



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: March 2015

## What's On...

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 11am-noon

### **'The Rule of Law'**

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1.30-4.30pm

### **'Issues of Ageing' Workshop**

Booking Essential – for ages 50+

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March, 7-8pm

### **'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**

'Sanctuary' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March, 11am-noon

### **Sabbath'** led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30pm

### **Small-Group Communion**

Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2-3pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 7-9.00pm

### **Creativity Group: Bring Your Own**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March, 11am-noon

### **'What We Need'**

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 7-9pm

### **Management Committee Meeting**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 11am-noon

### **'In This Together'**

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1.30-4.30pm

### **London District AGM**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 12.30-1.15pm

### **'Finding Your Voice'**

Singing Workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March, 7-9pm

### **Women's Group**

Led by Jeannene, Liz and Carole

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 11am-noon

### **'Is That all There Is?'**

Led by Rev. Jopie Boeke

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 12.30-1.30pm

### **Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

## Vulnerable Adults

I've just been reviewing our congregation's safeguarding policy and it's reminded me that along with our need to take care of children, we also have a legal 'duty of care' towards so called vulnerable adults. And who might they be? Back in my thirties I was referred by my GP to their new counsellor, to help me come to terms with a difficult life issue. I saw this counsellor weekly for some months. He was helpful. He met my partner and, when we adopted our children, the counsellor and his wife invited us round and we spent some happy afternoons with them and our new family. He was an expert on post traumatic shock disorder, having worked with the Ministry of Defence, and appeared on a well-regarded TV discussion programme to explain how society might better care for those in distress.



A few years later my mum showed me a surprising news report from our local paper. It was about our helpful counsellor, now exposed as a conman and a bigamist, having married twice with two completely different identities. He was an ex-armed services sergeant who'd served time in jail and who'd forged certificates to win a place at university. A big surprise. He had completely fooled us, the BBC, a university, my GP, and seemingly hundreds of other people. He hadn't done me any harm and it made me laugh to think that he was actually a capable counsellor, despite his bogus qualifications. But he had harmed other people and I still think of his second wife and the shock she must have felt when his many deceptions were revealed. She too was involved in psychotherapy, a caring and intelligent woman.

In truth, aren't we all potentially vulnerable adults? In the world of safeguarding, vulnerable adults are a quite narrowly defined group of people, receiving social care at a certain level. But here at church let's treat each and every one of us as potentially vulnerable. In the last couple of months I've heard from a number of people who've been taken in by various scams – on the telephone, by email and even through the post. Each has lost some money and, just as significantly, they have lost confidence in their ability to know if they are being taken for a ride. But in the face of skilled fraudsters, most of us become quite gullible. We are easily fooled because such people are so skilled. So if anybody asks you for money or bank details or wants you to get involved in 101 other confusing or suspicious sounding situations, tell them you'll talk it over with your friends at church first.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this month's newsletter...

\* Reflections on FUSE: Festival of Unitarians in the South East \* 'Issues of Ageing' Workshop \* 'Tips for Making the Most of Church' \* 'Management Committee; Goodbyes and Hellos' \* 'A Goodbye for Now' by Carol Sheppard \* News from our Kids Club \* Hosting our District AGM \* 'Getting to Hear About It' by Elizabeth Beel \* 'Make Yourself at Home' by Jane Blackall \* Tenebrae Service \* 'New Perspectives' sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker \* and much more...

# Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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

*Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514*

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

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

# New Website and Weekly Email Bulletin



As promised in the last newsletter our shiny new website has now gone live. Have a look and see what you reckon:

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

The launch of the new email bulletin has been slightly delayed but if you have signed up you can expect to receive the first of these weekly messages very soon to keep you informed of all the forthcoming events and opportunities here at Essex Church.

If you haven't already given me your email address and would like to receive the church email bulletin please do send a message to [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk). Thank you!

**Jane Blackall**

## 'Heart and Soul'

### Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March, 7-8pm**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April** (note irregular date)

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



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

Our March gathering will be led by Sonya Leite on the theme of 'Sanctuary'. If you would like to know more about these gatherings contact [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

## Hosting the Unitarian London District AGM

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 1.30 to 4.30pm  
Here at Essex Church**

With people arriving from 1pm onwards, we'll be serving drinks and meeting up with members from the many congregations that make up our London and South East District (LDPA). At 1.30pm Rev John Carter will lead a service to be followed by the formal AGM. After that we'll be offering an afternoon tea. We're also looking forward to welcoming our new District Minister Martin Whittell, who will be starting his new role in April. We wish him all the best for the work ahead.

Everyone is welcome to attend the AGM and Melody is co-ordinating a small team to serve refreshments. Contact Sarah our minister if you would like to know more or can offer to help. Your assistance would be much appreciated.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

## Management Committee: Goodbyes and Hellos

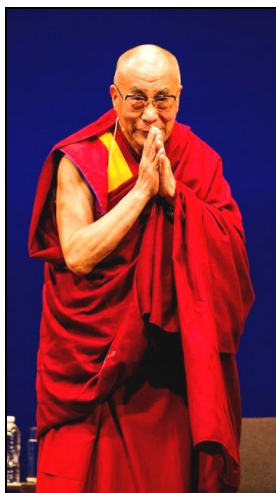


We are sorry to be saying goodbye to our current congregational chair David Darling and to committee member Carol Sheppard. David has been such an asset to our congregation over the last decade, bringing good humour, wise judgement and a deep intelligence to all our deliberations. Carol settled in with Kensington Unitarians so quickly and made strong connections here and it's good to know that she is back now with her original Unitarian congregation in Portsmouth. We thank you David and Carol for all you have contributed to our community and we hope you will come and visit us whenever you can. You will be missed.



We are glad to be welcoming two new members to our committee. Gina Bayley and Roy Clark attended their first meeting in February and we're grateful to them both for being prepared to give up time to serve our congregation in this way. They bring extensive experience from other voluntary organisations and we're looking forward to learning more from them.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**



'It is important to think very well before entering a particular spiritual tradition. Once you have entered you should stick to it. Do not be like a man who tastes food in all the different restaurants but never actually gets down to eating a meal. Think carefully before adopting a practice; then follow it through. This way you will get the results from dedicating even a little time each day. Alternatively, if you try to follow all the various paths you will not get anywhere.'

**His Holiness The Dalai Lama**

## 'Issues of Ageing'

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1.30 to 4.30pm  
Open to anyone aged 50 or older.



An opportunity to explore in gentle conversation some of the issues we face as we grow older and time to ponder our changing needs and yearnings. What might help us to feel more fulfilled at this stage of life? How do we re-assess and assert our identity as our roles in life change?

Refreshments provided. Bring your lunch if you plan to stay after the morning service. This is a free session but you do need to book a place in advance.

Please let our minister Sarah know if you plan to join this session - by email on [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) or leave a phone message on 020 7221 6514.

## Tenebrae

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 7pm

Led by Tristan Jovanović and Sarah Tinker



This small group worship focuses on the themes of Holy Week and the events leading to Jesus' death on the cross. Tenebrae means shadows or darkness in Latin.

We will meet in candle light and hear a series of readings taken mainly from the Gospels. Readings will be interspersed with music and the candles are extinguished one by one until we are left in darkness and slowly and silently leave the room.

The themes of Easter-time – betrayal, confusion, anguish, despair, humiliation, death – are often avoided or hidden in our modern society. Yet there is strength to be found in sitting with the unpalatable, as witnesses to that which is.

This Tenebrae gathering will be followed by a simple Middle Eastern meal here at the church, £4.00 per person, please let Sarah know if you would like to eat together.

# Warden's Column

As part of updating information for the launch of the new website, Jane asked me to look again at the list of websites for groups using the building. I obviously hadn't done this for a long time, because there was only one group still meeting here (the Guild of Pastoral Psychology) who hadn't changed their web address, their name, or both. Four groups on the old list had stopped meeting here and we had 13 new groups with websites. In fact the only groups who meet here regularly who don't have a website are the children's choir run by local Chinese parents; Ashtanga Yoga and Taiji (both of which are self-practice groups rather than open classes); a small ballet class and even smaller Feldenkreis class - and another yoga teacher, Catherine James, who clearly doesn't need any more advertising because her classes are full anyway.

The updated list below is now on the website [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk) – which is bursting with other information too, and well worth a look anyway – so why not click on a few links and get a sense of the variety of groups who meet here.

