



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: April 2014

## What's On...

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April, 7-9.00pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 7-8pm  
**'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering**  
'Strengths and Truths'  
Led by Sonya Leite

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30am-4.30pm  
**'Compassionate Communication'**  
Weekend Workshop (*Booking Essential*)

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 11am-noon  
**'Communicate and Connect'**  
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1pm-4pm  
**'Compassionate Communication'**  
Weekend Workshop (*Booking Essential*)

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April, 7-9.00pm  
**Creativity Group: Photography**  
(or bring your own craft project)

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April, 11am-noon  
**'The Importance of Being Optimistic'**  
Service led by Harold Lorenzelli

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30pm  
**Small-Group Communion**  
Led by Sue Smith

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2.00-3.00pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 7-8pm +  
**Tenebrae Service** led by Sarah  
Tinker and Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 11am-noon  
**'Everyday Sacrifices'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30pm  
**Congregational Easter Lunch**

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April, 11am-noon  
**'Floods... and other  
Weather Irregularities'**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30-1.15pm  
**'Finding Your Voice'**  
Singing workshop with Margaret

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 12.30-1.30pm  
**Nia Technique** with Sonya Leite

## A Message from our Minister:

# Opening Up

By the time congregation members read this, we'll already have given it a go. What you might ask? Well you may know that between the hall, where we serve drinks, and the church worship space is a folding wall. It's hidden behind the orange velvet curtains. At our last committee meeting I suggested that we open this wall from time to time on Sundays and let some light in. It does make a remarkable difference to the light levels in the hall. But it's not just the light that interests me.



The social time after a service is a really important time for a church congregation. It's when people get to make connections with one another, get to talk about the service theme perhaps, get to know one another better. I think we provide a particularly friendly social time here at Essex Church and I'm always grateful for the people who make a special effort to talk to newcomers. But there's always more we can do. One of the problems I see with our social time is that people sit down at a table and tend to stay there. We all like to talk with our friends and there's nothing wrong with that. But if that is our main focus then we are looking more inwards than outwards as a community and I don't think that's the ideal direction for a church to be facing. I reckon that our congregation has probably more visitors than any other UK Unitarian congregation and that gives us a particular task or mission – how to welcome the strangers in our midst and how to help strangers become friends.

Along with opening the partition wall we may also experiment with different size tables and changing the layout at coffee time. I'll be interested to see how these small changes feel and even more interested to hear your ideas of how we can best honour our commitment to grow our congregation and to reach out more effectively to visitors. You may have heard Unitarianism described as a 'well-kept secret' and more than one new person has wondered why they hadn't heard of us sooner. How can we better 'open up' to our wider world? Do let me know your thoughts.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

*P.S. We have recently reviewed and updated our guidelines for volunteers doing stewarding, coffee and greeting (see guide on page 5) – the intention behind these changes is to focus attention on the quality of our welcome to newcomers and visitors – of course this is something we can all help with even when we are not officially 'on duty'!*

## In this month's newsletter...

- \* 'How We Came to Essex Church' by Sam and Caio
- \* Creativity Group: Photography
- \* 'Let's Talk About Death!' – views of our Death Café from Jeannene Powell & David Talbot
- \* Sunday Volunteering: Guides to Stewarding, Coffee & Greeting Duties
- \* Easter Lunch
- \* 'The Art of Forgetting' – sermon by Jane Blackall
- \* Spirituality & Sexuality Group for Women
- \* 'On Love's Side' – a recent 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.



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# 'Heart and Soul'

## Midweek Spiritual Gatherings



**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April from 7-8pm**

*Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library*

*Followed by social time and refreshments*

Our March gathering will be led by Sonya Leite on the theme 'Strengths and Truths'. All are welcome. There will be cake!

If you would like to know more about these gatherings please contact [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

# Congregational Lunch

After the Service on Easter Sunday



We will be having a bring-and-share congregational lunch after the service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April (Easter Sunday).

Please put the date in your diary and plan to bring some food or drink to contribute to the table. It is likely that you will be approached with a sign-up sheet over the next few weeks so we can get a sense of what people are going to bring and ensure we have a reasonably balanced offering.

Carol Sheppard has kindly offered to coordinate the lunch and organise a team to set out the meal and clear up after so please consider offering to lend a hand on the day.

# Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



## Stewarding:

6 <sup>th</sup> April:	Heidi Ferid
13 <sup>th</sup> April:	Natasha Drennan
20 <sup>th</sup> April:	Juliet Edwards
27 <sup>th</sup> April:	Gina Bayley

## Coffee:

6 <sup>th</sup> April:	Kate Brown
13 <sup>th</sup> April:	John Hands
20 <sup>th</sup> April:	Veronica Needa
27 <sup>th</sup> April:	Roy Clark

## Greeting:

6 <sup>th</sup> April:	Billy Jackson
13 <sup>th</sup> April:	Sue Smith
20 <sup>th</sup> April:	??? – <i>can you volunteer?</i>
27 <sup>th</sup> April:	Carol Sheppard

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)**

# How We Came to Essex Church

Congratulations to Caio (snapped in action) and all the boys at the Falcons School in West London for completing the charity obstacle course on the 28th February at Westminster Sports Grounds. A special thank you goes to all those kind people at the Unitarian Church who helped Caio to raise a total of £83. He really couldn't have done it without your help. All the monies raised will go directly to the school W4 charity to set up a football club on Sunday mornings for boys and girls who otherwise would have no access to such a facility. The money will also help supply them with kit and equipment. A boy from each group was also allowed to throw a cream pie in the sports teacher's face at the end of the event so much fun was had by all!



I would like to take this opportunity to write a little bit about how Caio and I came to be members of the Church and what it means to us. It is significant that Caio felt so comfortable running around with his sponsorship form in hand asking you guys for donations. He wouldn't even ask my neighbours without me accompanying him because he can be quite reserved. It is testimony to the warmth of the people at the church and how welcome we feel. We won't of course use this as a premise to always ask for money!!

I first came to the church because I was searching for a place where I could have Caio blessed. I had always dreamed of having Caio blessed but I couldn't figure out how I could do it and yet remain truthful to my heart and to Caio's innocence and lack of loyalty to any one idea of religion. I wanted a patient, loving, forgiving, understanding, all encompassing, wise and worldly entity to bless Caio into this world. The only truth I could totally swear by is that we should seek to better ourselves, that we should love each other, that we should strive to be honest, humble, cooperative and non-judgmental. That we should try not to be lazy, egotistical, dishonest, disingenuous and also that we should accept that we are all these things so we need to work on trying not to be through spirituality and seeking an understanding or relationship with our higher power. As far as I was concerned Caio had to be blessed in a place that knew all that too but didn't tell me I had to believe in any form of doctrine or absolute religion. WOW I had a tall order! Knowing not what that could possibly be or even if such a place existed it took me a long time to find Sarah Tinker and then suddenly I had found it all in one person. I was so excited and the blessing Sarah gave Caio was truly magical as were the amazing musicians!



