dance with social dancing and actual tea and cake! We had a lovely time at the inaugural tea-dance back in February so come and enjoy a gentle afternoon learning some basic social dancing steps with Rachel who can teach even the most left-footed people. This is an inclusive event for anyone including LGBTQI+ people and we ask that everyone is respectful to each other. The partnering at this tea dance is gender-neutral, meaning anyone can lead and anyone can follow, and we are completely body positive. The venue is wheelchair-accessible and has gender-neutral toilets. We ask you not to wear high heels as we need to protect the floor! You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to raise money for our nominated charity, Diversity Role Models.

Tickets: £10 on the door (*free entry to members of Essex Church*)

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

**Save the Dates: Future tea dances are
planned for 23rd July and 22nd October!**



'Why an Angel?'

While I was in Durham visiting Stephanie recently I took the "Angel Bus" to see the Angel of the North. Local people have mixed feelings about it. Some are very positive, but other comments were "it's rusty", which it is, and "I think it should have proper wings". It stands 20 metres high, has a wing span of 54 metres and is built to withstand winds of over 100 miles an hour and of course has pretty deep foundations. As you will see I had my photo taken doing my best to be an angel too! It's far too big for anyone to take a selfie, so there's a very friendly atmosphere as people take turns photographing each other. Further down the hill there is a small informal area where people have tied ribbons to the saplings and left flowers, teddy bears and messages to remember loved ones who have died. It's a bit shabby but people have felt moved to make a little shrine.



This is Anthony Gormley's statement about "Why an Angel", which I really liked.

"Why an angel? The only response I can give is that no one has ever seen one and we need to keep imagining them. The Angel has three functions – firstly a historic one to remind us that below this site coal miners worked in the dark for two hundred years, secondly to grasp hold of the future expressing our transition from the industrial to the information age and lastly to be a focus for our hopes and fears."

Juliet Edwards

The Alister Hardy Trust
and British Teilhard Association

'Ecology, Science and Spirituality – Friends or Enemies?'



Saturday 3rd June, 10.30-4.00pm
Here at Essex Church

The Alister Hardy Trust and the British Teilhard Association are holding a joint conference here at Essex Church on Saturday 3rd June.

Entitled 'Ecology, Science & Spirituality – Friends or Enemies?' this promises to be a worthwhile event with two highly regarded speakers – Professors Keith Ward and Ursula King.

Look out for booking forms in our foyer or see:
www.teilhard.org.uk/teilhard-association/events

Rental Apartment in Andalucia



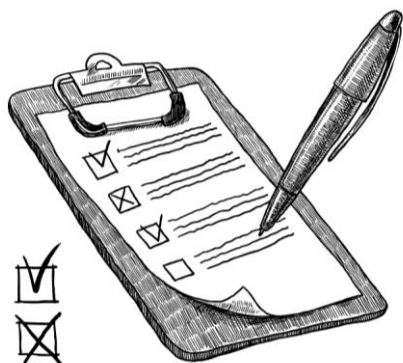
Booked your hols yet? If not perhaps you might like to rent my apartment in Andalucia for either a holiday or a mini break. I have a 2 bedroom flat in beautiful *Jerez de la Frontera*, Home of Sherry, Flamenco, Dancing Horses... and much else besides. It has wonderful Moorish architecture, great food and is a short hop from the coast. Cadiz, 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

Email: royclark@email.com / **Phone:** 07903625408

Not Only, But Also... A Survey of 21st Century Unitarian Beliefs & Spirituality



Unitarian minister, Rev. Sue Woolley, is currently conducting a survey of UK Unitarians, looking into our religious beliefs and spirituality, with a view to publishing a book on her findings. It will cover themes including beliefs about Unitarianism, Unitarian ethos and values, beliefs about the divine, beliefs about Unitarians' relationships with Christianity, beliefs about Unitarians' relationships with other faiths; beliefs about people; and Unitarian spirituality and activities. She is hoping to find at least 150 people to complete the survey and her research would of course benefit from sampling a wide range of Unitarian perspectives.

I would like to encourage members of our congregation to participate in this interesting research project. Copies of the survey can be obtained directly from Rev. Sue Woolley (revsuewoolley@gmail.com) or I can forward it to you.

Jane Blackall

Jubilation

Oh, trumpets clamouring on high!
Gusty forests ablaze
Forever before my gaze!
Fetch me a bellhorn
That blares a way before the traffic
Going up the hills of sanctification!
Roaring a passage-----
Delivering a message-----
Hurrah, new life is coming!

Elizabeth L. Beel

'If there is a major problem in spirituality today, it may be that we do not do enough to form Christians for resistance to evil. We form them for patient endurance and for civil conformity. We form them to be "good" but not necessarily to be "holy." In the doing of it, we make compliant Christians rather than courageous ones, as if bearing evil were more important than confronting it.'