**Alister Hardy Society:** *talks on spiritual topics followed by discussion*  
[www.studyspiritualexperiences.org](http://www.studyspiritualexperiences.org)

**Babybop:** *dance classes for 2-6 yr olds,*  
[www.babybop.com](http://www.babybop.com)

**Beit Klal Yisrael:** *liberal synagogue*  
[www.bky.org.uk](http://www.bky.org.uk)

**C G Jung Club London**  
[www.jungclub-london.org](http://www.jungclub-london.org)

**Guild of Pastoral Psychology:** *lectures on psychological themes,*  
[www.guildofpastoralpsychology.org.uk](http://www.guildofpastoralpsychology.org.uk)

**IGAP Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists:**  
*monthly evening & Saturday seminars, [www.igap.co.uk](http://www.igap.co.uk)*

**John Stirk:** *osteopathy based yoga*  
[www.johnstirk.com](http://www.johnstirk.com)

**Little Foxes:** *pre-school football training*  
[www.thelittlefoxesclub.com](http://www.thelittlefoxesclub.com)

**Living Spirituality, Journeying Together group:** *monthly discussion, sharing & informal liturgy, [www.livingspirit.org.uk/events](http://www.livingspirit.org.uk/events)*

**Lolly Stirk:** *yoga for pregnancy*  
[www.lollystirk.co.uk](http://www.lollystirk.co.uk)

**London Meditation Centre:** *classes in Vedic meditation*  
[www.londonmeditationcentre.com](http://www.londonmeditationcentre.com)

**Monkey Music:** *pre-school music classes, [www.monkeymusic.co.uk](http://www.monkeymusic.co.uk)*

**Nia – Art of Movement:** *dance classes with Sonya, [nianow.com/sonya](http://nianow.com/sonya)*

**OneSpirit Interfaith Foundation:** *training for interfaith ministers and open worship services [www.interfaithfoundation.org](http://www.interfaithfoundation.org)*

**Pilates:** [www.onebodyclinic.co.uk](http://www.onebodyclinic.co.uk)

**Russian Imperial Ballet:** *children's classes, [www.russianimperialballetschool.org](http://www.russianimperialballetschool.org)*

**Seicho no Ie:** *Brazilian Buddhist Service, usually in Portuguese, [sniuk.org/english](http://sniuk.org/english)*

**Sing & Sign:** *baby signing classes, [www.singandsign.com](http://www.singandsign.com)*

**Tse Qigung:** *classes in Tai Chi, Chi Gung & Kung Fu, [www.tseqigongcentre.com](http://www.tseqigongcentre.com)*



Jenny Moy

# Hucklow Summer School 2015

For Personal and Leadership Development

## 'Between the Dreaming and the Coming True'

Celebrating Twenty Years of Summer School!



**22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Applications due by 17<sup>th</sup> April

Hucklow Summer School brings fellow Unitarians together and allows them to get to know each other deeply and form lasting connections. The core purpose of summer school week is religious education: we focus on matters of religion and spirituality and intend to draw out and develop the potential of all participants. We aim to provide a carefully balanced programme, offering a rich mix of activities for both the heart and head, and a wide variety of optional sessions including country walks, poetry, discussions & crafts, which participants might 'take home' and try out in their own congregations and communities. We also ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for relaxed fellowship and fun during the week!

**Theme Talks:** with Daniel Costley, Cody Coyne, Sheena Gabriel, Jo James & Sarah Tinker

### A Choice of Daily Engagement Groups:

**'Dream Yourself to Wholeness'**  
with Liz Birtles & Nicky Jenkins

**'Cherishing Dreams, Chasing Dreams'**  
with Margaret Kirk & Nick Morrice

**'To Dream the Impossible Dream'**  
with Jane Blackall & Katie McKenna

**'The Space Between: Stillness & Motion/Words & Silence'**  
with Rita Woditsch & Lynne Davies

**Children and Young People's Programme**  
with Claire Maddocks & Her Team

**Basic Cost for Adults (shared room): £500**

Some bursaries are available to help with the cost of attending.

Please visit our website for details and an application form:

**[www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk](http://www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk)**

Alternatively, telephone Janet Costley on 01732 464211.

## Creativity Group: Bring Your Own Crafts

Thursdays 12<sup>th</sup> March, 16<sup>th</sup> April (*irregular date*),  
14<sup>th</sup> May and 11<sup>th</sup> June from 7-9pm



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

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

During early 2015 we are inviting group members to make some new textile panels to add to our ever-changing seasonal wall-hanging which is displayed at the front of the church. Panels should be 150cm long and have a loop at the top to go over the pole they hang from. Contact Jane if you need more details: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

**Jane Blackall**



# HYMNS

IT IS QUITE EASY TO JOIN IN

① FIRST OF ALL FIND THE RIGHT BOOK



② THEN FIND THE RIGHT NUMBER

	1		3		7	2
4		9				5
	5		1	6		
7						9
		8	7		2	
		3			5	
6				9		4
1	8		2			3

HYMN NUMBERS MUST BE CALCULATED BY A COMPLICATED PROCEDURE INVOLVING ADDING ROWS AND COLUMNS

③ BE SURE YOU ARE SINGING THE RIGHT TUNE



④ MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW THE VERSE NUMBERS CAREFULLY



(IT CAN BE EMBARRASSING TO KEEP SINGING WHEN EVERYONE ELSE HAS STOPPED)

CartoonChurch.com

This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by the very nice man Dave Walker originally appeared in the Church Times.



'We're here for meaning, affirmation, purpose, and growth in the embrace of beloved community. To belong.

[Martin Luther King, Jr.] made that expression [beloved community] popular but it was first coined by Josiah Royce. Royce's idea was that the beloved community was the one in which – no matter differences of faith tradition, nationality, race, or idiosyncrasy – the people were united by common striving for truth, reality, and faithfulness to one another. He thought of it as a community that creates heaven here, a community that lives reconciled to one another, and to the highest expression of love. The creed of the beloved community is simply faithfulness to the largest and most active expression of love.

We yearn to belong.

We yearn to belong to something larger than our own private sphere.

We yearn to belong to something larger than our own private sphere that can give us grounding in an uncertain world – something that can give us hope.

In fact, Royce called the beloved community a community of hope. It is not a community that looks and hopes for some reward nor hopes for a better life handed to them in this world or the next. It is a community of hope because it is the members of the community who take action to make hopes real, who are themselves the hope... In a community of hope – because you aren't waiting passively for some great hand to reach out and save you – you are, yourselves, the hands.

In a world in which rapid change has become the norm and storms of all kinds toss and threaten – a world of uncertainty – here, where we work, sometimes with steady and sometimes with trembling hands – we strive to create the certainty that only love can create – the certainty of love itself. We unite to strengthen the bonds of kinship among all persons... our spiritual lives are deepened, our feelings of awe and reverence are increased – our tenderness toward all life is strengthened and we pursue the expression and expansion of the beloved community through worship, study, and service.

We affirm and renew [our covenant to each other] when we do modest yet essential things – like making coffee, greeting one another, setting up for a worship service, rearranging chairs, ushering people to seats and so many more small and yet essential things. We renew the covenant in visible and essential ways when we teach religious education classes, sing in the choir, play music for worship, help in the office, drag yet another gong to sound meditation, chair a working group, serve on the board or ministry council, or do committee work or so many other essential things that require gifts of your time, talent, and treasure.'

Unitarian Universalist Rev. Hilary Landau Krivchenia

# 'Tips for Making the Most of Church'

*I have been asking around for hints and tips to enhance your experience of church life. The following are a collection of those I have received so far from Caroline Blair, Tristan Jovanović, and Sarah Tinker mixed in with a few thoughts of my own. As such they are suggestions for you to consider and not necessarily 'official church policy'. Maybe you can offer some more hints and tips to this list.*

**Jane Blackall**



Develop your feeling of belonging by getting to know some new people, making an effort to talk to newcomers or asking someone how they are today. Try and remember their name next time you see them or admit you've forgotten and ask them again. Introduce people to others you think they may get on with or have something in common with.

Allow yourself time to stay on after the service to have tea or coffee and stop to chat with others. Even if the hubbub of the hall is not your style you might like to go and find a quiet spot in the garden to have a conversation. Your experience of church can be greatly enhanced by getting to know (and be known by) others in the congregation more deeply and you can help this process by simply being present and talking with others instead of rushing off to get about your business after the service. Of course there will be times when you really aren't in the mood to be sociable, or you have other commitments to attend to, but lingering at church on a Sunday can be of great benefit to you and to others in the community.

