



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: April 2016

What's On...

Sunday 3rd April, 11am-noon

'Leftovers'

Led by Jane Blackall

Thursday 7th April, 7-8pm

'Heart and Soul'

'Mandalas – The Healing Wholeness'
with Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10th April, 11am-noon

'Freedom in Faith'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10th April, 12.30pm

Small-Group Communion

Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 17th April, 11am-noon

'Celebrating Life'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17th April, 12.30-1.15pm

'Finding Your Voice'

Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 24th April, 11am-noon

'Simple Gifts'

Led by Carole Grace
and Sarah Tinker

Thursday 28th April, 7.00pm

Management Committee Meeting

Dates for your Diary:

Sunday 1st May, 11am-noon

Service led by Katie McKenna,
Ministry Student and Member of
The Octagon (Norwich Unitarians)

Sunday 22nd May, 12.45pm

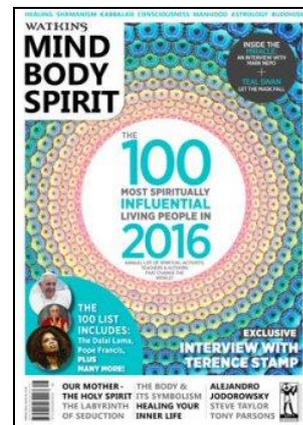
'The Pleasures & Pains of Ageing'
Workshop with Carolyn and Sarah

Sunday 12th June, 12.30pm:

Essex Church AGM

100 Most Spiritually Influential People A Message from our Minister

Do any of you know Watkins Bookshop in Soho? It describes itself as 'an esoteric bookshop in the heart of London. Established over 120 years ago, we are one of the world's oldest and leading independent bookshops specialising in new and antiquarian titles in the Mind, Body, Spirit field. We import books from around the world including America and India, and our staff are all experts in the themes in the shop, and you can always ask them for recommendations and advice'. It's well worth a visit if you are interested in this particular field and they also now have a useful website, packed with inspirational materials. The spring edition of their quarterly magazine included their annual list of the 100 Most Spiritually Influential Living People – spiritual teachers, activists, authors and thinkers that change the world. The list is intended to 'celebrate the positive influence of today's spiritual teachers'.



As I read through their list I found myself smiling happily, noticing how many of these teachers have been mentioned in courses and worship here at Essex Church. We are so fortunate in our freedom to use materials from any source. At a Sea of Faith conference a few years ago an Anglican lay reader expressed his envy at the eclectic nature of Unitarian worship. For him, it was rare to use poetry in worship or words from a spiritual tradition other than his own. We have the pick of contemporary as well as ancient spirituality, sacred texts, literature, academic works, and the like. It's a great privilege.

But I'd encourage us all to take a next step. When we have so many sources of spiritual inspiration to choose from, it can become overwhelming. We may be so busy hopping from idea to idea, and teacher to teacher, that we never stop long enough to go deeper and do the work that needs to be done if an idea is to become part of us. I'll be interested to hear your views about this and about the people listed on this website. We could make two lists of spiritually influential people, one of the living and one of the dead. Some people live on through their wisdom. Whose teachings are having the most profound influence on you at the moment?

Before looking at their list I made a list of my own most spiritually influential living people and had 24 names in common with Watkins' assessment. There's even one person on the list who I know has a Unitarian Universalist spouse. Now that surely will get you looking! Here's the link to their website or get in touch and I'll print you a copy of the list. www.watkinsmagazine.com/watkins-spiritual-100-list-2016

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Hasta Pronto Jenny' * 'Evidences' – Forthcoming Exhibition featuring Roy's Photography *
'Impressions of the LDPA AGM' by Melody * 'Report from the Big Sleep Out' by Sarah Williams
* 'Supporting Girls' Wellbeing in Laos' by Julia Alden * 'News from India' by Sonya Leite *
Warden's Column – including news of summer building works * Worship Training at Rosslyn Hill
* 'Messages from the Wise Ones' reflection 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.

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



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sunday Afternoon Workshop:

'The Pleasures and Pains of Ageing'

Sunday 22nd May 12.45-2.15pm

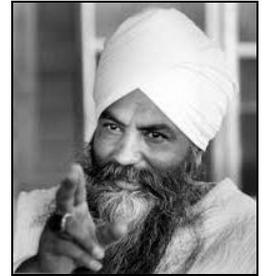


Looking around at people you know you witness great examples of how to live fully your whole life. However, if you follow the fashion and film industries, as well as the media on the whole you will see frequent put-downs of the older generation. It is very hard to resist this negativity. And indeed the ageing process can bring difficulties. But it also brings new positive situations and experiences. You do not need to be old to contemplate the issues of ageing. After all, ageing is a lifelong process.