I was brought up a Catholic but never felt close to the religion and my search for a place where I could communicate with and contemplate my higher power and somewhere where Caio would be able to grow up exploring his own spiritual truth seemed to be over the minute I met Sarah Tinker. My first service was illuminating. It was inspiring and the very essence of Unitarianism seemed to make sense to me. Each week is new and explorative and I feel right-sized afterwards, if you know what I mean.

During my search for somewhere to lay my spiritual hat, a very insightful friend said to me once out of the blue "Have you tried the Unitarian Church in Notting Hill? I think they might be what you are looking for." Her contribution to our having found the Unitarian community is huge and will not be forgotten and is testimony to how much the blessing was to do with the community at large. When we first started coming to the church, Caio would naturally fidget a bit and I'd have to dangle a few bribes in front of him to get him to settle and sit still for an hour. He now loves doing service, blowing out the candles, stewarding, helping with the teas and coffees. Recently he has started singing from the hymn books and the other day I caught him in his room singing "Walk in the light, walk in the light, walk in the light of love." I had goose-pimples all over and quietly thanked God. The church feeds his passion for music also and I do want to say that the beautiful amazing weekly menu of music and genius musicians is something I could never have imagined would also be a part of the whole experience. We are both blessed!

**Sam Boyero**

'People whose ideas of religion have been shaped by conventional influences may find it hard to understand how a religious movement can be built upon principles, rather than upon shared creeds and doctrines. The questions such people ask are often too small. They may ask whether Unitarians believe in God, without any prior attempt to come to grips with the complicated question of what believing in God really means. They ask: "Are Unitarians Christians?" and expect that the answer will be "Yes" or "No". Life is seldom quite that simple. It does not reduce itself to neat clear-cut categories. A person's theology is expressed more in the way that a person lives than in what he or she puts into words. A Unitarian may profess allegiance to Christianity or to any other of the great religious traditions of the world, but not in any exclusive sense. In becoming a Unitarian, one does not repudiate such allegiances, but simply places them in a universal context.'



**Rev. Dr. Phillip Hewett**

## Creativity Group: Photography



**Second Thursday evening of each month  
continuing 10<sup>th</sup> April from 7-9.00pm**

Whether you are a cautious clicker, a seasoned snapper ...or a David Bailey wannabe, come along to our Photography Creativity Group this spring. On the second Thursday of each month between April and June you can learn some simple and fun ways to improve your picture taking skills. With a little guidance and some practice anyone can take consistently good photographs.

As well as tips and techniques, there will be plenty of opportunities to practice and a regular "show and tell " spot where those that wish to can compare and discuss their latest digital or indeed filmic efforts . We will also be looking at the work of some of the masters of the art to inspire us.

Zero previous experience necessary; just bring yourself, your enthusiasm... and your camera.

If you are not a photo fan and life through a lens is not your thing, come along anyway and bring with any other portable hobby or craft you enjoy. Or, just come for the conversation and fellowship of the group. Basically just come along! Looking forward to seeing you for our first get together on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April.

**Roy Clark**



*Our creativity group meets once a month to focus on a particular art or craft medium or a certain project for each quarter of the year so that we can go deeper into it during that period. 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. If you don't fancy the art or craft we are 'officially' focusing on then you are always welcome to bring along whatever you're working on and do your own art/craft whilst enjoying the good company of the group.*

**Jane Blackall**



**A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms**

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:  
13<sup>th</sup> April, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June**

**Also each MONDAY lunchtime from 12.30**

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.**

## 'Finding Our Voice'

**Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall**

**Sundays 27<sup>th</sup> April, 25<sup>th</sup> May  
from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

**Please Note – now on fourth Sunday!**



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.

# Sunday Volunteering:

## Some ways to lend a hand at Essex Church



## The Role of the Steward:

*\*\*\* marks items that will generally be dealt with by Sarah or Jane but will need checking if they are both away*

- The steward should usually arrive quite early (by 10.30am at the latest) to \*\*\*ensure that the chairs in the church are laid out properly, the sound system is plugged in and switched on, that the microphone battery has not run out (there are spares in the stewarding cupboard) and that the seasonal wall-hangings at the front of the church are all neat and tidy. The voice recorder should be switched on and blu-tacked to the lectern (and the batteries should be replaced if running low).
- \*\*\*The steward also makes sure that one of the office keyholders (Sarah, Jane, Juliet, Harold, Caroline or Jenny) has brought the chalice upstairs and places it on its stand and that the Tibetan singing bowl with its cushion and stick has been brought up too.
- \*\*\*The candles for joys and concerns need to be brought out of the cupboard and the steward also ensures there are matches (or a lighter) and tapers available.
- The steward brings a glass of water to the reading desk.
- As people start to arrive, the steward hands out service sheets/hymnbooks, which is the most visible part of the job. There are large print hymnsheets for those who need them.
- The steward is responsible for helping latecomers to come in quietly and find a seat (and also brings extra chairs in from the hall if the church is unexpectedly full – ask for help if needed). There are 'Seat Reserved' notices in the Steward's Folder that can be put on chairs at the back so that latecomers can be easily directed into seats. If possible, stewards should stop people from entering or finding seats during the opening words and chalice lighting section, encouraging them instead to wait till the first hymn begins.
- It is also useful if the steward can keep an eye on the foyer in case anyone comes in and wanders off elsewhere in the church during the service.
- Finally, the steward hands round the offertory bags during the collection, and counts the loose cash collection after the service.
- We keep a record of how much is received and also count how many people are attending each week as these statistics are an important part of the congregational growth project (all recorded in the 'Steward's Blue Book').
- The collection money is handed to Caroline, Sarah, Jenny, or a member of the committee to lock in the office.
- Thank you! The steward's work makes a lot of difference for worship leaders and is very much appreciated.

## The Role of the Greeter:

- Amongst other things, the greeter arrives early (by 10.30am at the latest) to make sure that the front door is opened up by 10.30am, and stands in the foyer to welcome people, particularly newcomers, as they arrive.
- The greeter might usher new arrivals into the hall where people gather to chat before the service and introduce them by name to another person, especially someone similar to themselves if possible.
- It may also be helpful to point out where the toilets are, mention that there is a coat rack in the church itself and point them towards the kitchen if they need a glass of water. You could also ask them what brought them here today, where they are from or if they have any questions.
- We generally try to discourage people (other than the steward and those involved in the service) from going into the worship space until the choir have finished practicing.
- If visitors are entirely new to Unitarianism then the greeter might offer some leaflets or a copy of our newsletter to help them get a sense of who we are. Useful leaflets might be 'Your First Time at A Unitarian Service' or 'A Faith Worth Thinking About' or our congregation's current leaflet or history leaflet. Give them the idea that it is fine either to take the leaflets away with them after the service or to leave them here once read.
- As part of our congregational growth project we are asking our greeters to try and gather a bit of information about visitors and to let Sarah our minister know about them if their circumstances suggest they could become regular attenders. New people are much more likely to return apparently if we learn their name and if they are spoken to by three people on their first visit, in addition to the minister, so do introduce them to others or suggest that they sit near someone in particular.
- We would also ask the greeter to continue their role after the service during coffee time, by keeping an eye on new people and ensuring that they are not left sitting alone nor trapped in an awkward conversation. A simple 'hope to see you again next week' can also make a difference to a new person.