On a similar note – try coming along to another regular gathering in addition to Sunday services where you might get to know others in the congregation a little better – perhaps the monthly 'Heart and Soul' gatherings or the creativity group.

If you are shy, volunteering to make tea and coffee on a Sunday is a good way to make connections (and do a good turn for the rest of the congregation) without having to worry about making sparkling conversation. This was one of the first tasks I did for the congregation many years ago and it was a good way to start to get to know people and do my bit in a low-pressure way.

Do something small but helpful like clearing coffee cups, picking up litter, offering to help with washing up. It's a good way to get to know people and to develop a sense of ownership of the church. It really does belong to all of us.

If you have a favourite hymn, do let Sarah know and she will try to include it in a service. Also, always feel free to suggest favourite readings, or put in requests for the pianist or singers. Sarah is always interested to hear your ideas about worship and any thoughts you have on possible themes.

Go and visit some other Unitarian congregations in London or further afield. Take our greetings to them and bring back any ideas of good practices we could learn from them.

Have a good idea about how to improve something at church and offer to make sure it gets done.

We encourage everyone to be thoughtful about our behaviour in worship and avoiding distracting one another if possible. Let's all check that our phones are on silent before the service begins and if we want to use our phones for other purposes during a service, perhaps to write some notes or look something up, let's be discreet about it and not distract others. We can also be thoughtful about rustling plastic bags and sweet wrappers as people really do appreciate the peace we can find here on Sunday mornings.

For the same reason, it really helps the atmosphere if people are on time for the service, so maybe you could consider setting off five minutes earlier. We know that London transport can be a challenge at times so if you do happen to arrive late, please try to come in quietly, waiting for the first hymn perhaps.

We are a child friendly congregation and do our best to have a children's activity available each week. If we don't have a children's leader or your children prefer to stay with you during the service, do feel free to bring them something to play with or read and to nip out with them if they get restless.

Apart from the library, the church is wheelchair accessible, including a toilet. Please let us know if you have any mobility issues etc. that are not being addressed. We can open the double doors to admit scooters etc., we can provide armless chairs if you find them more comfortable, and we can offer large print hymn sheets if you need them (just ask the steward on duty for large print on Sunday mornings). If you let us know in advance we will ask worship leaders if they can give you a printed or emailed copy of their sermon if you would like to receive that.

During the collection, please try to be aware of where the collection bag has come from, so that you can make sure it goes to the right person next and the steward does not have to chase it around the room.

Please make use of our back garden! It can be a real suntrap on a nice day, and is a lovely place to sit and have a quiet chat.

Also, have a look at the library downstairs. You are welcome to borrow books, and we have a really good selection of titles. (Please bring them back though.)

If you often find yourself struggling to get your hymn book open at the right page in time to sing along then you might benefit from looking up the number of the first hymn before the service starts and marking the page with your order of service. Then once we've sung the first hymn you can mark the place of the next one (and so on) so that you are always ready to sing with gusto!



## Congregational Lunch

After the service on Easter Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> April)



We will be having another bring-and-share lunch after the service on Easter Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> April). You might like to invite a friend!

Please look out for the sign-up sheet circulating on Sundays in late March and let us know what food or drink you are offering to contribute for the occasion. We would also be very glad to hear from anyone who is willing to offer practical assistance (such as setting out and clearing up on the day).



## 'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



**Sundays 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April  
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices.

Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

## Day of Unplugging

6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> March 2015



To tie in with the 'Sabbath' service on 8<sup>th</sup> March we thought you might be interested to read about the 'National Day of Unplugging' which is taking place the same weekend.

This is a project of *Reboot*, a group which affirms the value of Jewish traditions, and creates new ways for people to make them their own. Inspired by Jewish ritual and embracing the arts, humour, food, philosophy, and social justice, *Reboot* initiates creative projects that spark the interest of younger Jews and the larger community.

From the 'National Day of Unplugging' website:

*'We increasingly miss out on the important moments of our lives as we pass the hours with our noses buried in our phones, chronicling our every move through Facebook and Twitter, and shielding ourselves from the outside world with the bubble of "silence" that our earphones create.*

*If you recognize that in yourself – or your friends, families or colleagues— join the National Day of Unplugging, sign the Unplug pledge and start living a different life: connect with the people in your street, neighbourhood and city, have an uninterrupted meal or read a book to your child.*

*The National Day of Unplugging is a 24 hour period – running from sundown to sundown – and starts on the first Friday in March. The project is an outgrowth of The Sabbath Manifesto, an adaption of our ancestors' ritual of carving out one day per week to unwind, unplug, relax, reflect, get outdoors, and connect with loved ones.'*

If you take part in this and find it a helpful way to carve out some sacred space in your busy life you might like to carry the project on and make it a regular practice in your life. The 'Sabbath Manifesto' website ([www.sabbathmanifesto.org](http://www.sabbathmanifesto.org)) includes a list of ten suggested principles to help us slow down.

**For more info: [www.nationaldayofunplugging.com](http://www.nationaldayofunplugging.com)**



## Small Group Communion



**8<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 10<sup>th</sup> May**  
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library

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

**8<sup>th</sup> March** – Led by Jane Blackall

**12<sup>th</sup> April** – Led by Tristan Jovanović

**10<sup>th</sup> May** – Led by Elisa Melgosa & Mike Eichler

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

## Foodbank Collection



Thank you to everyone who has been supporting our Foodbank collections here at Essex Church. We've decided to stop these collections for now. The Trussell Trust foodbanks now have efficient collection points in many supermarkets and because they were collecting so much food we found that our boxes were not always so welcome and we just don't have space to store food for a few months till they ask us to collect for them again. We also had a problem collecting just the foods that they needed most. So we'll step back for a while and suggest that if you want to continue donating food you buy items to place in collection points elsewhere. We'll also aim to have one of our monthly collections for the Trussell Trust this year as they need money to help organise their work and to distribute food efficiently. Thanks for the generosity of your support over the last couple of years.

**Caroline Blair**

## News from our Kids Club



Hello from kids club! It's lovely to have everyone back after the Christmas break. We got started again in mid-January and we welcomed Alyssia back from Mexico. We are impressed to hear her offering us the odd Mexican word.

We are learning about Unitarians today and Carolyn has helped us enormously. There are apparently around 800,000 Unitarians in the world. Carolyn's work at home means another completed task in the Chalice Award Scheme; she has contributed so much to everyone's understanding of what Unitarianism is all about. We discovered some interesting famous Unitarians. Christopher Reeve was a Unitarian as was Beatrix Potter. Not to mention the man who invented the internet - Tim Berners Lee. Sarah tells me that Tim celebrated his wedding in this church very quietly last year. Not many people know that!

This year we kicked off by having a birthday in the group. Happy Birthday to Andrew. He has also been chosen to be part of the elite fencing team at his school and we were impressed by the moves he demonstrated for us. Well done Andrew!

We also have a budding director and writer in our team. Carolyn has been selected by her school to direct and star in a play. She has written an adaptation of Wuthering Heights would you believe! She was also a soloist in a recent production of Noye's Flood by Benjamin Britten.

Tyler continues to be our budding football star and a wonderfully kind and loving member of our team. He always has gifts for everyone and is a true example to us all. He plays for a Junior Team and recently scored a top corner goal from the half way line. He's enjoying his coaching sessions too. I am still hiding the balls from him! Well done Tyler.

Caio continues with his passion for all things musical. He is perhaps the quietest member of our team so he clearly doesn't take after his Mum! Caio can always be found writing music and he has been asked to compose a piece of music for his school concert and has got stuck in with a piece for recorder, piano and cello. Recently Caio was accepted to Norwich School with a potential choristership in year 4 so it is with regret that we will be saying goodbye to all in the late Summer. But in the meantime we're looking forward to a wonderful Spring and cracking on with our chalice award tasks. If you know any other families that are looking for a dynamic, liberal church for their children and adults to attend – tell them all about us. There's room for more!

**Sam Boyero**

## One Light Spiritual Gathering 'Self-Discipline'



**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March, 6.15-8.30pm**  
**– Here at Essex Church**

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

The next One Light Spiritual Gathering will take place on: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> (with the reminder that 13 is a lucky number in Judaism, and other traditions). It will focus on the blessings of Relaxation! So leave the strain of the working week behind, and come along. Just Be with us from 6.30 – 8.15 pm at Essex Church.