Join Carolyn Appleby and Sarah Tinker for an interactive session on this topic. All adults welcome. No charge. Make sure you have had some lunch before we begin.

'If you are willing to look at another person's behaviour toward you as a reflection of the state of their relationship with themselves rather than a statement about your value as a person, then you will, over a period of time cease to react at all.'

Yogi Bhajan



Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

3rd April: Gina Bayley
10th April: Carole Grace
17th April: Ted Nist
24th April: Julia Alden

Coffee:

3rd April: Roy Clark
10th April: Juliet Edwards
17th April: ??? (*can you help?*)
24th April: Jonathan Crawford

Greeting:

3rd April: Melody
10th April: Liz Tuckwell
17th April: Gina Bayley
24th April: Melody

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

'The Sufi learns consideration beginning with his murshid, but this culminates in consideration for God. When one arrives at that tenderness of feeling, every person in the world is considered. To the Sufi the missing of an opportunity of considering another is a great disappointment, for he does not consider it to be a fault towards a human being, but to God. Verily, he is pious who considers human feeling.'

Hazrat Inayat Khan



'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 7th April 2016 from 7-8pm



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

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

Our April gathering will be led by Sarah on the theme of ' Mandalas – The Healing Wholeness'. Carl Jung wrote "The mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the wholeness of the Self." Come and join us for a gentle, meditative evening's exploration of the healing nature of the circle, with colouring sheets to take away.

If you would like to know more about our 'Heart and Soul' gatherings email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Hasta Pronto Jenny!



Jenny our warden is heading to northern Spain in April. She'll be gone for two and a half months, to a fascinating project in an old monastery with her dance community. She'll still be working for Essex Church part time in an interesting new development for us – made possible by the Internet. She can handle our lettings, our invoicing and accounts from a distance and with Skype, WhatsApp, email and text messaging we'll still be working closely together. Her physical presence will be replaced by her friend Arda who will be living in the warden's flat in our basement and working as a volunteer warden for us. Arda has been stand in for Jenny on many occasions when she's taken annual leave so it's good to have someone here who knows us and our building well.

Jenny's absence frees up an exciting opportunity for someone to take over providing flowers for our Sunday services. Do get in touch if this appeals to you. It doesn't have to be every week and you'll receive a budget for buying flowers.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Two Dates for your Diaries



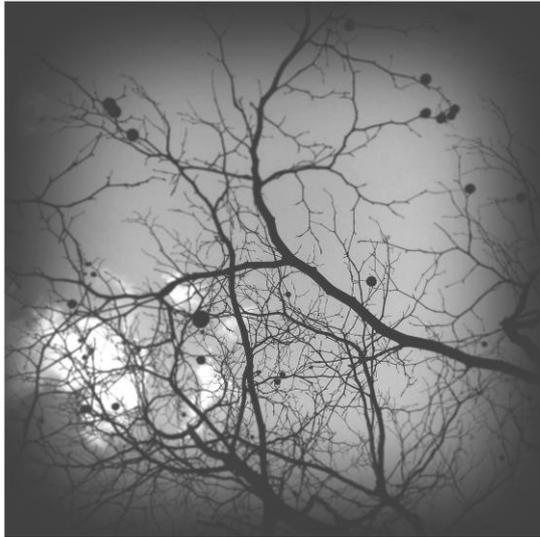
After the service on Sunday 10th April the Blair family invite us all to join them for a party to celebrate Amber's birthday on her and Iona's visit from South Africa.

In our 17th April service we'll be joined by a grown up Amber, husband Stewart, and family from the States, to celebrate a simple naming and dedication ceremony for Tate.

'We need tenderness. We need to be cared for and considered. In order to get that, we probably have to risk letting ourselves be a bit less certain, a bit less hardened. It amazes me how many times I hear adults talk about how good it feels to help someone else, how willing they are to provide a ride or a meal or a listening ear. Yet these same people are quick to say, "I don't want to be a bother", or "It's really hard for me to ask for help". OK, so if most people actually enjoy being helpful but few of us dare to ask for help, then how is anyone going to have the joy of helping? We need to let go of the illusion of our own absolute independence and acknowledge our tender places. Treating tenderly includes treating ourselves tenderly, not demanding perfection in every moment, not expecting absolute consistency in how we feel, not pretending that we are beyond hurts or confusions or sadnesses or doubts.'