## The Role of the Coffee Maker:

- It is a good idea for the coffee maker to arrive early (ideally by 10.30am) and get the kitchen set up before the service. You can put the urn and kettles on to boil, get the mugs out, and prepare a few plates of biscuits etc.
- Since we committed to being a 'Fairtrade Church' we take care to stock up on fairly traded tea, coffee, and biscuits, and we generally buy these in bulk to ensure there are always supplies in the cupboard. However, you are welcome to bring some extra biscuits or treats, if you so wish.
- The only thing that the tea/coffee maker needs to bring along on a Sunday is fresh milk (you can claim back for the cost).
- Recently we have tried to get into the habit of making 'real coffee' instead of instant. The metal cafetières are usually kept in the cupboard under the cooker hob.
- It is usually a good idea to slip out of church during the final hymn to put the kettle on so you're ready for the stampede.
- After coffee-time you finally need to wash up (hopefully with a little help from your friends) and put everything away before you go.

# Let's Talk about Death!

I'd heard about Death Cafés about 18 months ago, in an advert in our newsletter and thought it was a good idea but hadn't found the opportunity to go. Having volunteered in a Hospice and having read books about death and dying, the idea of having an afternoon talking with others about the subject really interested me. In fact, for a long time I'd thought it quite bizarre that we don't talk about the subject of death and dying in this society very much, as it's an experience common to all humanity.

Knowing that one was happening at the church I made sure I could attend, and am so glad that I did. The experienced facilitator let us know that it was "our group and process" and that the way the afternoon went, was very much dependent on what issues, thoughts and feelings were important for us.

I found it really valuable to share some of my thoughts and experiences around death and bereavement - from my personal as well as voluntary working life. Hearing such a varied mixture of attitudes, beliefs and experiences from others about the same subjects was really validating, that I wasn't the only person who experienced/thought something; and also enriching, hearing that there are different ways to approach or deal with things.

Although boxes of tissues were present if needed, it wasn't all sombre - there were expressions and feelings of gratitude and gladness - of appreciation of the opportunity to live the life that we have. It really was a very rich and supportive experience. At the end there was a sense that further opportunities for exploration would be welcomed and a suggestion was made that we may have future groups, where people could discuss some of the emotional and practical issues encountered when dealing with death and dying. I for one would be there, as I continue to grapple for understanding about what this thing is - this great mystery of death.

**Jeannene Powell**



As I get older I feel the need to come to terms with my own death and seek out opportunities to face it. So, the recent Death Café at Essex Church seemed the place to be and about 25 other folk obviously agreed.

The session was facilitated by Clare Slaney with a very light touch. We started in a circle and were each invited to speak about our experiences. There were some sad stories and we all had been touched by grief and loss in some way. We then broke for tea and delicious cake and resumed our discussions in smaller groups. We then formed a circle again for further sharing.

So, was the afternoon useful? Well, yes. The chance to discuss hopes and fears with others was very valuable. I think that I was looking for answers, but are there any for us Unitarians?

For me the message of the afternoon was about life and living. We are alive now so let's make the most of every moment. I hope we can have more Death Cafés at Essex Church.

**David Talbot**

## In Kew Gardens

Thirty years ago - 'Oh!  
Be still, act your age.'  
Thirty years ago I sat here with her  
Gazing at flowers - ' OH!  
WILL you still your rage  
Act your age!'  
Thirty years ago  
I sat here with her  
Gazing at flowers - Oh!  
Why can't you be still?

**John Hands**



'Here in this sanctuary of ancient dreams and wisdom and beauty we come to grow, to be healed, to stretch mind and heart, to be challenged, renewed; to be helped in our own continuing struggles for meaning and for love; to help build a world with more justice and mercy in it; to be counted among the hoppers and doers.



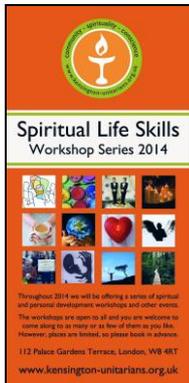
In the face of cynicism, darkness, brutality around us and within, we seek to align ourselves with a living community that would affirm rather than despair, that would think and act rather than simply adjust and succumb.

Here we invite the spirit of our own humanity and the healing powers under, around, through and beyond it, to give us the nerve and grace, the toughness and sensitivity, to search out the truth that frees, and the life that maketh all things new.'

**Rev. Jack Mendelsohn**

# 'Spiritual Life Skills'

A new workshop series for 2014  
Hosted by Kensington Unitarians



Throughout 2014 we will be holding a series of 'Spiritual Life Skills' events here at Essex Church. Open to all, these groups will take many varied paths in exploring what it is to be human. The full programme is now available in our new leaflet. We strongly encourage you to **put the dates in your diary and book ASAP** as we will be advertising widely and places will be limited.

We would very much appreciate if you would help us spread the word about this series by taking copies of the special leaflet and recommending it to any friends who may be interested.

## BOOK NOW!!!

### 'Compassionate Communication'

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30am-4pm &  
Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1pm-4pm (must attend both)**

Compassionate Communication is a practical exploration into how and why others hear us as they do, and how and why we hear others as we do. This understanding helps us choose differently in the way we listen and how we express ourselves; and so helps us toward a more compassionate and enriching understanding both of others and ourselves.

We are delighted to be joined by Jill and Richard Broadbent who will be offering their 'Compassionate Communication' training over a whole weekend this spring (this is a two-day course). Some long-standing members of the congregation will remember that the Broadbents led a six-week course with us back in the autumn of 2010. We cannot recommend this training highly enough, and would encourage members of the congregation to sign up, even if you took part in the previous course as there is always more to learn and considerable benefit to be had from practising with others.

There is a sliding scale of £20 / £40 / £60 for this training (pay what you can afford) which is a considerable saving on what you would pay to do an equivalent training course elsewhere. **THERE ARE JUST A FEW PLACES LEFT ON THE COURSE!** Please book your place soon by emailing [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) or contact Jane if you would like to know more.