Sister Joan Chittister



A Date for Your Diary: LDPA Quarterly and Training Course

Working on our Welcome: Improving Our Hospitality to LGBTQ+ People

**Saturday 17th June - 11am arrivals
for an 11.30am start until 3pm**

(will be followed by worship and refreshments until 4.30pm)

Unitarians are rightly proud of our historically progressive views on gender and sexuality issues, particularly our part in campaigning for equal marriage, but there is so much more work still to do. As a wider range of voices from across the LGBTQ+ rainbow (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people) begin to make themselves heard, some of us may find ourselves confused by new terminology, and by seemingly conflicting messages about how best to respond to people's needs. In this half-day workshop, co-facilitated by Quaker activist Fred Langridge and Jane Blackall from our own Kensington congregation, we will explore some practical ways in which our communities can offer a better welcome to visitors who identify as LGBTQ+ and highlight areas where we could improve our awareness and sensitivity around issues of gender, sexuality and relationship diversity.

You'll need to book in advance for this training (though the training is free of charge) so the organisers know how many people to prepare for, but you are also welcome to arrive at 3.00pm to attend a special worship service connected to the workshop's themes. This will be followed by refreshments and time to socialise with everyone. Finish time around 4.30pm.

To book a place on the workshop or find out more, please contact Jane Blackall on jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or phone and leave a message on 020 7221 6514.

It would be lovely to have a good turnout from our own congregation and we are likely to need some volunteers on the day to help with refreshments so please do let Jane or Sarah know if you might be willing to assist in some way.



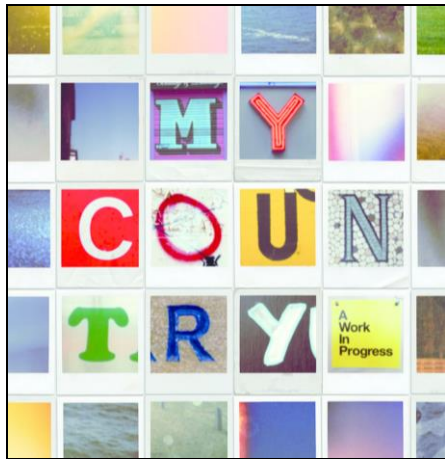
'I see I am uncomfortable, rigid, grasping. I get upset or angry when someone disagrees with me or blames me for something, when things disappoint me or do not go my way, and even when somebody offers me constructive criticism. But I am not separate. I see that I am connected to all others, to everything. Now I feel relaxed and comfortable.'

Barbara Ann Kipfer

Cultural Outing to the Theatre

'My Country: A Work in Progress'

Saturday 1st July, 2:30 pm
Theatre Royal, Stratford East



Britannia calls a meeting to listen to her people. Caledonia, Cymru, East Midlands, North East, Northern Ireland and the South West bring the voices of their regions. The debate is passionate, the darts are sharp, stereotypes nailed and opinions divided. Can there ever be a United Kingdom?

In the days following the Brexit vote, a team from the National Theatre of Great Britain spoke to people nationwide, aged 9 to 97, to hear their views on the country we call home. In a series of deeply personal interviews, they heard opinions that were honest, emotional, funny, and sometimes extreme. These real testimonials are interwoven with speeches from party leaders of the time in this new play by Carol Ann Duffy, Poet Laureate, and director Rufus Norris.

Melody is organising a group outing on 1st July to see this play at the Theatre Royal Stratford East. Prices for top Dress Circle seats are £22.00 for under 60s; £17.50 for over 60s. Please speak to Melody (or give her a call on 07752 091501) **before Sunday 14th May** if you want to go along.

For more information see the website:
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/my-country

Inclusive Communion

Sundays 14th May, 11th June, 9th July
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall or Tristan Jovanović.

14th May – led by Tristan Jovanović

11th June – led by Sue Smith

9th July – led by Jane Blackall

Good Cause Collection of the Month

Christian Aid Week

Collection on Sunday 28th May



Christian Aid is an organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. They work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. They are part of a wider movement for social justice, and provide urgent, practical and effective assistance where need is great, tackling the effects of poverty as well as its root causes.

For more information: www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week

Recent Charity Collections:

January – **Inclusive Church** - £121.70

February – **Generation. Education. Period.** - £250

March – **Migrants Organise** - £221.80

Warden's Column

As well as our ongoing regular bookings we have a few special events in the next month that I thought were worth mentioning in this column. We have a new booking on the first Monday of each month - starting on 5th May. It's an organisation called InSense: gillybeansmusic.wixsite.com/insense

"InSense is the creative collaboration of pianist Gilly Bean with Usui Reiki Master and writer Laura Bacon. They were very much guided to work together after discovering a shared, beautiful love of piano and sensory healing work. With this as their focus, InSense was born with a view to exploring the synergy between Reiki healing and channelled piano after all five senses were gently activated. As the workshops have continued to grow, they have found that when all five senses are awakened prior to the meditation, then the channelled piano session is really felt and the benefit from the Reiki healing can be deepened. Each bespoke workshop is designed with a monthly theme around a series of taste, scent and visual gifts, which are presented to the workshop attendees before the piano journey and Reiki begins. They are then encouraged to savour and explore each gift and return deep within themselves as they do so."