Rev. Barbara Threet



Evidences

An exhibition of recent work by
Roy Clark, Maurizio Cortigiano, James Ryan

25th April - 1st May 2016
at The Gallery on the Corner
115 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BU

I will be holding a Spring exhibition of my recent work at the end of April. If anybody would like to attend the Private View on Tuesday 26th April please let me know and I will send you an invitation.

Roy Clark

FOY Conference 2016 'Grief and Bereavement'

A Supportive Space – Time for Reflection
Challenging Conversations

29th April – 2nd May at the Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Bereavement is both intensely personal and a shared, social experience. We aim to talk about what can happen, what resources we can draw on, our personal histories, and many different ways of responding to death. We will explore different types of grief, whilst learning how bereavement affects people in many different ways. Speakers will include a representative from CRUSE, the national charity for bereaved people, as well as from A.W. Lynn, a family funeral director. During the weekend there will also be free time for local walks, worship/meditation, and other activities. The conference begins on Friday evening and ends with lunch on Monday.

Standard cost for adults is £192. There is a £10 discount for first-timers, ministers, students and unwaged people. General conference enquiries should be made to Joan Partington: 01228 670 565 / partingtons@gmail.com

Unitarians at London Pride March

A Date for your Diary: Saturday 25th June

Working with district minister Revd Martin Whitell, I am helping to co-ordinate the Unitarian presence for this year's London Pride march. It is one of the largest festivals of LGBT Equality in Europe and we are keen that the work of the Unitarian Church in promoting equality is given a good show.

The parade is on Saturday 25th June in central London and lasts from about 11.30am to 3.30pm. We will meet around Baker Street (exact location to be confirmed) and the march ends just off Trafalgar Square.

We are asking that each Congregation find at least two people who will commit to being there on the day and walking with us. It is huge fun and the more of us the better.

Ed Fordham

For more info: ed.fordham@gmail.com / 07974 950 512

International Association for Religious Freedom
and the World Congress of Faiths present:

'Peak Experiences and Peace'

Saturday 16th April, 10am-4pm
Croydon Unitarian Church,
1 Croydon Flyover, CRO 1ER

We honour the 100th Birthday of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (July 21, 1916 – Feb 7, 2000), director of Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions., author of '*Faith and Belief*'. We Honour Abraham Harold Maslow (April 1, 1908 – June 8, 1970) who poetically observed in '*Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences*', "The great lesson from the true mystics {is that} the sacred is in the ordinary, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbours, friends, and family, in one's backyard."

The day will include: worship featuring "The Kol Nidre" by Andrew Wickens and Elizabeth Hills; a panel on "My Life Journey – Peaks, Valleys and Peace" including Ashley Hills, Marcus Braybrooke, Pejman Khojasteh, Arman Mohajeri; a performance of 'The Lark Ascending' by Andrew Wickens and Elizabeth Hills, honouring Rev. Orlanda Brugnola, IARF Representative to the UN; and a panel on 'Three Cardinal Virtues: Trust, Compassion and Hope' with Ian Mason, Chris Hudson, and Richard Boeke. There will be time for circle group discussion. A vegetarian lunch will be provided.

Please email r.boeke@virgin.net if you are coming.

A five pound donation at the door is requested.

'Medicine and Mystic Consciousness'

A Talk by Dr Rached Daoud



2.00pm on Sunday 24th April 2016
Here at Essex Church

Originally from Lebanon, the British doctor and writer is known internationally for his new message in medicine. Dr Daoud has helped countless patients worldwide and his latest book 'Doctor Impossible' takes the reader on the journey of his life, telling how healing may come in the most unexpected ways, in the mystery of suffering and its relief; challenging all to live and love, beyond all expectation.

All welcome. No charge. An event organised by musician and friend of our congregation Jenny Thorn.

For more information contact:

4musicsphere@gmail.com or 07960 057567

Small Group Communion



10th April, 8th May 2016
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:

10th April – led by **Tristan Jovanović**

8th May – leader to be announced

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

Warden's Column



As the weather gets warmer, I feel very relieved that we managed to survive the winter with 4 out of 6 gas heaters on the church thermostat system broken, a new one that has to be turned on separately and two plug-in radiators. A few weeks ago we thought we'd finally found the holy grail - of new gas heaters to fit our existing alcoves - but unfortunately when the installer came to measure up it turned out that they were actually 50 cm too tall.