## Forthcoming Workshops...

### 'Our Living Stories'

Playback Theatre, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 3pm-5.30pm

An afternoon of surprise and delight with Playback Theatre led by Veronica Needa. True Heart Theatre's events have created an opportunity for people from all cultures, across generations and languages, to meet each other through a heart-full exchange of real-life stories and experiences. Cost: this event is free of charge (donations welcome).



### 'Counter-Culture:

Resistance, Rebellion & Responsibility'

with Symon Hill and Jane Blackall

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June, 11am-4pm

In this workshop we will be considering ways in which our church communities have the potential to challenge some of the dominant values of today's society and model a different way of being in the world. How can we help bring about greater justice and peace? Cost: £5 / £10 / £15 (pay what you can afford). To book, email: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

Symon Hill is a left-wing Christian writer, activist and trainer who has written on issues including religion, ethics, current affairs, media and sexuality. To date, he has published two books: *The No-Nonsense Guide to Religion* and *Digital Revolutions: Activism in the Internet Age*. Symon campaigns on issues including religious liberty, sexuality, peace and economic equality and is also an associate of the Ekklesia thinktank.

### 'Enlivening Worship'

with Sarah Tinker & Jane Blackall

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July, 11am-4pm

A workshop for all those interested in creating enlivening worship in Unitarian and Interfaith settings. Aimed at those new to worship leading as well as for those with experience, this workshop will cover music, choice of materials, themes, prayers and meditations, as well as presentation styles and ways to appeal to all our senses. Cost: £5 / £10 / £15 (pay what you can afford). To book, email: [jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) or phone 020 7221 6514 and leave a message with your contact details.

# 'Love in All its Manifestations'

As part of the service on 9<sup>th</sup> February, led by Jeannene Powell, members of the congregation were asked to consider how they show love in the world, and how love shows itself to them. We were invited to write our responses on heart-shaped post-it notes and add them to two 'Love Trees' that Jeannene had painted....

## How we show Love in the World:

Visiting elderly friends – shopping and supporting them  
Volunteering with the Junior League of London  
Working with the children – standing up for what I believe in  
Giving refuge to my nephew who split up from his girlfriend  
To try to do my best to be supportive, compassionate,  
open my heart – to my family, friends and the world  
Feeding people  
Practical help when I see a need  
Trying to stay aware and awake, thoughtful and grateful  
Giving love and support to my daughter and her growth  
'tough love' parenting  
I love this congregation and all the people who make our community real  
I show love by being kind to people on twitter who are going through hard times  
The gratitude of my daughter, her cuddles and kisses  
in the morning and when she says 'I love you'  
Giving and receiving hugs  
I give 10% of my income to a spiritual source –  
something or someone that inspires me  
Giving love and support to my lovely students  
Smiles



## How Love Shows Itself to Us:

Friendship, advice, healing touch, shared experience, prayer, discussion  
Finding the first winter aconites in the park next door  
All around me since I allowed myself to have love in my life  
Music, dance, being by the sea, this church  
A feeling of being blessed by this gift of life  
People are so often kind to me and so supportive when I ask for help  
I have experienced love from people who have enabled me  
to have meaningful work and study that I can manage  
The wonders of nature and music / sharing things with people  
Receiving a surprise phone call or letter  
Help and support arriving unexpectedly  
Nurturing my friendships, sing and dance, get a massage  
Through the kindness of my patients, the unwavering love of  
my mum, no matter what, the beauty of this world  
Getting a text that shows she is thinking of me  
Spring flowers

'The word "worship" comes from two old English words and literally means "worth shaping" or "shaping what is of worth in our lives." Everything we do in life shapes how we think about, feel about, and act in the world, and there are certainly many powers-that-be in our society that are trying to shape us, not always for our own good. What I understand us to be doing here [in church] - through whatever individual religious practices we may have, through our Sunday morning worship, and through everything else we do together as a community - is undertaking practices that shape us in ways that we want to be shaped, moving us from indifference to compassion, from greed to gratitude, from bitterness to forgiveness and acceptance, from despair to hope - even from deadness to life.'

Rev. Dr. James Kubal-Komoto

## Small Group Communion



**Sundays 13<sup>th</sup> April, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June  
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:

**13<sup>th</sup> April** – Led by Sue Smith

**11<sup>th</sup> May** – Led by Tristan Jovanović

**8<sup>th</sup> June** – Led by David Francis Darling

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



“Once I heard Dean Sperry in a lecture at the Harvard Divinity School say this: There had been times, he said, when he scarcely knew what he believed or whether he believed anything at all — times when he was baffled, confused and dismayed—as, no doubt everyone is sometimes. And at those times, he found great good in the Communion. For here was something which generations of people has said and done over the centuries. And somehow, regardless of doctrine, that gave him a thread of continuity, a kind of steadying. In that service, it was as if he felt himself one with the age-long movement of humanity, together, through thick and thin.”

**W L McKinstry** (from *uchristian.org*)

## Spirituality and Sexuality Group for Women



**Tuesday evenings 7 to 9pm:  
17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July**

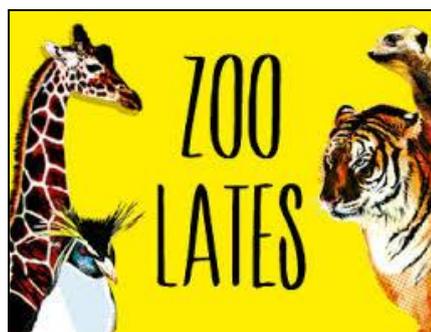
**facilitated by Jeannene Powell and Sarah Tinker**

Together we will create a safe space for us as women to consider both the connections and the disconnections between our spiritual and sexual lives. Our explorations will include issues of identity, history, changes through our lives and the messages we have received from family, religion and society. Using simple exercises in writing, art work and meditation we will seek imagery to heal the rifts between these important aspects of ourselves. As places will be limited do let us know if you would like to join this small group and ensure that you can commit to attending at least two sessions and ideally all three.

*(Men interested in joining a men's course / group are invited to contact Jim Blair on jim\_blair\_rhino@hotmail.com)*

## Cultural Outing: Zoo Late

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 6-10pm – BOOK NOW**



We tried to organise an outing to one of the London Zoo late openings last year but these events always sell out in advance and quite a few people found that by the time they tried to book it was too late. We have picked a date nice and early this year in the hope of avoiding this problem and will be going on 27<sup>th</sup> June. Zoo Lates are for 18+ only and as well as the chance to appreciate the animals it includes cabaret, comedy, and a street food fair.