Then later that week "Homegrown" return for one of their bi-annual sales of fairly traded cotton clothing and other craft items.

"Home-grown have a range of colour co-ordinated clothes for women, made in India from the highest quality shot cotton. Helen and Nicky design the range, carefully choosing the colours and prints which are put together. Each garment is then individually made by tailors in India, in good and safe working conditions. Because our range is cotton most of our clothes are washable, but we recommend that all the jackets should be dry cleaned."

They'll be open Thursday May 4th from 12.30-6 and Friday May 5th from 10am-5pm - home-grownlondon.co.uk

On Saturday 13th May, Sandra Vigon a Jungian psychotherapist is running another of her intuitive collage workshops. I took part last year and found it a really inspiring experience. Space permitting she may be willing to offer a discounted rate to members of the congregation. See sandravigon.co.uk/workshop.html

"This hands on workshop will be an introduction to intuitive collage using Seena Frost's SoulCollage® process. Participants will begin to create and engage with a personal deck of collaged cards depicting and symbolizing aspects of the personality, inner guides and significant archetypal figures. This is a unique way of accessing inner wisdom, developing self-awareness and learning to play with the imagination."

Lastly, on Saturday May 20th, Alternatives are running a workshop here with David Kessler on dealing with loss and grief. www.alternatives.org.uk/event/you-can-heal-your-heart

"You cannot stop the loss from occurring, but changing your thoughts can change everything that comes after the loss. Grief is a matter of the heart and soul. Grieve your loss, allow it in, and spend time with it. Suffering is the optional part. Remember that you come into this world in the middle of the movie, and you leave in the middle; and so do the people you love."

Based in the heart of London at St James' Church, Piccadilly since 1982, Alternatives is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to raising awareness and offering practical, inspiring and alternative solutions for everyday living. They started running some of their Saturday workshops here in 2015.

Jenny Moy

Social Justice Themes for Kensington Unitarians



Back in February, Sarah, Roy, Jim and I attended a session at FUSE (the Festival of Unitarians in the South East) exploring ways in which our congregations can make worthwhile connections in our local communities with other groups or organisations with shared values. We came out of this session and had a rather inspiring and energising conversation about some possibilities along these lines for our own congregation.

As a result of this conversation, Sarah and I brought a proposal to the church committee, suggesting that our congregation selects three priority 'themes' around which we will focus our social justice activities and look for local opportunities to make connections and contributions. The idea is that each theme would have one or more 'champions' in the congregation who would take the lead in coordinating and reporting back on activity in that area. This would not necessarily entail a huge amount of new work but it may focus our thinking and give us a way to talk about and promote the work we're already doing in these areas.

We intend to begin by focusing on these broad themes:

- LGBTQ+ Equality
- Refugees / Migrants / Anti-Racism
- Age / Health (*including mental health*) / Disability

I have offered to take the lead on LGBTQ+ equality projects and, to this end, I am already organising the inclusive tea dances, and the 'Working on our Welcome' training day for the London District in June. Jim Blair has drawn our attention to a local project 'Migrants Organise' that his daughter Jennie has links with. We are wondering if there is some scope for offering English language conversation practice sessions for refugees here at the church. There is also some potential for linking with local groups such as Age UK and Mind who use the church building to meet. All of these projects, as well as being worthwhile activity in tune with the church's values, could be an opportunity to make the congregation better known in the local area.

Jane Blackall

General Assembly Annual Meetings 2017 – The ‘GA’



I've been to a lot of Annual Meetings and those of our General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches are certainly some of the more demanding, at least in terms of time. With a minister's pre-conference beforehand, I'm away for four nights and by the end of that time I'm longing for fresh air and simpler food. It can feel a bit overwhelming being in a hotel with over 300 other Unitarians. This year I had been asked to give the Sermon in our Anniversary Service, which was led by my friend and colleague, the Rev Daniel Costley. With Jim Blair as one of the children's leaders and several other leaders who had been part of the Unitarian Youth groups when I was Youth Officer, I felt well supported by friends. If you're longing to read another sermon from me, the transcript will be in The Inquirer newspaper soon. Copies are free in the church foyer.