Having considered many options (including sacrificing the skirting board) we're now thinking of taking the plunge and replacing the heating throughout the whole church with a zone based radiator system. Previously we'd been reluctant to heat the church space with radiators because of the greater time needed to get up to temperature, however this new system would have an intelligent thermostat. This would mean that rather than switching it on a few hours before the room was needed, we could program it with each week's bookings and over time it would learn exactly when to fire up the boiler in order to get the space to the required temperature. It should also help that we're planning to replace the current single-glazed skylights with double glazing this summer. A zone-based system has the advantage of making it possible to just heat the Hall (e.g. for yoga) without having to turn up the central heating throughout the whole building (as now). It would also mean that the boiler could be relocated from the end of its current long, dark tunnel (see my winter '15 column for details!) into a locked cupboard in the Hall.

However, because we have concerns that some of the existing piping may be leaking inside the floors, new pipes will need to be installed throughout the building and great care will have to be taken to make this as discreet as possible. This is particularly an issue in the Church space, where there is no existing piping and the aesthetics of the room are very important. The current idea is therefore to block in the alcoves and run a set of 3 12" flat-fronted radiators along between the skirting and the wall-lights. The pipes will need to run along the base of the wall - but hopefully it will be possible to box them in neatly in a way that harmonises with the existing skirting. The pipes should enter the room through the false ceiling above the garden door and pass under the staging to get from one side to the other. There will also need to be two flat-fronted radiators on the back-wall on either side of the altar in order to have enough capacity to heat the space.

The only time the building is empty enough for all this work to take place is August (when we also hope to have our church roof made waterproof) - but hopefully by the time it starts to get cold again next Autumn we'll be ready for whatever next winter can throw at us!

Jenny Moy

Impressions of the LDPA AGM

This year's AGM for the London & District Provincial Assembly was held at the Croydon Unitarian Church in March and I went as our congregation's delegate. It's an interesting building and I enjoyed meeting up with some people I'd met before at the FUSE weekend. The turnout wasn't brilliant and I wonder what would encourage more London District Unitarians to attend an AGM like this. We had lovely refreshments laid on by the congregation, especially by Pauline Peet who knows quite a few of us Kensington Unitarians. Vegetarians were well catered for.



Beryl Payne, long-time lay leader of our Chatham congregation, agreed to be President for a second year and I was touched by some words she used in the worship that began the afternoon.

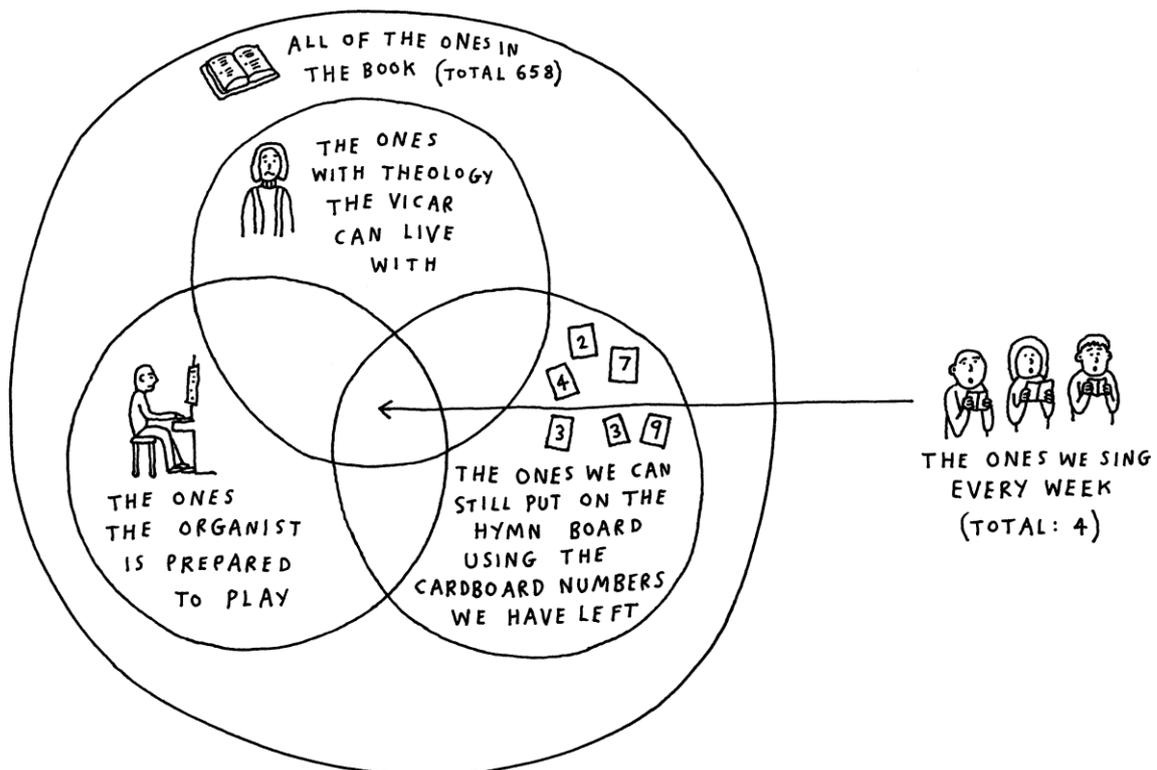
For it is by your being
That we all can know
The depths of being.
It is by your singing
And your silence
That we can know
A unity in togetherness.