If you book right now there are some half price tickets available at the special rate of £14. You can book via the Zoo website:

[www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/whats-on/zoo-lates-0](http://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/whats-on/zoo-lates-0)

# ‘The Art of Forgetting’

Sermon by Jane Blackall – 28th January 2014

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

We hear a lot about remembering in church. Today I’m going to try and redress the balance a bit – and perhaps that’s the key word to bear in mind, *balance* – by looking at a handful of different ways in which forgetting might be beneficial or even necessary for a well-rounded and flourishing human life. Up to a point, forgetting can be good for you: intellectually – in terms of learning and creativity; emotionally – in terms of freedom from worry; and spiritually – in terms of personal and social transformation. So I’m going to consider each of those three realms of forgetting in turn.

But first let us acknowledge some of the legitimate reasons why we might be anti-forgetting... and get them out in the open. Firstly, simply, most of our everyday experiences of involuntary forgetting are connected with inconvenience, irritation, and occasionally social embarrassment. We go upstairs to get something and when we get there we can’t remember what it was. We can’t call to mind a scintillating fact at the moment we need it in conversation (or in a pub quiz when we can’t remember the capital of Burkina Faso). We bump into an acquaintance and find that we’ve completely forgotten their name.

Beneath the surface of these everyday irritations, though, perhaps these small moments of forgetfulness provoke discomfort at a deeper level. For starters, these lapses remind us that we humans are fallible. And beyond that, we might associate forgetfulness with our own personal decline – memory loss is something that many of us fear coming upon us in old age – and it might bring to mind painful thoughts of people we know and love who are suffering from dementia and other progressive conditions.

Another reason why we might feel uneasy about forgetting is in relation to certain famous proverbs and sayings that we may have internalised which encapsulate society’s attitudes towards the value of remembering. I’m thinking especially of: ‘those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it’. When we think of terrible atrocities and tragedies, we are called both to honour the memory of the victims, and to learn from the mistakes so that it doesn’t happen again.

This may lead us on to another aspect of forgetting, deeper still – our own mortality. One day, we will be gone, and eventually all those who knew us will be gone too. Will we be remembered? The thought of being gone and forgotten is a sobering one.

So forgetting has a lot of negative connotations – and, in many cases, things will, by default, be forgotten unless we as individuals and as a society make a particular effort to remember them – in general it’s remembering we need to work on... but that doesn’t mean that there’s no place for forgetting. As we heard from Oliver Burkeman in the reading that Carol gave earlier (*excerpts from ‘This column will change your life: the art of forgetting’ published in the Guardian on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012*), forgetting is a ‘vital complement to remembering’.

I found a very short paper called ‘The Art of Forgetting’ by Elizabeth Vincent. It’s nearly 100 years old and I know absolutely nothing about her but I liked what she had to say so I’m going to share a short excerpt or two. She says:



*“To remember rightly and truly – one has to forget. If we actually remembered everything, we should practically remember nothing, because we would be swamped and drowned in a mass of confusing details, and our rebuilding memory would stand hopeless before the task of uniting all these bits into a clear and convincing picture. But if we know how to forget, if we do not cling to facts like a frightened swimmer clings to the pole, but drive with a fine and strong stroke forward into the deep, blue alluring waters to a new and beckoning spiritual shore, then we shall see what we have forgotten coming back to us, clearer and purer, deeper and fuller with meaning, all the incidental details gone, but the essential picture heightened and more ours now than ever before.”*

This sets us up very nicely to look at the intellectual benefits of forgetting. First things first: to state the obvious, you simply can’t remember everything! (or at least most people can’t – there are a few poor souls who seem to be able to remember everything and by all accounts they are tormented by their condition). In the modern world there is ever more information and data coming our way and it is difficult to know how to deal with it without becoming overwhelmed. Often the challenge is to sift this deluge of information for the bits that are worth keeping hold of... there is a lot of ‘noise’ swamping the nuggets and selective forgetting is one way in which we respond. That selection is partly conscious, partly unconscious.

I heard a story on the one of my favourite podcasts, Radiolab, which was the initial inspiration for today’s service. The item was about an avant-garde rock band who were rehearsing a new song. They spent a whole evening practicing it over and over but the drummer just couldn’t get the hang of the rhythm and kept making mistakes here and there. Eventually she gave up, they knocked it on the head for the night, and everybody went to bed. The next day she got up, went straight to the drum kit, and got the rhythm right first time. I think a few of us here might have had similar experiences where a good night’s sleep has had a seemingly miraculous effect when we are trying to learn something new.

This is a very condensed version of the story and its interpretation but in a nutshell the explanation given was that a key function of sleep is that it enables us to forget. If I’ve understood correctly, slow waves of electrical activity pass over our brain during the night, gently eroding *all* of our memories, including the things we want to remember, the mistakes we want to forget, and all the incidental things that happened during the day that we have no particular need to recall. When we are trying to learn something, like the drummer learning her rhythm pattern, we tend to reinforce the memory by repetition, so the memory of the thing we are trying to learn survives this process of erosion, whereas the random mistakes we make and the incidental day’s events just fade away. I recommend you go and listen to the excellent Radiolab podcast to hear that for yourself.

## ‘The Art of Forgetting’ by Jane Blackall *(continued)*

Another cognitive benefit of forgetting may be in relation to creativity. Holding ideas loosely, thinking fuzzily, may allow you to combine them in new ways. Gaps in our memories may be a blessing as they give us the room to come up with something new. The neurologist Oliver Sacks has written on this. He says:

*‘We, as human beings, are landed with memory systems that have fallibilities, frailties, and imperfections – but also great flexibility and creativity...’* [Sacks talks about the tendency to forget where we have picked up ideas, and to assimilate them and treat them as if they are our own, and also about what he calls ‘autoplagiarism’, where our own ideas are forgotten and lie dormant for years before being picked up at a later date as if they were brand new]. He continues: *‘I suspect that such forgettings occur for everyone, and they may be especially common in those who write or paint or compose, for creativity may require such forgettings, in order that one’s memories and ideas can be born again and seen in new contexts and perspectives.’*

Let’s move on to another realm where forgetting is important. Sometimes there are things we’d *like* to forget but we find that we can’t stop thinking about them. Are any of you familiar with the little figures on the front of your order of service (*and at the top of this article in the newsletter*)? These are Guatemalan worry dolls. They were all the rage in the New Age hippy shops I used to hang around as a teenager. If you are troubled by worries then you tell them to a worry doll and place it under your pillow before you go to sleep. The folklore says that the doll takes on your worries, so that you can sleep in peace, and in the morning your worries are gone, forgotten. I guess it’s a pretty much universal experience to have such worries, thoughts, and feelings that we would like a bit of respite from. I know from my own experience that, in times of stress, anxiety, and sadness, all I want to do is have a break from the loop of distressing thoughts in my mind. Sometimes sleep is the only respite, and the first few seconds on waking up are often the only moments of peace in the day before all the unpleasant realities flood back in. And it’s not just the day-to-day worries. I don’t know about you but I seem to keep a mental catalogue of every significantly embarrassing or foolish thing I have ever done. These cringeworthy moments seem to be seared into my memory and I wish they weren’t.