Apart from that service I unusually had no other official duties to perform so that left more time to meet new people and get to know what's happening in congregations around the country. I heard lots of interesting and inspiring stories of congregations getting more involved in their local communities or joining other national campaigns on issues that concern them. There's a lot going on. Representatives from the Red Cross and the Dr Hadwen Trust, which is now known as Animal Free Research UK, came to thank us for raising so much money for them over the last few years. I was glad these were collections that Kensington Unitarians had contributed to. Both charities gave special thanks to Rev Feargus O'Connor, minister of our Golders Green and St Albans congregations, for his tireless fund-raising on their behalf.

I was also pleased to attend the inaugural meeting of a group soon to be affiliated to the Unite trade union, Faithworkers branch. This will be open to anyone working for a congregation and feels a useful way to support working people's rights in this era of zero hours contracts and often diminishing pay. We are very fortunate that our employment conditions here at Essex Church are so positive, with all members of staff being paid above the London Living Wage. But this is not the case in many faith settings.

Parts of the Annual Meetings are business meetings and we discuss motions put forward by congregations and other groups. Full details will be on our UK Unitarians website soon but I was glad to support motions condemning unjust deportations which separate family members, and expressing solidarity with the Coptic Church in Egypt. A proposal to reduce the length of our Annual Meetings was also discussed and a final proposal will be debated next year. Despite my complaint about the length of the meetings I'm not sure that we've fully thought through the ramifications of losing a whole day. Have a think if you'd like to be our delegate at next year's meetings. It'll certainly give you a wider perspective on our movement.

Sarah Tinker

I hadn't been to the GA before, and so I wasn't quite sure what to expect. And I didn't go alone. My granddaughter came with me as the children's leaders had a good programme of events planned to keep her and the other young and older children occupied. Unfortunately for me I was recovering from a bad cold, and that hampered my ability to enjoy it fully. Even so, there were things I did enjoy. Being able to see so many faces I hadn't seen in a while as well as meeting some new people is always a pleasure. And with over 300 people there, there was plenty of catching up to do and new people to meet.

As part of the Opening ceremony all congregations carried their banners. And that was Kyra's and my job. Waiting in the wings, it was amazing to see so many varying designs. Quite a few people said they liked our banner which has many religious and spiritual symbols on one side. When it was time to go, we walked proudly as our banner weaved its way around the conference hall with the others. I also really enjoyed sinking my teeth into Rev Sue Woolley's questionnaire about what Unitarians believe and how they express their spirituality. She's hoping to get over 150 replies back and I'm looking forward to finding out what conclusions she comes to, when her paper is published next year. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to stay for the whole 4 days, but I travelled back to London having got a greater sense of what our national Unitarian movement is all about.

Jeannene Powell

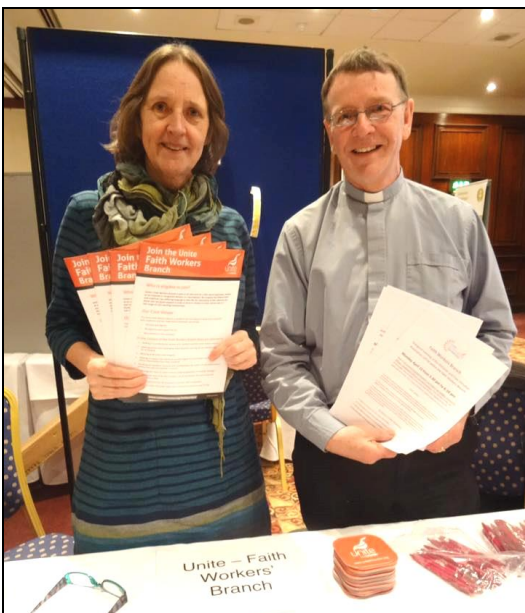
Images from the 2017 Annual Meetings – the ‘GA’



Sarah preaching the Anniversary Sermon



Jeannene carrying the Essex Church Banner



Sarah on the Unite Faith Workers' Branch Stall



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 21st May, 18th June, 16th July...**

Midweek class on Wednesdays - 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 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a three month period.

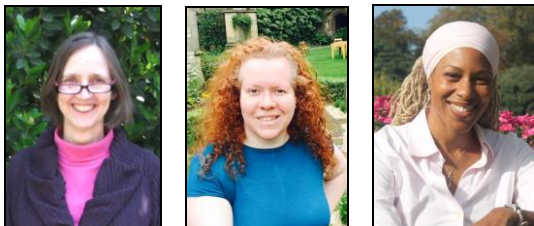
Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

‘What does it take to be worthy of love? What does it mean to be “whole?” The answer to these questions is so simple to state and so hard to achieve. What it takes to be worthy of love and what it means to be whole is to be fully who we are, who we were born to be, warts and all. Life doesn’t demand perfection from us. It simply demands that we allow ourselves to be who and what we are, in all our glory and all our shortcomings. To be perfectly imperfect people. Not to strive for perfection, but to strive to live into our true and authentic selves. Jewish theologian Martin Buber put it this way: “Every single person is a new thing in the world and is called upon to fill his particularity in this world. Every person’s foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, be it even the greatest, has already achieved.”