The main discussion point was IMPULSE, which is our quarterly LDPA magazine, and whether that should be extended to include in-depth features. We talked through the pros and cons of email versus hard copies, and colour or black and white printing. The District Directory of Worship Leaders will be printed soon and will also be available online. We are encouraged to get involved with our Unitarian presence for the PRIDE march on Saturday June 25th. This photo shows some of our banners.

We've hosted a few LDPA events here at Kensington and no doubt they'll be visiting us again before too long. But in the meantime we're all invited to attend the Summer Quarterly and Outing on Saturday 18th June at Hastings Unitarian Church and our committee is happy to fund travel costs for anyone who wants to attend.

Melody

CHOOSING THE HYMNS



CartoonChurch.com

If you have a favourite hymn or song let us know and we'll use it in a service. If you can hum it, the words and music can be found!

Report on the 'Big Sleep Out'

A very big thank you to everyone in the congregation who sponsored me so generously to do The Big Sleep Out: you helped me raise £550 personally and of the 6 Greenford High School teachers together we raised over £2,000 and then the students raised more...

It was a strange night. Thankfully it did not rain, I think my enthusiasm would have wavered at that point. It was mild, but very windy. On arriving we were all issued with two cardboard boxes and a big plastic bag. You could do what you liked with the boxes - some groups of friends built little fortresses and encampments with theirs. We just taped ours together to make one 'tube' each, which became our home for the night.

I am blessed with being able to sleep just about anywhere, and once the lights went out and we all went to bed at midnight I didn't have any trouble getting to sleep, but many of my colleagues could not sleep or were kept awake by the plastic bags rustling in the wind.

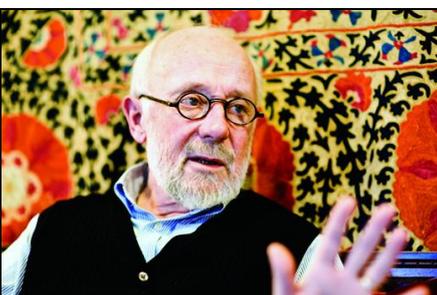
What made the biggest impression on me was the lack of a one's own space, and also the ability to do the small things that help keep one's dignity like being able to clean your teeth or wash. I know that my 'territory' is very important to me: suddenly my 'home' was reduced to just a box and everything I had with me had to fit in there too,... I felt very vulnerable. There were toilets where you could use the basins to clean your teeth but I arrived, slept and left in the same clothes and didn't wash.

I woke at 5.30am, and eased myself out of my box to go to the loo: as I stepped over all the sleeping bodies and listened to the wind rustling the plastic, I wondered if this is what all the refugee camps / temporary accommodation look like (a distant idea for us but just down the road from my sister Rose who lives in Berlin). At 6am the lights went on and we were swiftly sent on our way... no lie-in when you are sleeping on the streets when the city starts to move, even if you want to.

By 7.30am I was back in my own bed in my own home.... greeted by both the most amazing pink sunrise as I emerged from Hanger Lane station, and the sight of the man who has been sleeping in the station underpass for the past 6 weeks, still there, fast asleep on his pile of cardboard... homelessness is not easily eradicated.

It was a real learning experience and I'm glad I did it. Thank you all again for your support and good wishes.

Sarah Williams
(Juliet Edwards' daughter)



'Spirituality is thus for the hatching of the heart. Whatever helps to open our hearts to the reality of the sacred is what we should be engaged in. This awareness leads to an image of the Christian life very different from the one with which I grew up. The Christian life is not about pleasing God the finger-shaker and judge. It is not about believing now or being good now for the sake of heaven later. It is about entering a relationship in the present that begins to change everything now. Spirituality is about this process: the opening of the heart to God who is already here.'