As we heard in the reading by Burkeman earlier, *choosing* to forget has got a bad name, as there’s a good psychological principle that such memories should generally be brought to light (with professional help if they are particularly serious) and closely examined for what we can learn from them. And in terms of our day-to-day-worries and stress it might well be argued that rather than trying to forget them we should face them head on and try to tackle our situation in some practical way to change it. But sometimes we just need a break, a bit of guilt-free time out, to enable us to carry on. It’s worth employing some of the tips that Burkeman suggests to forget our worries for a while – substituting the thoughts with something else – or doing some physical activity to put them from our mind. It’s OK to forget, just for a while, and have a rest, as a kindness to ourselves. After a break we might find we are more able to cope with the struggle.

Elizabeth Vincent has something to say about this too:

*“To be happy one has to forget. If we were constantly facing the futility of our days, the doom awaiting us, the mistakes we have made, the wrong paths we have taken, the aims we have missed, we could not live another day. But as long as we forget, the bitterness in our heart is charmed away as David charmed away the gloom of Saul with his lute, and once more we look upon life and fate with the trust of a child and believe that what is, is good... Once more we belong to life and life belongs to us. We forget, because we find only in forgetting the possibility to be, to live on.”*

And we come to a third realm where forgetting plays a vital role: on the path of personal, social, and spiritual transformation. Mystics of various traditions often talk of the way of forgetting or unknowing as being a necessary aspect of the journey towards God. In a similar vein, advanced Buddhist meditators talk of forgetting worldly experiences and concepts altogether as they ascend to higher states of consciousness. This sort of personal spiritual transformation is not divorced from the real world, however. True spirituality influences our whole way of living and being.

To make radical personal changes we might just need to forget who we used to be. Both of the poems we heard earlier alluded to the river Lethe from Greek mythology, the river of forgetting in the underworld, in which souls would have to bathe, and thus forget their previous lives, in order to be reborn. The poet C. K. Williams refers to a “looking away that makes possible beginning again”. Forgetting can liberate us from the past which holds us back. And the same goes for radical social change. The activists who change the world are those who are forgetful of received wisdom, social convention, the preconceptions that are quite ingrained into most of us, which condition our outlook on life, and which we may not even be conscious of. Forgetting may bring about about a sort of beginner’s mind that allows us to see things with fresh eyes and new hope. Evelyn Underhill, who wrote a great deal about mysticism, had this to say:

*“The old moralists said that Hope was the virtue which purified the Memory and made it fit for God; and by Memory they meant all our funded experience, that hoarded past which we drag along with us, and which conditions our whole outlook on life. In respect of all this, Hope teaches us the art of wise forgetting; of dropping the superfluous, the outgrown, the trivial. It cleanses the mind from all those half-realities which impede the total concentration of our love and will on God; and lifts up all the rest of our experience into the eternal light... Thus the pain and disappointment, the tragedy and frustration of existence, are transfigured when Hope purifies the mind.”*

So, in the last twelve minutes, I’ve attempted to make the case for the value of forgetting in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual realms, and redress the balance a bit. Of course, remembering is a hugely important aspect of everyday life, and in many ways it is a sacred task, and an act of love as well. Sometimes it’s absolutely necessary to remember, and work at remembering. But sometimes it’s OK, or even a blessing, to forget. We need to keep the two in balance. To borrow Evelyn Underhill’s turn of phrase, we need to cultivate the art of *wise* forgetting, in order to learn and create, be liberated from our worries, and ultimately flourish in this life.

May we all become wise in the art of forgetting. Amen.

## One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'Modern Life'



Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2014  
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church

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

Information from One Light: 'Come and enjoy as we gather for deep healing and loving connection to Spirit. Come help us create a sacred space, bringing in the One Light, One Love for which we all long - with silence, music, meditation, and eternal inspiration from all faiths and none. Bring your beloved eternal self, your family, children and friends'

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

For further information contact Interfaith Reverends Pamela Ramsden 07966 478 980 / Kathryn Reynolds 07976 739 286

**Future Meetings: 11<sup>th</sup> April – Modern Life, 9<sup>th</sup> May – Present Moment, 13<sup>th</sup> June – Appreciation, 11<sup>th</sup> July – The Soul**

## Hucklow Summer School The Authentic Self: Discovering the Real You



**Week of 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014  
Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire**

**A week of living, learning, & spiritual development**

Activities for all ages, theme talks, engagement groups, and fun! Join us to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Hucklow Summer School!

Cost: Adult (sharing): £480; Children 3-4 years: £130;  
5-11 years: £300; 12-16 years: £365.

For more information contact Kate: 07870 322 519  
or [info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk](mailto:info@hucklowsummerschool.org.uk)

For further details and to download an application form:  
**[www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk](http://www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk)**



## What's Going on in Our Busy Building?

Looking through the April diary to work out what to write for this month's newsletter I was shocked to realise that (apart from Sundays) we have bookings every single day. In fact we've had at least one booking every single day this year since 3<sup>rd</sup> January and, on average, four bookings. In fact the only clear day in the diary at the moment (until things slow down at the end of July for the summer holidays) is Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May - and it's very likely that someone will book that too before we get there.

So yes, it is a busy building. On the busiest day in the diary this month - 28 April - we have 9 bookings, not bad considering we only have three rooms: the bookings are yoga, preschool music, Nia, preschool dance, ballet, Chinese, meditation, Sufi meditation and Tai Chi. They keep the building busy from 9 in the morning till 10 at night with scarcely an hour's break.

Looking at the month overall, the building will be used by over 30 different groups: 29 of which use us regularly and 20 use us weekly.

This is the busiest we've ever been and our 2013 accounts show that reflected by increased lettings income. We made around £80,000 last year - that's more than £200 per day.

However, letting other groups use the building isn't just about earning money, and several of our regular groups are offered a large discount on our standard rates because we want to support their activities. These include: the Sufi worship group; a Chinese children's choir organised by local parents; an Eritrean refugee support charity and - the most recent addition - a group of local Reiki healers are now offering free sessions in the library on Wednesday evenings.

So - it **is** a busy building! To the benefit of the local, London, and wider UK community - and also I hope to us.

**Jenny Moy, Essex Church Warden**

## Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE)



When I chose my workshops for the FUSE weekend, I had no particular plan in mind. I just picked whatever looked interesting at the time. But sometimes unplanned things just chime together in an unexpected way. On this occasion I had chosen to go to a workshop on the pagan wheel of the year. It made me reflect on how divorced we have become from the seasons; I was convinced as a teenager and young adult that spring, in particular, was over-emphasised in poetry over the years. Spring was a time of uncertain weather and no particular significance. Having my own garden has changed this somewhat, but it was still thought-provoking to be reminded of how fundamental the changing seasons have been to humanity, and what an intense matter the pagan festivals must have been, in eras when health, safety and comfort were so much more easily achieved in the long, fine days than in winter.