***This event is free. Donations for expenses are welcome.  
Any surplus will go to Essex Unitarian Church***

### **For further information contact:**

Interfaith Reverend Joanna Ryam 07929 836 935

*Forthcoming One Light Gatherings:*

*10<sup>th</sup> April – Celebration; 8<sup>th</sup> May – Contentment;  
12<sup>th</sup> June – Patience; 10<sup>th</sup> July – Presence*



*'To life — these two words represent so much of what Judaism is about. They suggest first that Judaism is about how to live, not just what to believe. They convey an optimistic attitude toward life, investing our energy in living rather than*

*in worrying about dying, asking us to enjoy the pleasures of this life rather than noticing all the things that are wrong with it, emphasizing life in this world rather than pinning our hopes on finding satisfaction in some world to come. As the traditional Jewish toast over a glass of wine, *To life* conveys a sense of exuberance, a readiness to enjoy the pleasures of this world. It removes from wine, and from other pleasures, that taint of sin and self-indulgence, and invites us to look at all that God has created and find it good. The sages teach us that 'in time to come, everyone will have to account for all the good things God created which he refused to enjoy.'*

**Rabbi Harold Kushner**

## Richard III in Leicestershire

It has long been thought that the body of Richard III was buried quickly and without ceremony in the Church of the Grey Friars in Leicester after his defeat and death at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, which effectively ended the Wars of the Roses. However that church was demolished during the dissolution of the monasteries and his remains had never been found. Richard was the last king of the House of York, being succeeded by Henry V11, the first monarch of the House of Tudor. In August 2012 the University of Leicester in association with the City Council and the Richard III Society began an archaeological search for the body beneath a council car park in Leicester. In September it was announced that a body had been found beneath what was thought to have been the choir of the church. The body was that of an adult male who had severe scoliosis of the spine with various battlefield injuries. Over the next few months numerous tests were carried out on the body, including using DNA evidence from a surviving relative, and in February 2013 it was announced that the skeleton was that of Richard III. This has caused huge interest around the world, and of course in particular here in Leicestershire.

The original licence granted by the Ministry of Justice provided for re-burial of the remains in Leicester Cathedral, but this was challenged by a group calling itself the Plantagenet Alliance, who believed the body should be laid to rest in York. This legal challenge delayed everything by a year or so. Eventually the High Court ruled that there were 'no public law grounds' to interfere with the original decision, and plans went ahead for the re-interment. This will take place in Leicester Cathedral on Thursday 26 March 2015, and much work has been done to prepare a suitable tomb and resting place for the last English king to die in battle. The previous Sunday, 22 March, his body will be taken in procession through some of the villages near the site of the Battle of Bosworth where he died, including Dadlington and Sutton Cheney (just to the north-west of Hinckley, where we live) Although it is true that Richard was a son of York, his body has laid in Leicester for over five hundred years. Also, despite being a Yorkshireman myself, I feel that Leicester as a city needs him more than York does, which already has numerous historical sites and features. The recently-opened Richard 111 Visitor Centre in the city is already proving a major attraction.

To historians, Richard remains a controversial figure and of course his image has not been helped by Shakespeare's portrayal of him. When his brother Edward IV died unexpectedly in 1483, Edward's 12 year-old son became Edward V, with Richard as Lord Protector of the realm. However a power struggle ensued, and the young king and his brother were imprisoned in the Tower of London and never seen again. It is assumed they were murdered, though the exact circumstances remain unclear. Apparently one thing that can be said for Richard is that "he was a good lawmaker for the ease and solace of the common people" (Francis Bacon). Whatever one's view of him, there is no doubt that the discovery of his body has caused considerable excitement and interest both locally in Leicestershire and around the world. I understand that the re-interment on 26 March may be broadcast live on Channel Four.

**Howard Hague**

# FUSE 2015 – Festival of Unitarians in the South East



*There was a bumper turnout for Jeannene's 'Heart and Soul' session (all about 'Sabbath') on Sunday morning at FUSE.*

This was my first visit to FUSE so I didn't have anything to compare it to. There is so much I could write, as so much happened, however I'll just outline a couple of things.

What struck me most was the sense of connection. This was something explored in one of the workshops I attended, however, having bumped into people I haven't seen for a long time, others I'd seen last week at church (Kensington Unitarians were very well represented) and meeting some really friendly people from other congregations for the first time, I really felt a deep sense of caring, connection and warmth.

I also found that my inner connection to that which is sacred and Divine for me was strengthened, through morning prayer sessions and opening and closing worship, but also theological discussions over dinner and even with a woman working in a local gift shop.

The weekend was really packed, with workshops to attend, but there was also the option to have space. Having the pebble beach and sea across the road was a delight, and I visited a few times over the length of my stay.

On Sunday morning, it was a real honour to present an example of the "Heart and Soul" gatherings we've been running at Kensington for the past couple of years. A little under 30 people attended, and Jane had prepared a useful handout so people could use the basic structure of our "Heart and Soul" to try out an alternative type of gathering in their own congregations.

I really found my time at FUSE meaningful and enriching. As well as nourishing - emotionally, mentally, spiritually and also physically with delicious food throughout. And although it's only just finished, I'm already looking forward to the next one.

**Jeannene Powell**

This was the 4th FUSE weekend that I've attended and I'm glad it all went so well. This year I'd been in charge of organising the workshops in the spirituality and worship strand and all those five workshops were well attended and well appreciated. Thanks to Jeannene for running an excellent session demonstrating our Heart and Soul alternative worship and to Jane Blackall and Jef Jones for their popular workshop on prayer. It was a treat to have my grandson Zak attending FUSE for the first time and to see him settling in so quickly and to have so many of us Kensington Unitarians at the event. A particular treat was to have Stephanie Saville join us for Heart and Soul on Sunday morning despite the frosty start to the morning. Walking each day on the beach really blew the cobwebs away and then we'd head back to the Chatsworth Hotel for such interesting conversations with friends old and new. Zak left the hotel on Sunday saying he'd really like to come back next year and I agreed with him. It's good to meet up with other Unitarians and spend an inspiring weekend together, reminding ourselves of the exciting possibilities of our liberal religious faith.

**Sarah Tinker**



*Katie McKenna (Norwich), Jef Jones (Brighton) and Jane Blackall enjoying a stroll along the Worthing seafront.*

# FUSE 2015 – Festival of Unitarians in the South East

At this year's FUSE I was involved in helping to run a couple of sessions which meant I wasn't able to get to various interesting workshops that were going on elsewhere at the same time.

However, for me, the real joy of the event this time around was in the conversations that took place on the fringes. I got embroiled in several in-depth philosophical and theological exchanges at the dinner table (and also spontaneously invented a silly game called 'Guess the Vegetable' which had our table in hysterics on Saturday night so it wasn't *all* high-brow). It was great to catch up with old friends and set the world to rights, and also to spend time with people I didn't previously know so well, and deepen those connections a bit too.

Unitarian congregations in the UK tend to be fairly small and (once you get out of London, Manchester and Birmingham) geographically far apart from each other. It occurs to me that activists in our congregations – those people who are most engaged in creating the vision and doing the work that keeps our communities alive and thriving – can come to feel quite isolated and unsupported if they don't have peers with similar passions and concerns nearby. Up to a point we can keep in touch and exchange our wisdom online (there are all sorts of Unitarian groups on Facebook, and lots of individual Unitarians and UUs on Twitter, so social media *does* play an increasingly significant role in this regard) but in my view nothing is quite as good as meeting up in person and taking time to share our stories face-to-face.

Occasions like this, where there is plenty of free or flexible time built into the programme, are really valuable for keeping up morale and building solidarity amongst Unitarian activists. I wonder if there are any ways in which we could do more of this sort of thing throughout the year (bearing in mind that we are all so busy already)...

**Jane Blackall**

This was a passionate occasion and exactly what I needed. Everything was well planned and when the plans failed there were many people ready to hold it all together. I am amazed at the thought and care that flows during these retreats. I get so much from these Unitarian meetings that I feel inspired and feel I want to do something to pay my debt of gratitude to the church before my passion wanes.

I feel strongly that all churches should be involved in social justice and I have missed some of that fervour recently and I am aware at how some of the press have condemned the bishops for being too political whereas I see this as a moral call for compassion. Naturally I was drawn to the 'social justice' workshops on the weekend which were thought provoking and practical.