Marcus J. Borg

Supporting Girls' Wellbeing in Laos

My international life has allowed me to meet extraordinary people from all over the world, some who do pretty amazing things. Last year I wrote in our newsletter about my experience in Cambodia. This year, most recently, I was invited to participate in rural Laos as an instructor in a *Wellness Workshop* for a group of twenty girls between the ages of fourteen and fifteen. The invitation came from Dianne Gamage, an English Language teacher in Bangkok whom I had met at an Alliance for International Educators (AIE) conference last year in Mumbai. Dianne is also the founder of a small Australian registered charity, *Lotus Educational Fund*, which currently facilitates the school-attendance of eighty-four girls by providing school fees, textbooks, a backpack and a school uniform. While girls' education has made impressive gains worldwide over the last decade, there are still millions that could be but are not in school. In Southeast Asia, poverty is a primary cause and obstacle. Keeping girls in school can be a big challenge in Laos and *Lotus* in helping to keep them there.

Savannakhet, where we were located, is right across the Mekong from Thailand. It offers easy access for entrance to a continual flow of young Laotians wanting to cross the border, lured by hopes of finding in Thailand a way to generate income which is usually partially given back to support families. Many of those migrating are adolescent girls and boys. World Vision Asia estimates that there are some 200,000 undocumented Laotian workers in Thailand (many others are documented), a large portion of these between the ages of 14 and 20. The overwhelming risk for young Laotian girls is the unwitting entrapment into the sex trade or of unskilled labour that often includes abuse and violation of human rights.

In the context of this daunting bigger picture, Diane's *Wellness Workshop* gave us all a tight focus on one of the ground-level building blocks of empowerment for young women in this region. The initiative was a true collaboration among volunteers and organizations. The workshop hosted twenty Laotian girls who travelled about two hours from their rural village to meet up with our team of volunteers. The girls attended our week-long workshops about women's wellbeing, reproductive health, contraception, HIV/AIDS, and awareness and avoidance strategies against the dangers of human trafficking. The collaborative framework allowed the girls to develop a broad view of many aspects that could contribute to their wellbeing. A women's doctor, a translator, a physical education teacher, several international teachers (myself included) and members of World Vision Asia came together to lead sessions for the girls. I got to use (along with colleague Margot) art to help explore notions of identity and to build self-confidence. For the first time the girls drew self-portraits, painting and using creative means of expression to explore and describe their character traits. The girls also engaged with volunteer Kate in organized sports and movement throughout the day.

Through the use of text, on-line video and YouTube applications, it was also the first time that these girls learned a range of critical knowledge about their bodies. Our translator, Mee, was kept very busy! The girls were fascinated by this educational introduction to understanding their physical selves and the ways they could be responsible for their health. Our doctor, Denise, ingeniously designed a bracelet that the girls could make and wear, with multi-coloured beads to follow the pattern of the monthly menstruation cycle so they could tell when they were ovulating



and were most likely to get pregnant. A project to produce washable and reusable sanitary pads was developed during the week, as lack of such simple hygiene products emerged during health discussions with the girls as a very real deterrent to their attending school. Another outcome of our collaboration was a quick raising of funds via crowdfunding by Sara, a Sustainability Project Manager for Macquarie University in Australia, to complete the building of a toilet at school. Imagine what a difference this kind of practical initiative can make to a girl in a rural school. To confront the very real dangers that many young women face from the realms of trafficking for sex trade and other illicit or abusive work, local members of World Vision offered training in awareness and possible plans of action should they find themselves in danger. This part of the workshop focused on educating the girls about existing laws that protect their rights and giving them strategies to find help if and when they did migrate and encounter trouble.

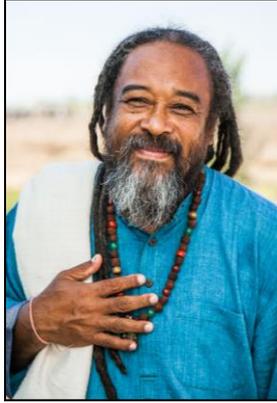
For the duration of the project, we volunteers resided together with the girls in dormitories at Thasano Station Rice Research Centre. This was a wonderful venue to share our work. The research facility is run and managed by Dr. Phoudalay Lathvilavong. When she is not advising farmers on new rice growing techniques, she devotes her time to improving social and economic conditions for the Lao people living in this rural area. A true model for these young women, she has been instrumentally involved in the *Lotus Educational Fund* since its inception in 2008, working with families and focusing, in particular, on keeping girls in school. As the week went forward, and as we worked, lived and learned together, we observed stronger, more confident girls emerging, becoming young women who were being empowered to realize they could make choices in their daily lives and in their futures. This awareness is an essential step in a culture where women have had so little negotiating power.