I then went to a workshop on Unitarian views of Easter. Easter is always problematic for non-Trinitarians. It can be nothing more than a time when we have two bank holidays – not much fun for those who don't work – and when we are encouraged to eat more than we need, even though most of us already do. The Rev David Usher emphasised the fact that a feast or festival only really takes on significance if we have recognised a period of waiting for it first. Lent is not just a matter of giving up sweets for a month and a half – giving up treats is just a way of making us reflect on the pattern of our lives. If we never try to defer any gratification, or change any behaviour, we will never understand the meaning of a feast or festival, any more than a child who gets presents every day will see much point in Christmas. He suggested that lent might involve a period of actual fasting, though that is obviously a personal choice; at the very least, we are more likely to get some sense of a spring re-birth if we have devoted some kind of time or energy to preparing for it.

The two workshops went well together, even though one was led by a pagan and one co-led by a member of the Unitarian Christian movement. They both suggested that there should be something raw, passionate, fundamental about recognising the coming of spring/ Easter; but that this has to be worked for, and goes alongside acknowledging the darker side of life: respectively allowing oneself to feel the winter, not spending the whole of it shut away in an artificial electric summer; and allowing oneself to experience some level of deprivation or deferral of pleasure, and time and space to reflect on the less safe and cuddly side of spiritual life.

**Caroline Blair**

## Good Cause Collection of the Month

### Send a Child to Hucklow



#### Collection on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April

'Send a Child to Hucklow' is a Trust to arrange and administer holidays at the Unitarian Holiday Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire for groups of disadvantaged children, having no regard to religious, political, racial and other considerations.

"SACH" offers Monday to Friday holiday breaks for groups of up to about 25 children within about a 4-year age-spread, and aged between 8 - 15 years, together with 4 or 5 Leaders. The children are selected from various agencies such as the Family Service Units, Women's Refuges, Social Service Departments, Schools, Community Associations, and Congregations. The only condition is that the children selected would not otherwise have a holiday.

For more information visit: [www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](http://www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk)

### Previous Charity Collections:

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

**Jan – West London Churches Homeless Concern – £129.51**

**Feb – War Child (UPF Lent Appeal) – £197.72 + Gift Aid**

**March – Red Cross Syria Appeal – £174.13 + Gift Aid**



*Sarah and Jane at Nicky Jenkins' FUSE 'Café Church'*

## The Rev. Jane Barraclough



We are sorry to have to tell people about Jane Barraclough's death. After dealing with serious health issues for several years, Rev. Jane Barraclough died on 3rd March at her parents' home in Reading. She was fifty years old. After gaining a degree in English Literature from Cambridge University, Jane worked as a teacher but also travelled and lived overseas for many years, becoming fluent in French and Spanish.

She discovered Unitarianism in Brighton, where she soon became an active member, taking an interest not only in the local congregation but in our national movement. She studied for the ministry at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, and after graduating had her first ministry at Bethnal Green while also working at Unitarian HQ in London. In 2008 she moved to Manchester to become minister at Cross St Chapel, where she remained until her illness led her to resign late last year. Whilst Jane was working in the London District we had some happy times running groups together and she enjoyed some of the art and creativity activities we ran here at the church. I always appreciated her gutsy laughter, her fierce intelligence and the deep sensitivity she brought to the task of creating worship.

A Memorial Service will be held at Richmond Unitarian Church at 2.00pm on Saturday 26th April, to which all are invited. Please let the Rev. David Usher know if you plan to attend as the congregation at Richmond will be catering for this event. A later memorial will also be held by her congregation in Manchester.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'We are a church, and it is appropriate that we ask ourselves, what is the moral dimension of our hospitality, the moral dimension of our reception of others, of our solidarity with others, who may not look like us or move from the same assumptions or values? I'm not talking about being politically correct, or legalistic—I'm talking about hospitality as spiritual practice. I'm not talking about just opening the doors—I'm talking about opening the heart.'

Rev Marilyn Sewell on Radical Hospitality

## Foodbank Update



Thank you to everybody for their continuing contributions to our Foodbank collection. By the time this newsletter is published we will have taken our fourth car boot full of food to help those who find themselves struggling to feed themselves and their families.

The Trussell Trust runs foodbanks all round the country for people finding themselves in poverty. People have to be referred by a social worker or similar and generally are only given vouchers to use for up to three visits. At our local Foodbank in Chelsea they have a table laid out with odds and ends of food and drink that they can't put in the actual Foodbank for some reason. People can help themselves to things on that table for free and can also have a cup of tea and a slice of cake whilst they are there. I found it all quite heart-warming until I remembered that we didn't need Foodbanks until a few years ago. Are you as angry as I am that our welfare state provision is I suspect being eroded for ideological rather than financial reasons?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

### An UPDATED wish-list of items:

- Milk (UHT or powdered)
- Sugar (500g)
- Soup
- **Bottles of fruit squash**
- **Tinned meat pies**
- **Tinned veg (e.g. sweetcorn)**
- Pasta Sauces
- Sponge Pudding (tinned)
- Cereals
- Rice Pudding (tinned)
- Instant Coffee
- Instant Mash Potato
- Rice
- Tinned Meat / Fish
- Tinned Fruit
- Jam
- Biscuits or Snack Bars

If you would like to donate any of these items please bring them along to church next time you come. The church committee will need to arrange regular transport of the food we collect so if you might be able to help with this then let Sarah or a committee member know.



Restoring dignity and reviving hope  
Community projects tackling poverty and exclusion in the UK and Bulgaria

# 'On Love's Side'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2014

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



**Standing on the Side of Love** is a public advocacy campaign organised by the Unitarian Universalist Association, whose goal is to harness love's power to end bigotry and oppression against people because of their identity. The message, "standing on the side of love," emerged as a rallying point for people of faith in Massachusetts during an early campaign for fully inclusive marriage. The Standing on the Side of Love Campaign was inspired by the 2008 shooting at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, a congregation which was targeted because of the welcome they give to LGBT people and because of their congregation's liberal stance on many issues. Two people were killed on Sunday, July 27, and seven others were injured when a gunman opened fire inside the church in Knoxville, Tennessee, during a Sunday morning performance of a children's play. The man who shot these people had written a long letter explaining that his actions were because of his hatred of the liberal movement.

The Knoxville Community responded with an outpouring of love that inspired the leadership at the Unitarian Universalist Association to launch a campaign that would harness love's power to challenging exclusion, oppression and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, race, religion, or any other identity. They asked people to stand on the side of love in response to the many issues of our day.