I have been changing some things in my life recently and in a few months I want it to look different. Next academic year I am going to do less teaching so I do have some time to spare for banner waving and 'good works'. I wonder if anyone would like to join me and 'think outside the box' so that we can have fun whilst showing our commitment to loving our neighbours.

I think our church has a unique voice and I would like more people to hear it. As a community we already do a lot however there is such a richness of abilities, talents and experience within our organisation that I am convinced that some of us might have the energy for something different - I do not know what but I feel that we can stay with some unknowns and see what happens.

**Carole Grace**



*Jane and Jeannene waiting for dinner to be served.*

I attended a very interesting and well attended session on dreams led by Sheena Gabriel and Rob Oulton. They had arranged boards around the room with montages of writers, artists, saints, inventors and politicians who had been influenced by dreams. Rob gave the example of Elias Howe, one of the inventors of the sewing machine who, inspired by a nightmare where he was being jabbed by spears with holes in them, thought up the needle used in sewing machines.

They explained that the current western view of dreams as a side effect of sleep and unimportant is very different from historical and other cultural perspectives. They ran through the principles of and techniques for, working with dreams. They also touched on social dreaming and the benefits for the wider community. The session ended all too soon for me and made me eager to explore this topic in more depth. Luckily, Sheena is happy to provide a bibliography. I feel inspired to try to keep a dream journal.

**Liz Tuckwell**



*Liz, Lynne (of Lewisham Unitarians), Jeannene, Carole, Jane and Sarah larking about at the breakfast table.*

## FUSE 2015 (continued)

Although I did attend two groups during the weekend, and in addition enjoyed many encounters with other people both known and unknown to me, over meals and elsewhere, I particularly enjoyed the Mindfulness Taster on Sunday afternoon. So I will limit my comments mainly to my experiences in this group. The Group helped me to recall and re-experience some very important discoveries which have both changed and shaped my life from early middle-age onwards. The principle one of these is my discovery of meditation and the values associated with this activity, and using breathing techniques to slow down my mind and body.

Difficult to realise it now but when I was younger – really right till my middle fifties – I was quite often disturbingly quick, both in how I thought and in my bodily movements. I did try to practice SLO-WW-W in my drama movement- training and elsewhere: but it wasn't till passing through a crisis in my middle life I began to attend group therapy sessions. Through these I began to practice meditation and controlled breathing, and really achieved some degree of success in establishing and regularly revisiting a centre of calmness.

In our Sunday afternoon group we passed a full glass of water from hand to hand, then followed this with doing the same thing with our eyes closed! As it was quite a large group these activities took some time to complete, and afterwards to share our thoughts and feelings about doing them. We did this sharing of our observations both in the large group and in groups of threes.

I always find small -group sharing especially valuable, almost regardless of the subject or topic of the sharing. Usually so many other creative thoughts are stimulated, some of which it would be impossible to predict would emerge. We went on to practice mindfulness in various ways, and to listen to the sounds around us, and become more aware of our "inner noise" of buzzing, distracting preoccupations and random recollections.

Although I did enjoy some of the sharing of ideas and reactions to Andy Pakula's workshop: 'A Small Tree amidst the Storm', it did rather take me back to a few of the sociology courses which I attended years ago as a teacher of Social Studies. Although I have no doubt that Systems Theories can help to assemble and focus one's mind on the various factors which influence individuals and groups, I incline to be wary of the tendency these have to distract us from focussing on the more vital overall factors of how feelings and our attitudes to one another affect everything we may contrive to do to change our circumstances.

No time to enter into any of this here of course. Instead I would like to express my appreciation of the early morning yoga and "rest-stop" meditation and breathing exercise groups which Ashley Jones conducted for us on Saturday and Sunday mornings. If groups like these have a beneficial effect naturally enough you feel as I did, you would like to follow them up. Well, it is possible for those able to do so to attend yoga groups led by Ashley at the Unity Church in Upper St Islington on Monday evenings between 7- 8pm. Heidi and I look forward to continuing our morning yoga sessions begun in Worthing in Islington-not-by-the-Sea!

Of course, as I am sure most readers will know, one of the main features of any Conference of people dedicated as we are, to furthering the aims and interests of a Group, a Society



Heidi, Sarah & John enjoying lunch at the Chatsworth Hotel.

or religion, is the opportunities it offers us to meet and share these interests and our experiences with one another from various Unitarian churches in the South East. Our weekend was not lacking in any of this.

To be human I think we have to admit there might have been some small opportunity for disappointment as well! Mine was that I regret that what promised to be a session of particular interest to me – 'God Revised: How Religion Must Evolve in a Scientific Age' – was scheduled quite early on Friday afternoon, before many of us could arrive, settle in, and focus our thoughts. In future why not consider, say, some appropriate dramatherapy activities centred on meeting and sharing of our hopes and wishes for the weekend? The theme of *God Revised* would not be too difficult to introduce in such activities as a ground-breaker for the theme later on.

Any roads up, as they don't seem to say in Worthing, it was a good occasion. I particularly enjoyed watching the children relating to each other at mealtimes and entering into activities later on. We do – well I do- seem to have some difficulties and suffer from embarrassments which they are happily free of!

Thank you, FUSE organisers, for all your splendid efforts.

**John Hands**



Zak had a great time in the 'Short FUSE' children's group.

This was my first Unitarian weekend and we had lots of fun in the children's group - swimming, going to a Pottery cafe, doing slapstick shows, playing on the beach and eating lots of food. It was a great weekend and I hope I can go next year.

**Zak Latif**

# 'Make Yourself at Home'

Sermon by Jane Blackall – adapted from  
the service given on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015

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

Today I am going to offer a few thoughts on what it means to be hospitable here in our spiritual home. Often our services consider issues that might help us lead better lives as individuals. I think it's important, once in a while, to consider what might help us to lead a better life as a church community. How should we live – together? I hope that there will still be something in this service for you today regardless of whether or not you are already a committed member of this church, as hospitality is an important consideration in any groups we are a part of, and the lessons we have to take note of as a congregation are more widely applicable. The issues we are considering about hospitality here in our church community also have parallels at a smaller scale - in our homes, families, social groups - and perhaps also at a larger scale - in our nation and in the world beyond.

Now – Kensington Unitarians – I'm not setting out to flatter you all but I should acknowledge that in one sense I'm probably not telling you anything you don't already know – over the last few years we've often heard visitors speak highly of the warm welcome they have received here. And perhaps the highest tribute to our hospitality is the fact that some of those visitors have come back! And kept coming back! And some of those people have become committed members and friends who will stand in the church foyer on a Sunday welcoming the next newcomer. So – thumbs up for the good work we're already doing... and at the same time it's good to take a moment to reflect on what we do, why we do it, and whether we might be able to do better. And if anyone is here for the first time today – I want to say: you have got something to teach the rest of us – as you're seeing the place and the people with fresh eyes. Please do stay for a chat at tea time after the service and maybe you could let us know how we're doing.

So, quite often you'll hear people talk of hospitality as a significant spiritual practice. It's certainly a central obligation in most of the major world religions. As Tom Owen-Towle mentioned in the reading we heard earlier, 'Mature church life begins with hospitality, the most ancient religious rite, hallowed in every tradition – at least in writ, if less successfully in practice.'

I'm going to pull out three strands – three virtues – that we might focus on to help us get a better grip on what hospitality requires of us. And those virtues are: Awareness, Sensitivity, and Generosity. As we examine each of these threads in turn I am going to try to spell out what they might require of us – what they look like in practice – here in this church.

Let's start with my first strand: **Awareness**. Perhaps the most basic aspect of hospitality is simply noticing the visitor.

On a busy Sunday morning in church, when some of us are rushing about to get everything ready or the service, and others are greeting old friends and catching up on news, it is quite possible that a visitor could come in and not be noticed, and be left to their own devices, to stand awkwardly in the foyer of an unfamiliar building, filled with a community of people who all seem to know each other already, and who have their own funny ways. [I don't think this happens very often but I suspect it does happen from time to time]



And this might be stating the obvious but you can only notice who's *new* if you already know who's *old* (for want of a better word). The more regularly you attend, the more likely you are to know who's who, and the more likely you are to spot someone you haven't seen before, and be in a position to offer a special welcome to those who are here for the first time. Think of that character, from our first reading, John, who came to church every single Sunday. Few of us these days are in a position to be here week in, week out, rain or shine. The demands of work and family, and the irregularity of modern life conspire against us. However, the more regularly you can get here, the more often you stay on after the service to chat, the more deep and rich your network of relationships here becomes, and the more you realise, like John, that 'someone might miss you' if you didn't come. [I hope you do all realise that – it's not like we're checking up on you in a creepy way – but we do miss you if you're not here – first off, we wonder where you are, if you're alright – and yes, we also miss your contribution, your practical help to keep the show on the road. What I'm trying to say is: Your presence *matters*. *You matter*.]