The girls' growing confidence was even more evident in the culmination of the week's activities. We all rode back to the village to attend a drama performance that the girls presented for their teachers and their parents, to share what they had learned during the *Wellness Workshop*. The learning process had clearly come full circle, with the girls now having this chance to come home and teach others about the important new concepts they had learned. I myself, have come home feeling privileged to have participated in this project, proud of the girls and of their energy and resilience, and moved by a compelling sense that wellness, in mind, body and spirit, was shared by all.

Julia Alden

Lotus Educational Fund Website:
www.lotuseducationalfund.com

News from India



Greetings from Rishikesh in the foothills of the Himalayas, where I am attending teachings with spiritual teacher Mooji in his ashram. The daily Satsang with Mooji is food for my soul and that is very holding and what I have come for; the rest is spiritual practice in action to accept it all...the horror, the magic, the smells, noise and grace. Mooji is helping me to let go more and more the personality, the emotions, the thoughts. I am emptying and feel the peace and fullness of being.

Then I get in a Rickshaw with all the assault on the senses and I am tested big time! What a process India is and it's just a very obvious metaphor of what goes on in our busy minds.

[Editor's Note: Mooji is Number 40 on Watkins' List of Spiritually Influential People! You can find many of Mooji's teachings online for free. A favourite is his telling of the story of The Rope and the Snake: mooji.tv/freemedia/master-pointing-series-the-snake-and-the-rope/]

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Sonya Leite



the bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don't flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;
though sometimes it is necessary
to reteach a thing its loveliness,
to put a hand on its brow
of the flower
and retell it in words and in touch
it is lovely
until it flowers again from within...

From 'Saint Francis and the Sow' by Galway Kinnell

London Playback Theatre

Performs at Clean Break Theatre



Clean Break, 2 Patshull Road, London NW5 2LB
(tube: Kentish Town; train: Kentish Town West)

A series of Thursday Evenings at 7pm

A theatre of your stories on the themes of...

28 April – Who's leading London...?

26 May – Mental health – them and us?

9 June – Stories of creativity and well-being

Tickets: £10 / Bookings: londonplayback@gmail.com

www.londonplayback.co.uk

The Esterhazy Singers Perform Monteverdi's Vespers



Monday 25th April, 7-9pm
at City Temple, London EC1A 2DE

Our very own Natasha Drennan sings with the Esterhazy Singers who are performing another very special concert this month. Prepare to be transported to seventeenth-century Venice, when the Esterhazy Singers are joined by the London Youth Choir for an extraordinary rendition of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610. Period instrument ensemble The Little Baroque Company will add the thrill of occasion with their sackbuts, cornets and other antique instruments, alongside outstanding young tenor soloists Hugo Hymas and Robbie Jacobs.

Tickets: £15 full price, £10 balcony
(restricted view), students half price

For more information: www.esterhazysingers.com

'Messages from the Wise Ones'

Some thoughts from Rev Sarah Tinker from the service with Rev. Christopher Corps on 13th March

I didn't mean to do it. Honest. But if you look at the front of today's order of service it does imply that Chris and I as worship leaders today are in fact the wise ones delivering our own wise messages. But in truth we're merely acting like postal delivery workers with a van full of parcels.

Because we live at a time in human experience where we have access to the most wondrously rich and diverse sources of wisdom. Never before have ordinary people been so freely able to read and even listen to great teachers, experts on every topic under the sun, sources of deep inspiration.

Now as some of us know when faced with a banquet table filled to overflowing with our favourite foods, there is the danger of indigestion. When we have so many sources of wisdom to choose from we may end up stuffing ourselves so much that we truly digest very little of it. You may have heard the story of the wealthy Buddhist scholar who had visited almost every teacher and now visited a renowned Zen master

After he made the customary bows, he asked her to teach him Zen. Then, he began to talk and talk about his extensive doctrinal background and rambled on and on about the many sutras he had studied.

The master listened patiently and then began to make tea. When it was ready, she poured the tea into the scholar's cup until it began to overflow and run all over the floor. The scholar saw what was happening and shouted, "Stop, stop! The cup is full; you can't get any more in."

The master stopped pouring and said: "You are like this cup; you are full of ideas about Buddha's Way. You come and ask for teaching, but your cup is full; I can't put anything in. Before I can teach you, you'll have to empty your cup."

A few years ago we had a service here at Essex Church about the 7th century AD Northumbrian monk the Venerable Bede. You can probably still find the text and podcast of it through our Kensington Unitarians website. His monastery was a renowned centre of learning and had probably the best library in the land at that time – a collection of 200 books. Well, we have a lot more than 200 books in our library downstairs – you're all welcome to borrow anything you find there. And as I look round this room I know there are quite a few of us with embarrassingly large collections of books in our homes. We are surrounded by wisdom. But we have to keep emptying ourselves like that Zen teacup to ensure that we're truly nourished by it.