Parker Palmer speaks of wholeness and integrity as living a life that is not divided. About a union between “soul and role.” Wholeness springs from within, not from finding external sources of fulfilment, whatever “missing pieces” we may feel we’re lacking. We live divided lives when we act in ways that are at odds with the light that burns within. “Afraid that our inner light will be extinguished,” he writes, “or our inner darkness exposed, we hide our true identities from each other. In the process, we become separated from our own souls.” In contrast, wholeness, completion and the love that attend it flow naturally when we align how we are with who we are, living a life, as Palmer says, “divided no more.”

UU Minister, Rev. Peter Friedrichs

Thematic Ministry in April: Connection



We've reached month six of our first year of thematic ministry and this month our focus will be on 'connection', in all its possible meanings. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas about this month's theme for you to think about and do have a look at the themes for the months ahead in case there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer on a Sunday or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Thanks to everyone for the interesting conversations that we're having about these monthly themes. Our Sunday conversation on good and evil was memorable.

June – 'Courage and Resilience' /
July – 'Identity' / August – 'Triumph/Disaster' /
September – 'Purpose/Mission' / October – 'Generosity'

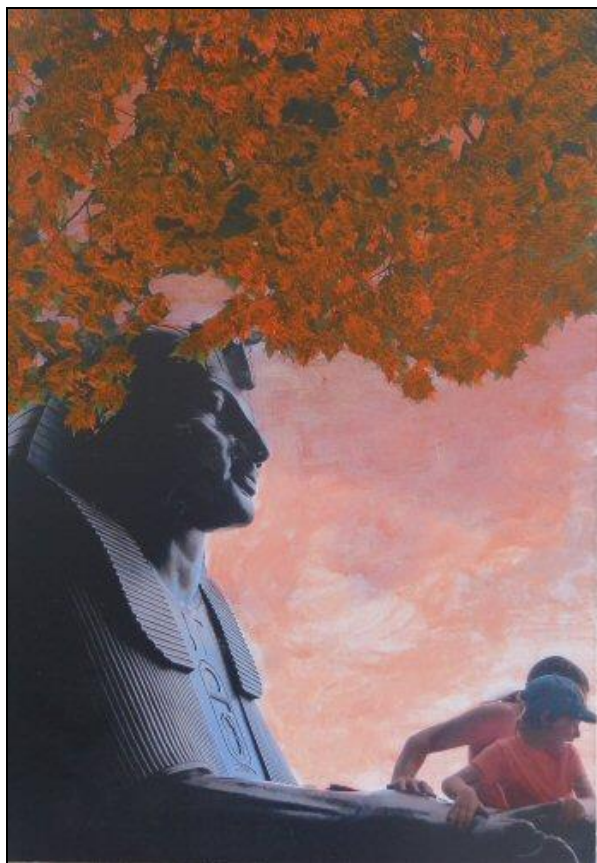
Take some time to reflect on your connections with others. Perhaps draw a diagram of your connections in life. It might show people, places, causes, institutions, ideas - anything in life that you feel a connection with. Such an exercise gives us an opportunity to consider the health of our connections. Are some important people or activities being ignored? Are some connections feeling stuck or in need of review. I've heard a definition of spirituality as 'the art of making connections'. How is your spiritual life today?

A challenge for the month of electioneering ahead: every time we find ourselves disagreeing with a politician's point of view, let's stop for a moment and remind ourselves that this human being is our relation. We are all connected as members of the human race. Can we find a way to honour the point of view of those we disagree with and still find ways to express our own ideas?

A connection with place: take time to consider the places you feel a connection to. How can you honour and celebrate this ancient human connection to the land, to the earth that holds and feeds us all. Making a collage or collection of photos of places you love can be a good reminder of how important a sense of place can be to us.

Starhawk writes that 'The Hopis say that we all began together; that each race went on a journey to learn its own road to power, and changed; that now is the time for us to return, to put the pieces of the puzzle back together, to make the circle whole'. How might each of us strengthen a sense of connection with those who are different from us?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane



'London Sphinx' by Heidi Ferid (www.heidiferid.co.uk)

UNIFEST: Play, Create, Explore, Believe

A Long Weekend of Unitarian Family Fun
26th-29th October 2017, Great Hucklow

Unifest will take place from Thursday 26th until Sunday 29th October 2017 – two whole days deep in the countryside at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. It is family-friendly and **kids go free**:

- Workshops for adults on the spirituality of parenting, creative sessions for children, and activities for all ages
- Intergenerational worship
- Time to explore Unitarian values and ethics
- Trips out to local attractions
- Enjoy the great outdoors
- Opportunities to share our talents and gifts

The cost per adult for 3 nights and all meals is £140 (reduced fee due to generous grants from the Hibbert Trust and Foy Society). If you have any questions contact John Harley, Unitarian Youth Officer: jharley@unitarian.org.uk. To book your accommodation for UNIFEST please contact Stella at the Nightingale Centre: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk.