Back to this question of awareness: let's think about the particular needs of the newcomer. There are basic, practical things you might need to know when you first arrive: Where are the toilets? Where should I hang my coat? Where can I get a drink of water? There are various quirks of the way we do things here that might need explaining, and if the newcomer has never been to a church before (not unusual these days) then they might be anxious about making a faux pax of some sort, standing up when they should be sat down in the service, and so on. There are some bits of infrastructure, some systems and routines, with which we can make life easier for a visitor – we can put up notices to say where the loos and the kitchen and the coat-rack are – the worship leader can make announcements inviting people to stand up and sit down, as they are able to, in the service – we can provide a printed order of service so they know what's coming up and don't feel unnecessarily anxious about what will be sprung on them next. Even more basic than that - we can make sure the place is clean, warm, and comfortable! *We can* and *we should* do these things.... but none of this replaces the human touch. In the end, hospitality is about human connection, people responding to each other.

This brings me on to my second strand: **Sensitivity**. Do you remember the first time you crossed the threshold of this church? Was it a casual thing for you, or a big deal, when you first came to Essex Church? Can you recall what it is that drew you to this place, as a visitor, a newcomer? Some come because they seek liberal religious teaching or intellectual stimulation. Some seek a spiritual workshop where they can wrestle with life's ultimate questions. Some come to church because they are lonely and yearning for connection, community. People have vastly different prior experience of religious and spiritual communities (and they are likely to arrive here with a wide range of different expectations as a result).

## ‘Make Yourself at Home’ (continued)

Visitors arrive at our front door for all sorts of reasons, with all manner of different needs... and they – WE – have differing temperaments (some introvert, some extrovert). SO – a key part of hospitality is displaying sensitivity to the particular person, the honoured guest, the unique individual with their own particular quirks and charms, in front of us.

There’s one classic, fairly fundamental, dilemma we face when welcoming a newcomer. On the one hand, there is a deep human need that most people share, and that is the need to be seen, heard, and acknowledged. Ultimately, the need to be known. How awful would it feel to turn up here one Sunday, come, and go, and leave no trace; have nobody take an interest in you, nobody even ask your name? On that basis, we tend to think that the right way to welcome a visitor is to bound up to them, introduce ourselves, ask their name and find out about them. Maybe introduce the visitor to one or two others you think they might get on with. Even, if you want a gold star, let the visitor know about groups and activities going on here that they might enjoy, and invite them to leave their email address... That is all good, well-intentioned stuff, it’s what we encourage our official ‘greeters’ to do. But for some visitors that is ALL TOO MUCH (maybe so much so that they won’t come back!) It’s like an over-attentive host at a party, fussing, who won’t leave you alone for a second. When I first came here, sixteen years ago, I was extremely shy, I hardly talked to anyone for months and months, and I was glad of being able to lurk while I sussed the place out. Us naturally introverted types might prefer to be mostly left to our own devices. It’s a difficult balance to strike: being friendly and interested but not over-friendly and intrusive. People might want connection... but they also need space. And that is why I reckon sensitivity is a key element of hospitality.

And onto my final strand: **Generosity**. This is not just about being materially generous in the way that good host at home might be – though I do want you all to know that me and Juliet have made cakes and bread pudding for you to enjoy after the service – we felt it was in keeping with the ‘hospitality’ theme!

Really I’m thinking that hospitality is largely about generosity of spirit. Generosity with your presence, time and attention: making a place at the table for strangers who might become friends. Generosity with your insight and wisdom: sharing whatever fragments of wisdom you may have and being open to wisdom of others.

Also the generosity of inclusion – think of the words of the hymn we sang earlier – ‘break not the circle, make it wider still, till it includes, embraces all the living’ – for me, a hospitable community is always reflecting on ways to be more inclusive, to work on removing the invisible barriers that might stop people from joining us. What, from our church’s position of relative privilege, are we not aware of? What are we not seeing? [the Unitarian Universalist Association in the states has done some really good work on all sorts of inclusion issues – work on accessibility for those with physical disabilities and mental health issues – work on the ‘LGBT welcoming congregations’ project which helps churches be more intentional in their welcome to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people – educating Unitarians about specific barriers to inclusion that people in each of these groups face (and so on)]. I think this is an area as a congregation where perhaps we’ve got more work to do (and perhaps there will always be more work to do – the circle can always be made wider).

Awareness – Sensitivity – Generosity – three virtues of a hospitable congregation.

I’m going to end more-or-less where I started by saying this: We’re doing alright. We are already a hospitable congregation. But it’s good for us – each one of us – everyone who has a sense that this is ‘their’ church – to reflect on what we can do personally to help make it ever an ever more welcoming place.

In the words of our last reading, ‘Prayer for this Church’, by Nancy Shaffer: ‘May we always have enough room for those many who want to come in... May we notice each one who is new and invite them to stay.’ May it be so. Amen.

Jane Blackall

## Craftivists’ Garden

In the last newsletter we showed off the six flowers made by members of the creativity group for the Craftivists’ Garden “wellMaking” project.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January there was a ‘Garden Party’ at Toynbee Hall where the collected flowers were displayed. People from all over the country had contributed (the final count was over 750 flowers) and many people travelled a long way to be there for the afternoon. I got chatting to some people who had set up a crafting group in Birmingham and we shared tips on how to run such things.

It is always nice to take part in an activity which links us in with other groups elsewhere and I will certainly keep an eye out for any future creative projects we can join in with.

Jane Blackall



See: [www.craftivist-collective.com/wellmaking-garden-party](http://www.craftivist-collective.com/wellmaking-garden-party)

## Unitarians in the UK



If you are interested in the distribution of Unitarian congregations throughout the UK you might enjoy playing with this interactive map on the UK Unitarians site.

[www.ukunitarians.org.uk/ukmaps.htm](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/ukmaps.htm)

## A Goodbye, For Now...



Firstly, I just wanted to say how lovely it was to come to the service last Sunday and to catch up with everyone. I came up last weekend so that I could get my stuff back to Portsmouth and so that I could finally have the wonderful feeling of everything being in the one place. Sarah very kindly gave me a lift back and on the way down we had an opportunity to really catch up with each other about everything that had happened in the last few months. And that made me realise that I hadn't really had the opportunity to say goodbye to everybody properly and that that was something I really wanted to be able to do. So, when Sarah suggested that I write a little something for the newsletter, I jumped at the chance.

In some ways it all feels like such a long time ago. I went down at half term and never came back. My brother was in a very bad way at the end and I was very shocked to see that when I first arrived back in Portsmouth. After that it was all a bit of a rollercoaster ride and I feel as if we were all whipped up in some kind of storm and set down somewhere very far from home. In fact I liken the whole experience to the scene in 'The Wizard of Oz' where the tornado picks up Dorothy's house, whirls it about and then sets it back down on the Wicked Witch in the land of Oz. She very soon realises that she's not in Kansas anymore and that is very much how I felt as I spent those three weeks by Jonathan's bedside, preparing for him to die.

Awful though it undoubtedly was, I do also very much see that whole experience as a gift. And I'm not being at all trite when I say that. Spending those three weeks with him was a gift that I shall always cherish and I feel that at long last I was able to say all the things that I had wanted and needed to say to him over the years. In fact, we had always seemed to be on the edge of so many much-needed conversations. And we were never quite brave enough or had the courage to have them. But then we did - granted, it was a very one-sided conversation and it was helped enormously by the fact that he was a captive audience - but it was a much needed 'conversation' nevertheless.

And then of course I had to plan and prepare his funeral, support my parents and somehow get through the awfulness of Christmas and New Year. And after that I made the decision to move back to Portsmouth. I am now looking for a new job and a new place to live. I have re-joined the choir here and we have already been involved in a performance. I am also looking around for other things to become involved with. Life moves on and I am determined to live well in Jonathan's memory.