I hope it's not too jarring to move from a description of such a violent attack to some rambling thoughts about sports teachers. I'm not up to date with the teaching of sports in school and I am sure that teaching methods have moved on a bit from the grim realities I experienced as a child. But I'd better check first – do we have any sports teachers in the room? If not then I can be shamelessly stereotypical for a minute or two. With apologies of course to any sports teachers who might listen in to this podcast at some future date. But really, back in the days of my youth, sports teachers were considered to be a breed apart – people who did not feel the cold, and could not imagine that some of our bodies were not like theirs. At my Junior School we had a teacher called Miss Quash and she invented a posture improving method which we called Miss Quash's torture – you could try it now if you like – it involved folding your arms behind your back as we stood in line. I remember Miss Quash's look of incomprehension when I tried to explain why I could not climb a rope and the anxiety she produced in me when two of the sportiest pupils were asked to pick teams. I shan't go into too much detail about how painful it is to be left till last to be chosen, in case it re-awakens painful memories in any of you. Let's turn our attention to a much better method – for life anyway – that instead of waiting to be chosen for a team, a team of equal size, instead we get to choose the team we would like to be in. And today's choice between two teams is the love team and the hate team. And thank goodness the teams don't have to be of equal size. We know, don't we, that if the world's population had to choose a team right now, had to choose between love and hate, the vast majority of people would be in the love team, standing on the side of love, not standing on the side of hate.

But my goodness, don't we need the love team to be the biggest team because one person, just one person, filled with hatred can cause a great deal of trouble for everyone else. The man who shot and killed two people at the Unitarian Universalist church in

Knoxville in 2008 was filled with hatred – a broken marriage, unable to get a job – an unpleasant situation for anyone to be in – but it led him to take action against the liberal church he held to be responsible for his pain. Such extreme behaviour does not happen very often in our world and when it does happen, it gets a lot of publicity. Far more frequent are the small yet still significant acts of love that help to make our world a better place and help us all – in the words of that Buddhist prayer - 'to cross the ocean of life' or as the Hindu proverb at the bottom of today's order of service says "Help another's boat across, and your own will reach the shore."

Living has to be an altruistic act, where we acknowledge that the circumstances others find themselves in are inextricably linked to our own lives. To live only for ourselves is surely not what life is all about. The President of the UUA Rev. Peter Morales, writes movingly about love:

*"Love reaches out. That is the essence of love. Love is our longing for deep connection. A search for connection is at the heart of all spiritual traditions and practices. The spiritual journey is a pathway into the depths of our being and also a journey of transcending the stifling confines of the self. Profound spiritual experiences are experiences of union – with others and ultimately with the great mystery of life. We are profoundly and fundamentally relational creatures."*

"We are profoundly and fundamentally relational creatures." We cannot do this thing called life on our own and the more we can reach out to others – especially perhaps those who are different from ourselves – then the more we can break down barriers of fear and ignorance and replace them with connections made of love and curiosity about those who are different from us. That is what healthy relationships are made of. And a healthy church community is made of faith put into action, actions aligned with the values that underpin our living.

We may stand, sit, dance, sing, write letters, sign petitions, collect money, think thoughts, gather information, talk to others, listen to others – these are just some of the things I know people here in our congregation do when we put our values into action. Our faith is not just about Sunday mornings and coming to church is it - much as I appreciate seeing you all here today and every Sunday you can make it here. Our faith starts with us and our relationship with that which inspires and guides us, that which we hold to be of ultimate worth, the God of our understanding, the God of our hearts. Our individual faith is then shaped by this our beloved community and - strengthened by that identity we can then reach out to the world in all its complexity and we put our faith into action, we live our values, we base our actions upon them.

My closing question today – a question for myself as well as for any of you who would like to ask it – if we choose again today to join love's team, if we choose to stand on the side of love, is there any one change that you would introduce in your life – a new action perhaps, a new way of thinking maybe, a new conversation you want to start? Let's talk about those possibilities together .....

"When emboldened by faith, we dare to proclaim:  
We are standing on the side of love".

*(Chorus from the hymn 'Standing on the Side of Love'  
– words and music by the Rev. Jason Shelton)*

# Sunday Services at Essex Church

6<sup>th</sup> April, 11am –

## ‘Communicate and Connect’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our Spiritual Life Skills course this weekend is a training in Compassionate Communication and so our service will focus on the way in which our ability to communicate with one another allows us to connect more deeply, with ourselves as well as with others.

13<sup>th</sup> April, 11am –

## ‘The Importance of Being Optimistic’

Led by Harold Lorenzelli

Our own Harold Lorenzelli says: “I will be looking at why, in the face of often overwhelming evidence to the contrary, it is important to adopt a positive outlook in life.” After the service there will be a special small-group communion for Palm Sunday led by Sue Smith downstairs in the library.

20<sup>th</sup> April, 11am –

## ‘Everyday Sacrifices’

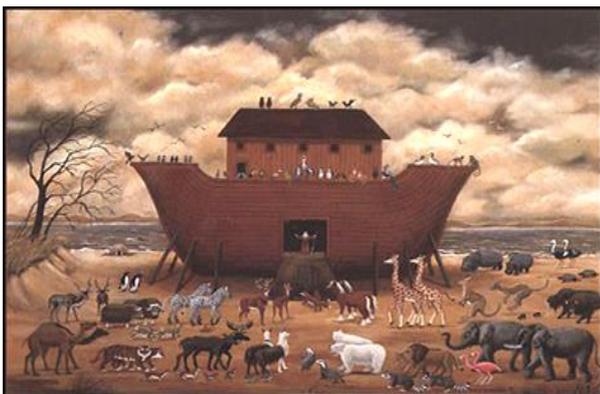
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Our Easter service will feature a fine quartet of singers and an opportunity to reflect on the theme of sacrifice in our everyday lives. Followed by a congregational bring and share lunch to which all are invited.

## 27<sup>th</sup> April, 11am – ‘Floods... and Other Weather Irregularities’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

After our very wet winter it is a relief to have spring with us once more. Today we will explore the symbolism of ‘the flood’ from ancient times to the present day. Wellies will not be required.



# Tenebrae Gathering

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 7.00pm

Led by Tristan Jovanović and Sarah Tinker



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.

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, including a Taizé chant, 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.

We will be singing a chant from the Taizé community that people might like to practice beforehand – “bleibet hier” – based on Jesus' moving request to his followers in the Garden of Gethsemane “stay here and keep watch with me”. If you have access to the Internet you can listen to many chants from Taizé in their separate parts and all together. It's an easy way to learn a new chant – this link should take you directly to “bleibet hier”.

[www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=254&lang=en](http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=254&lang=en)

# Essex Church AGM

A date for your diary: Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014

(cartoon by Dave Walker – [www.cartoonchurch.com](http://www.cartoonchurch.com))



CHURCH MEETINGS ARE BRILLIANT