Easter Sunday at Essex Church

We had a great turn-out for Easter Sunday and took the opportunity to take some new photos of the congregation.



Word Search: Unitarian Congregations in the London District and South Eastern Provincial Assembly

See if you can find some of our fellow congregations in London and the South East in the grid below.



Billingshurst
Brighton
Brixton
Chatham
Croydon
Ditchling
Dover

Godalming
Golders Green
Hampstead
Hastings
Horsham
Kensington
Lewes

Lewisham
Maidstone
Newington Green
Oxford
Reading
Richmond
Sevenoaks

Southend
St Albans
Stratford
Tenterden
Watford



Walking for Health



I have realised, only recently, how important WALKING is to general well-being and good health. Never too late to learn, I have given myself little adventures. Last September I had a week in the wilderness of Wales, camping with a group of people on a self-development programme (www.embercombe.org). Bearing in mind that I never did any outdoorsy things as a child or even much as an adult, I was so proud of myself managing to sleep outdoors under the night sky and in a bivvy bag. Then in February I went up to the Isle of Iona, and walked under an ever-changing sky. Every day we were graced with sunshine as well as howling wind and rain. I was wrapped up and ready for everything!

In March I set off to Israel to join something called Walk About Love – www.walkaboutlove.org.il - which in the Spring sets off from the southern tip of Israel to walk 64 days northwards from Eilat to Galilee, along the Israeli National Trail. (In the Autumn the walk is from the North southwards.) I joined them for the first 7 days, little knowing that some of the toughest walking (climbing, sliding, scrambling...) was in the first weeks across the desert!

The first two nights we camped on the sandy shore of the Red Sea at Eilat. Taking some time to meet each other and celebrate the Sabbath. Then we set off in earnest. Our organisers carried our heavy backpacks from campsite to campsite and provided us with three meals and 4 litres of water per day. We would cook it ourselves on a rota, and pack something for lunch after breakfast-time. It seemed strange to me that throughout the desert our phones had internet access. And in the evenings we could recharge them through this device at the back of the van! There were about 30 of us of assorted ages, mostly Israeli, but others from as far as Australia. There was a clutch of older people. Amongst them was an 88 year-old Frenchman who had been a professional mountaineer and guide before he retired not so long ago. And a 76 year-old grandmother from Hawaii had only just started doing these long walks in the last two years. She walked slowly and determinedly, a great companion and inspiration to me. There were also two dogs that were part of our group.

I was in awe of the extraordinary colours of the land under the blue sky – a thousand variations of yellow, brown, pink and grey. And I was generally fearless clambering up and negotiating paths downwards but there were moments during the first two days of walking across the hillsides when I was in absolute terror of falling off the edge onto jagged unforgiving valleys of rock. I sometimes could only crawl, sometimes scabbling inch by inch with my face to the rock refusing to look into the ravine below. Only the patience and encouragement of my fellow walkers kept me moving forwards and also knowing that going back from whence we came would have been even more challenging.

It was such relief to see our campsite in the distance. We would arrive and find a place to set up our tents first, and then came to dinner together around the fire. The young ones would stay up singing and playing music. I slunk away early to bed, and never slept so soundly or long as I did in the desert. I might get up once or twice at night and walk into delicious moonlight under galaxies of stars. The whole business of doing the necessary poohs and wees became quite an adventure of finding rocks or bushes or trees to hide behind during the day, or at night-time under the stars anywhere! And I was careful not to leave anything that was not organically part of me in the wilderness! I found even toilet paper quite distressing to see fluttering under rocks. And plastic bags unconscionable. I did what little I could to pick up and dispose of anything I saw that was not completely biodegradable.

After my second day of walking I realised that I was reaching the limit of my current capacity. I took the next day off to help pack up the campsite and journey with the van to the next spot. I walked one more day, and would sing this little song along the way.

*Be gentle with yourself, my friend, my friend
Be gentle with yourself, my friend
One day at a time, one step at a time,
one breath at a time, my friend.
One breath at a time, one step at a time,
one day at a time, my friend.*

So I said my goodbyes on the 6th evening around the campfire, and look forward to keeping in touch with some of my walking companions. On the 7th day I left with 3 others and hitchhiked and bussed our ways back to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and then eventually, after some more adventures of another ilk, I returned to London. Where next? Perhaps somewhere closer to home in the English countryside over the summer! The Chilterns are an Area of Outstanding Beauty.... not so far out of London!

Anyone want to join me?