So it is goodbye for now but I will be around from time to time as I want to keep my connections with Kensington Unitarians going. Essex Church and my friends there mean a great deal to me.

Much love, Carol Xxx



### A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
8<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 10<sup>th</sup> May**

**Midweek classes on TUESDAYS - 12.30-1.30pm**

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

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

**Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.**



## 'Getting to Hear About It...'

*(These are Elizabeth Beel's words when she lit her first candle in our joys and concerns ritual last month.)*

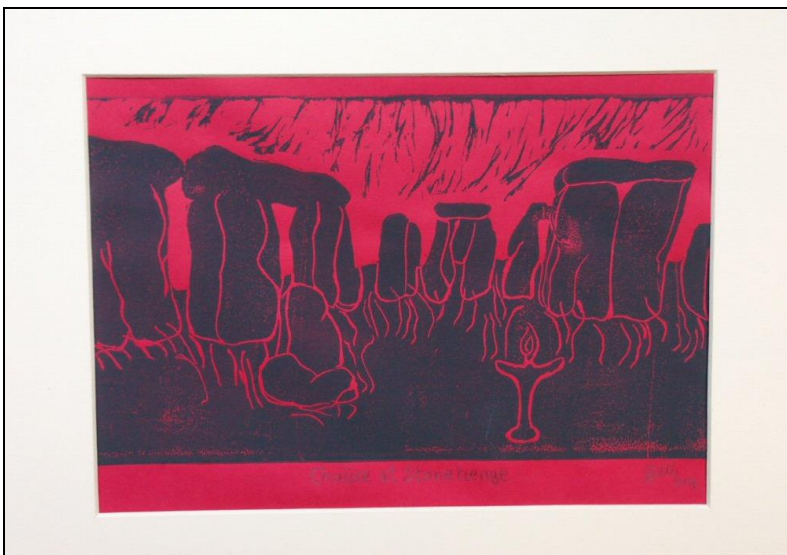
I think that some of you may have seen me buzzing around before, following on an impromptu visit I made to an art exhibition I had attended previously here at the church. And now I've already had an opportunity to introduce myself at a chalice candle lighting of a Unitarian early morning service.

I'm pleased to say I've already thanked the church committee for helping me in the purchase of an extension microphone which boosts the sound to my hearing aid. I've found it does enhance the sound input coming to me, not only from a main speaker but also from people speaking in a group, if I use a further channel on it. If you are ever in an organised group with me and are speaking to me too you could as an alternative use the FM receiver (which works on the same principle as the television receiver) and fasten it up around your neck. This can pick up your voice even further if you move the receiver closer up under your chin and that can enable me to hear you better; if you're not sure about its proper usage I will be happy myself to repeat the instructions fully on how to use it.

When I was young I got little special education despite my poor hearing - my nearer relatives tending to say they were unable to obtain this for me, too poor I suppose. Because of that I, too, am well acquainted with the miseries of shyness and embarrassment of not being able to communicate fully with my peers, particularly when having to announce myself as deafened on meeting someone new for the first time.

This naturally resulted in my being left to my own resources quite a lot. Eventually, I found a way to rebuild some confidence, and so hopes for my own future, through reading about other young people coping with various adversities: pioneering youngsters such as Anne Frank, Helen Keller, Jane Eyre, Sylvia Pankhurst, Jeanne d'Arc, and even Princess Anne herself who would receive much press coverage about her endeavours when young, if anybody remembers.

Prompted by my bothered headmistress, starting with Saturday morning classes in a little used school hall I was put to have to acquire neglected communication skills in years after I finished school and although the battle is still not all done I managed to pass those necessary exams for formal College entrance... This meant for me being able to learn about the practice of, to me, exciting new subjects in the Arts...and also getting to meet some of its various and interesting practitioners. Eventually I went on to complete my MA Arts Degree; and so on to these present years I have been involved in taking part in different exhibitions.



It was a Unitarian Art exhibition about a couple of years ago brought me first in to Essex Church and later I had been delighted to find that spiritually orientated thinking, religion, and even the willingness to say prayers of different sorts was part of its members' way of life. I enjoy taking part in the creativity group where I have been working on some print-making. I hope you like this lino print of Stonehenge that I have executed complete with Unitarian chalice, and appearing in this newsletter. Let me know if you would like to have a copy.

And lastly I hope the information I've given here helps you to understand my general situation a bit more and I do appreciate it when people take time to check that I can hear them, especially at a further distance than usual in a group.

**Elizabeth L. Beel**

## **Men's Group: First Meeting** **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm at Essex Church**

There have been some preliminary conversations about setting up a men's group at Essex Church. A date for an initial meeting has been pencilled in: Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm. Contact Jim Blair for more details: jim\_blair\_rhino@hotmail.com (please do get in touch to make sure it's going ahead).



# 'New Perspectives'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – adapted from  
service given on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2015

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

**Reading:** 'The Whistler' by Mary Oliver

Poet Mary Oliver lived for many years on Cape Cod with the love of her life, photographer Molly Malone Cook. When Molly died Oliver wrote a book about her grief and their love, interspersing her own writings with Molly's photographs. The book *Our World* ends with this moving prose poem in which Mary Oliver reflects on how we never fully know even those nearest to us. Even after many years of togetherness we still hold mysteries for those who love us to discover unexpectedly.

## The Whistler

*All of a sudden she began to whistle. By all of a sudden I mean that for more than thirty years she had not whistled. It was thrilling. At first I wondered, who was in the house, what stranger? I was upstairs reading, and she was downstairs. As from the throat of a wild and cheerful bird, not caught but visiting, the sounds warbled and slid and doubled back and larked and soared.*

*Finally I said, Is that you? Is that you whistling? Yes, she said. I used to whistle, a long time ago. Now I see I can still whistle. And cadence after cadence she strolled through the house, whistling.*

*I know her so well, I think. I thought. Elbow and ankle. Mood and desire. Anguish and frolic. Anger too. And the devotions. And for all that, do we even begin to know each other? Who is this I've been living with for thirty years?*

*This clear, dark, lovely whistler?*

**Address:** *New Perspectives*

Every week a little group of us meet in the hall here at the church for a Pilates class. Jordane our teacher is so committed to our physical well-being that we are now convinced she spends all the hours she is away from us thinking up ever more subtle exercises in order to reach muscle groups we never knew we had. After each class I find new parts of my body aching. We start gently enough, rolling our spines forwards and downwards till we find ourselves with our heads hanging upside down between our knees. And it was in this position hanging upside down last week that I spotted the chewing gum. Stuck under a number of our chairs. Before you leap up in horror out of your chairs now – fear not – I have removed hopefully all of it. I suspect it's been there for a while and we'd probably never have known it was there had I not been hanging upside down like a bat.

And that is really the message of this morning's address – if you hang upside down from time to time you'll notice things you might otherwise have missed. You'll get to see life from another angle, another point of view. And for anyone who isn't so keen on trying out awkward bodily postures there are many other ways we humans can gain new perspectives in life.



Get a new job, fall in love, lose a job, fall out of love, move house, have a special birthday, get ill, get well, retire, join a church, start shopping at a different supermarket, go on holiday, come back from holiday, take on a new hobby, volunteer, go on a journey big or small – the list is endless.

What these life changes have in common perhaps is their ability to shake us up in some way. Our routines are changed, we get to think new thoughts, life doesn't look quite the way it usually does. And in those moments we may find ourselves feeling more alive. Like the meditation we followed earlier on about a fresh breeze touching our cheek, there are times and experiences when we feel awakened, more aware and alert than we usually do. In these times our regular ways of thinking and feelings - our assumptions and prejudices, the ruts most of us fall into in our thinking get a shake-up. Our habitual ways of being benefit from a breath of fresh air from time to time. American Unitarian Universalist James Ishmael Ford is a Zen Buddhist practitioner as well as a UU minister and he writes of the insights he gains from meditation, a sense of

*"oneness. It really is just being present to our friends and to ourselves. It means just paying attention when sitting at the computer, or changing a (nappy) diaper, or whatever the myriad activities of life may be. Nothing special. And yet, it is all there is within the universe. And so I sit (in) Zen (meditation) to help me notice those nothing special moments as they arrive, and just how precious they really are. I have a friend who has taken up Tai-chi for much the same reasons. And I have friends who find Sufi dancing does the trick. And I have other friends who pray, good old fashioned Jewish and Christian prayer right to God. Each of us must find our own best way".*

For Ford having a regular spiritual practice prepares the ground for new perspectives. And he notes that a sense of awakening doesn't usually arrive in a nice neat package when he is quietly sitting in meditation – it arrives at inconvenient moments, in unexpected encounters or unpleasant experiences. He tells the story of being on a meditation retreat, having already broken his toe. Then early in the morning climbing some stairs a lightbulb blows and he is in darkness. He misjudges the next step and bangs his already broken toe on the top stair. He experiences the new perspective of extreme pain. It wasn't pleasant but it did wake him up. He wasn't the calm detached meditator examining his experience. He and the pain were one in that moment. Only later could he reflect on the experience of such pain and understand its ability to soften him to the pain of others, soften his responses to the world all around.

## 'New Perspectives' *(continued)*

One of the conversations I seem to have been having most often with people recently is how to cope with the news. How can a spiritually awakened person best deal with the painful news we hear from around our world every day. One way is to withdraw, to maintain a distance from the news and I have every respect for people who feel they need to back away from the diet of negativity that is our media's main output these days. Another approach is to stay with the news and with our distress and then do all we can to change our perspective. Instead of demonising the 'other', the ones who are committing dreadful acts, we can attempt to view the world from their point of view. This does not mean we in any way approve of their actions but it is a tool for understanding. It draws us closer to the perpetrators of violence rather than pushing them away. When we imagine the world from another standpoint we are starting to put into action our Unitarian emphasis on the oneness of all that is – one world, one humanity, one spirit. Though let's not imagine that this is an easy stance to take.

Forgive me if you find these examples painful, if any of them touch on your own life experiences in any way. Do not think that I am asking you to forgive those who have committed acts of violence, but rather to start an inquiry - into what might lead to certain behaviours, certain belief systems. That seems to me an important spiritual task. How can we begin to comprehend, for example, what leads a person to steal a purse from a dying woman, to plan and carry out a gruesome execution, to abuse children? What might lead people to cheat and lie, to threaten and frighten? I think we need to try to comprehend other perspectives on life when our natural reaction is to be appalled, outraged. Outrage makes us back away from something that frightens us or we disapprove of. Seeking another perspective makes us curious, inquiring, asks 'tell me more'. We humans have a tendency to think of 'us and them' – to divide the world up into groups – some of which we belong to, some of which we don't. I truly believe that one of our important spiritual tasks in the 21st century is to work on our divisive thinking and instead develop our ability to see human beings as individuals, who together make one species, with all our glories and all our pain.

Developing our ability to change our perspective is a very useful skill – moving in and out of focus, stepping to one side to take a better look, developing our curiosity about this complex existence we share. On the front of today's order of service is a quote from writer Ursula le Guin:

*"If you see a whole thing - it seems that it's always beautiful. Planets, lives.... But close up a world's all dirt and rocks. And day to day, life's a hard job, you get tired, you lose the pattern. You need a distance."*

And the opposite is also true – yes, we can gain new perspectives by stepping back, by viewing the whole from a distance, and also by moving in very close, learning to pay attention to smallest details. It reminds me of William Blake's visionary words: *"To see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour"*. When Mary Oliver describes hearing her lover of 30 years whistling for the first time she speaks for all of us. We all have mysteries to reveal and to discover in this beautiful, complex thing called life. Let's help one another to find these new perspectives.

## Good Cause Collection of the Month

### Home Farm Trust



#### Collection on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

Through a knock on my front door, I recently came across a charity called, HFT, which stands for Home Farm Trust. They're a charity which was originally set up by parents of children with learning disabilities in 1962. They have support hubs nationwide, including London, which provides support services for people who have learning disabilities, helping them to find work, live independently and have more say about how they live their lives.

I hadn't heard of them, and the two volunteers I spoke with felt very passionately about the work the charity does.

So often there are charities which don't get the coverage or the press, and with the financial cutbacks and difficulties getting funding, I really wanted to do something to help raise awareness of this charity.

As the HFT website mentions, things have changed since the 1960's people with learning disabilities didn't have many opportunities, and that's partly due to the help of charities like HFT, and their passion to help people with learning disabilities live fulfilling lives.

And I think, the ability to live as fulfilling a life as possible, is a basic human desire, and basic human right. More information about HFT can be found at: [www.hft.org.uk](http://www.hft.org.uk)

**Jeannene Powell**



### Previous Charity Collections:

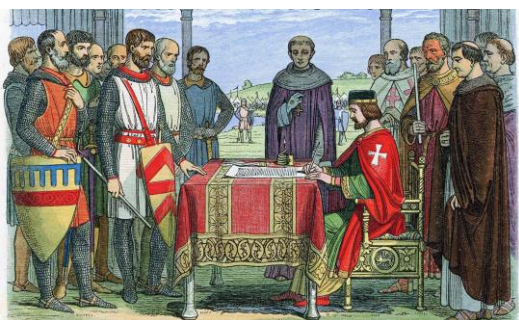
Thank you for your generosity in contributing to recent charity collections. I am pleased to let you know that we will be sending the following donations (plus Gift Aid) to good causes:

**December – Refuge UK (Domestic Violence) - £306.14**

**January – Red Cross Ebola Crisis Appeal - £159.18**

**February – Down's Syndrome Association - £138.03**

# Services at Essex Church this March



## 1<sup>st</sup> March, 11am – ‘The Rule of Law’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As England celebrates the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, let's consider how laws can shape a harmonious society and a well lived life - and how easily in some circumstances the rule of law can be undermined.

## 8<sup>th</sup> March, 11am – ‘Sabbath’

Service led by Jeannene Powell

Considering the various "Sabbath" and "Rest day" observations in various religions, we consider the usefulness of the principles contained in these and reflect on our own "Sabbath" time.

## 15<sup>th</sup> March, 11am – ‘What We Need’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Poet Wendell Berry tells us that 'what we need is here'. In today's service we'll have an opportunity to explore what it is we really want and need and how we might learn from our yearnings.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 11am – ‘In This Together’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Human groups so quickly divide themselves into 'us' and 'them'. How might spiritually literate and socially aware people help to transcend such tendencies?

## 29<sup>th</sup> March, 11am – ‘Is That All There Is?’

Service led by Rev. Jopie Boeke

At the end of the month we will be visited by Rev. Jopie Boeke, long-standing friend of our congregation, who was once interim minister at Essex Church. Jopie says that this service will be an attempt to address some of "the big questions" of life.

'To live without growing, without maturing, without stretching out for greater meaning and purpose, is to not live the best life. By which I mean, yes, the *happiest* life. Or the life of greatest joy, contentment, or value... [when we] take a very personal view of what makes our own life worth living, the answer is: seek meaning, live purposefully.

How are we to do this? It would certainly be disingenuous to suggest that it cannot be done either as a solo pursuit, or outside of a religious community. But here's the thing: that's what church is *for*. Churches, generally speaking, are places where people can gather to explore their personal and collective relationship with the Ultimate, often called God. They are places where the culture we live in can be examined and questioned and then resisted. Unitarian churches, more specifically, are communities where people who believe that the world is small, human knowledge is wondrous and diverse yet incomplete, there are many ways to love God or seek meaning, and we need one another – we are not separate from one another or Life herself.

Church is a place to explore what is meaningful in our lives, to question the lives we are living or the culture that surrounds us, and most of all to practice mission and covenant. What are we living *for*? That's our mission. *How* shall we live, especially together? That is covenant.'

Unitarian Universalist Rev. Audette Fulbright

## Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



### Stewarding:

1 <sup>st</sup> March:	Gina Bayley
8 <sup>th</sup> March:	Veronica Needa
15 <sup>th</sup> March:	Natasha Drennan
22 <sup>nd</sup> March:	Michaela von Britzke
29 <sup>th</sup> March:	Melody

### Coffee:

1 <sup>st</sup> March:	Natasha Drennan
8 <sup>th</sup> March:	Kate Brown
15 <sup>th</sup> March:	Sue Smith
22 <sup>nd</sup> March:	Kate Brown
29 <sup>th</sup> March:	Elisa Melgosa

### Greeting:

1 <sup>st</sup> March:	Liz Tuckwell
8 <sup>th</sup> March:	Roy Clark
15 <sup>th</sup> March:	Billy Jackson
22 <sup>nd</sup> March:	Melody
29 <sup>th</sup> March:	Roy Clark

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