Veronica Needa



'Life Changes'

Reflections from the service on 30th April 2017.
This reflection is also available online as a podcast.

'Journeying' by Julia Alden

I sit on the front porch of my house, with my suitcase ready. It is the first time I have ever travelled outside of my home state of Illinois and I guess, just about the first time I have ventured more than thirty miles away from this little mid-western town situated on a two-lane highway. If you blinked, you really did miss it. It was summer and I was going to stay with my cousins in Des Moines, Iowa. It was hours away and I just could not contain my excitement at taking this journey. I must have been nine or ten years old. I was no stranger to journeys, for I lived just down the street from the public library where I found books that allowed me to travel in my head; I had planned many, but today I was going to Des Moines!

The miles of corn fields I passed on the train took me to a summer filled with new people, new adventures and a hard-hearted aching for more of the same. Now, so many years later, sitting at my window in London, I think back to all the places I have journeyed to over these many years since that initial trip to Iowa. Many.

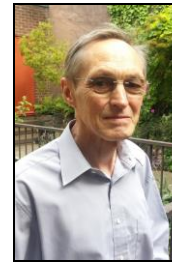
In some ways, this trip was the beginning of a transformation, or of a transformational process, a journey, both physically and existentially. Upon returning home that summer and then, subsequently after church camp and girl scout camp in the following years, my soul felt more nourished with the newness that each of those trips brought me. I opened more as a person and grew with inner confidence. The bigger world seemed full of hope and possibility. I was curious. The places in my library check-outs were more exotic and my small mid-western hometown, while providing a secure and safe-haven to grow in, spread ever slightly more confining. I planned and plotted on long summer days how my life would be out there...out in this beautiful expanse of people and places. I don't think that this was quite wanderlust, but an inkling that I belonged to something else. It wasn't just about traveling, finding out about new places and cultures...it was that...but it was about finding myself and how I fit into that majestic world.

Passing by cornfields in any place in the world always reminds me of the corner where I first journeyed from. The cornfields, perhaps, signifying my dreams. Each trip that I have taken, has added to the trajectory of my being and who I have become.

'Grieving' by Brian Ellis

Recently I grieved for almost two years. I'd never done so before and now I've had the experience I realise how important it is to accept the process of transforming from the person I was and couldn't just remain, to who I could now be.

Then I thought: how did I reach my seventies without grieving for anyone else? The most likely person I would have grieved for would have been my father; he was a fatherly friend and we got on well but he died when I was fourteen at home from terminal cancer. Looking back there should have been a transformation of some sort at an emotional level appropriate for my age. But at that age you do not have the emotional and relationship experience to initiate change. If nobody around you (relations, friends, teachers...) talks about death and dying and



suffering and the future problems of practical living after someone dies, then you assume that this is how the adult world deals with it, and that you don't talk about it either. All the guilty feelings (wishing your own father would die so he didn't keep on suffering), uncomfortable, and sometimes frightening thoughts, and doubts get hidden away, cluttering up cupboards in your mind and stopping them from being used in a more positive way. This is the antithesis of the process of transformation, the opposite of experiences being talked over in some evolving, safe and encouraging environment.

Offer a light emotional touch, and a quiet and airy space, to tempt out the thoughts of those who might not know that this is where their thoughts belong before they can begin to change.

I realise as I write this that being offered a light emotional touch etc. wasn't only for when I was emotionally immature but has applied to my adult life: if I walk past the door marked 'transform' please push it ajar to show me that the light can come in if I make the effort to open it myself.

'Shaped By Life?' by Sarah Tinker

Do you use words like fate or destiny? They're not modern concepts. In ancient times life was so perilous and so clearly out of any individual's control that it's not surprising they had terms to describe powers greater than their own. In classical times even the gods were at the mercy of the Fates – in Greek mythology the three sisters who spun each life thread, chose its length and qualities and, in due course, cut the thread to bring life to its close. The fates could not be avoided but destiny was a quality to work with, to struggle with in order to fulfil.

Through most of human history death has been an ever-present reality. Only in relatively recent times has medicine extended our average lifespan and given us a greater sense of being in charge of our individual existence. But the question remains: how much do we shape our own lives and how much does life shape us? I don't personally believe in a pre-ordained destiny, or in a life path that is mapped out for us. And yet there have been times in my life when a certain next step felt completely 'right'. Chance meetings have led to lifelong friendships. Decisions made in the moment have taken life off into new and unexpected directions.

What good fortune it is to live in a time and in a part of the world where we enjoy freedom of choice. Yet with freedom comes responsibility and the struggle of having to choose between the various options before us. We may live to regret a choice made too quickly or may feel paralysed by indecision, unable to see into the future, unable to decide which path to take for fear of missing the opportunity not chosen.

Some of the most significant changes in my life, truly transformatory experiences, have been clearly out of my control: births and deaths, relationships started or finished, redundancies and retirements, studies chosen or rejected, storms and snowfalls, car engines and bicycle tyres that misbehaved. I'll be forever grateful to companions along the way who've been there to remind me that I'll probably cope, whatever next unfolds. May it be the same for you.

THE WELCOMERS

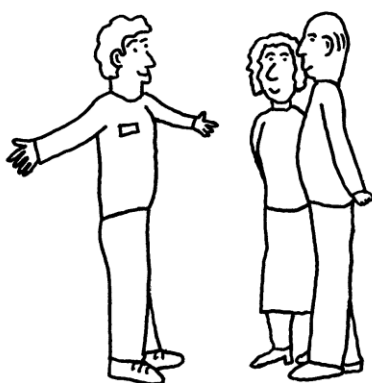
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WITH THE
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THERE IS
A ROTA
SO THAT
THE SAME
PEOPLE
DO NOT
HAVE TO BE
WELCOMING
EVERY WEEK



(I like to think we're a bit more welcoming than this here at Essex Church!...)

CartoonChurch.com

'Our world is filled with anger over the injustice and unfairness of life. Fairness is a human concept. There is no fairness in nature. The cry for things to be fair comes early in our development. Children understand the concept of fair, perhaps better than adults. Justice is a human concept. Love transcends humanity. Dogs and deer and elephants show signs of love. The natural world is replete with indications that something like what we call love is well known and understood by all manner of life.

God is that spark of love within each of us; and more, God is that call of love to make the world a better place. Life is not spread evenly for all people, but by reaching out to others we can even it out more. Life is not fair, but by watching out for and supporting one another we can make it more fair. Blessing and suffering are not passed out in an orderly fashion. There is always a little more here, less there, just barely enough for this and near overflowing for that. But that is not the end of the story, because how we respond greatly affects the outcome. It is not even or fair or just. That is our work: to bring more fairness and justice and love into life. And through this, God is fair. Through our work to make the world more fair, God is fair. God is in our response to suffering and disaster and pain and in this way, God is fair.'

UU Minister, Rev. Douglas Taylor

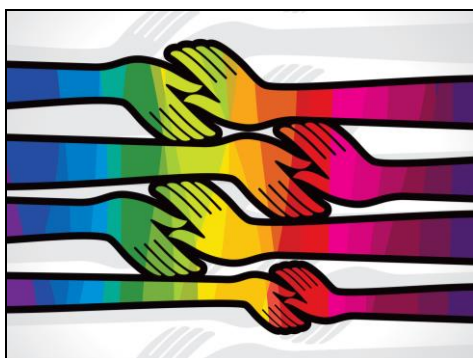
'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops



**Sunday 21st May and 18th June 2017
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

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

Services at Essex Church in May



Sunday 7th May, 11am – ‘The Touch of a Hand’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Touch can be one of the simplest, yet most profound ways to experience connection with another. It can also be misused. How can our touch be authentic, respectful and loving?

Sunday 14th May, 11am – ‘The Art of Conversation’

Service led by Roy Clark and Sarah Tinker

How the gentle art of conversation can help to make this world a better place. Followed by our inclusive tea dance in the afternoon – a chance to meet new people and learn new steps.

Sunday 21st May, 11am ‘Spirituality in the Digital Age’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sarah says ‘do let me know your thoughts on this topic’. How is the Internet enhancing your sense of spiritual connection?

Sunday 28th May, 11am – ‘Deepening Our Connections’

Service led by Jeannene Powell

In our service, we’ll be looking at the way we deepen our connections, with ourselves, others and which is of most worth to us. Stay after the service if you’d like to join us for our monthly Sunday Conversation about this month’s theme of ‘Connection’.



Unitarians Marching at London Pride

Save the Date: Saturday 8th July 2017



There will be a Unitarian group marching once again at London Pride this year (Saturday 8th July). It'd be great to have a few of us from Essex Church to join with fellow Unitarians from across the district and represent our LGBTQ+ inclusive religious community. Sarah and Jane are planning to attend this year and we will pass on further details as and when we get them.

Iceland Lava Trek: Fundraising for Mind



We have had this message from a friend of the congregation: ‘My name is John Anders Robinson, a care assistant and former mental health service user. I am undertaking the 5-day Mind Iceland Lava Trek this July as a challenge to raise funds for the UK’S leading mental health charity. It consists of an adventuresome 58 km. trek: through hot lava fields, gushing geysers, raging waterfalls, and the blue lagoon. My target is to raise £2,095.00, 80% of which has to be received as of 30th April 2017. Please consider sponsoring me. It is easy and quick and you can giftaid it.’

For more information and to make a donation see:
www.virginmoneygiving.com/johnrobinson13

‘A religious person is a person who holds God and humanity in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair.’

Abraham Joshua Heschel