And if our libraries don't contain what we seek we can click on the Internet and find just what we're looking for.

Though that has its issues too. I've been helped with today's thoughts by a lovely website called 'Fake Buddha Quotes: I Can't Believe It's Not Buddha'. It's packed with examples of Buddha misquotes – hardly surprising as the Buddha like Jesus and the Prophet Mohamad (peace and blessings be upon him) were teachers, their teachings were spoken and their words were not

written down in their lifetimes. When they were written down it was in a language other than our own and at a time very different from our own. No wonder people sometimes tweak the message to fit in with today's needs. There's a photo of Abraham Lincoln doing the rounds of the Internet at the moment, with words he's alleged to have said in 1864.

"The problem with internet quotes is that you can't always depend on their accuracy" - Abraham Lincoln, 1864

That may be true, but he didn't say it! And the words I used to start our service came from the Fake Buddha Quotes website, though they do have some connections with a traditional Buddhist sutra or teaching.

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with the light of reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

- Allegedly said by the Buddha

Sutra is often translated as text or teaching but it can also mean a thread in Sanskrit and that image of threads in a tapestry is one that works for me when trying to describe the world's wisdom traditions. We are fortunate to have access to all these threads that connect us to great teachers, known and unknown. Yet the tapestry is also made of ordinary, everyday wisdom, the kind of wisdom that gets passed from parent to child, friend to friend, neighbour to neighbour through the generations.

As liberal religious people, as spiritual explorers, we're probably not going to stay with just one teacher, or stick to just one path. Our sources of wisdom will be rich and varied. And like any sensible explorers we'll do a risk assessment of the journey. We risk indigestion, of just being too full to take anything truly in; there's a risk of teetering bookshelves of inspirational books falling on our heads; we risk becoming Internet or workshop or book butterflies flitting from one source to another yet never really deepening our understanding by sticking with just one path, at least for a while.

There will be times for some of us when we need to follow one source of guidance, it's healthy for us to be lifelong learners and to sit at the feet of teachers we respect. And from time to time we'll have a deep inner sense of our own sources of wisdom, messages from the wise one within, our own knowing and understanding. And when we experience one of those moments we'll be able to laugh and know that we'll never need to buy another book nor quote another famous teacher. Sometimes the messages we're seeking from the wise ones have really been within us all this time. We just have to look inside.

Closing Blessing: Socrates is said to have said that 'True wisdom comes to each of us when we realise how little we understand about life, ourselves and the world around us'. May we in the week ahead be joyously aware of how little we know, may we rejoice in accessing our inner fountains of wisdom, and may we give thanks for the wisdom of the ages, all around us and in all those we meet. May all that true wisdom be ours. Amen, go well and blessed be.

‘Everyday Wisdom’

During our ‘Messages from the Wise Ones’ service we asked people what everyday wisdom they have learned and here are some of their replies.

I have learned that:

- I make mistakes and it's ok
- This is a BIG world
- People are more often kind than otherwise
- Animals teach us how to be without need of words
- There are places for other Gods in our world
- We can learn a lot from cats
- Simple emojis sent by text created connection
- It's not necessary to cry over spilt milk (at tea and coffee time after the service!)
- I still have a lot to learn
- We have two ears and one mouth for a reason – so we can listen twice as much as we talk
- I have learned that I will have a nicer, calmer day if I am on time

‘Shared Pulpit’

Spiritual Development and Worship Service Training in April and May

Rev Kate Dean, Temporary Minister at Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead, will be leading a series of workshops and facilitated sessions to help Unitarians reflect on their spiritual journey and consider approaches to taking part in a Sunday service. Weekly sessions will take place on Monday evenings. In addition, there will be two Sunday afternoon workshops looking at how to prepare and lead a service.

Shared Pulpit: Six Monday Evenings from 4th April onwards

These sessions aim to help us to explore our personal and spiritual development by examining our spiritual journeys. Discoveries could be used as a basis for a sermon or address, but there is really no obligation to lead a service.

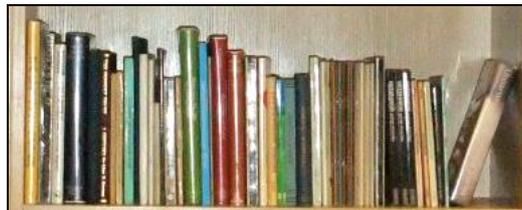
Worship Workshops: Sunday Afternoons on 17th April and 8th May

The first Worship Workshop on 17th April will look at the nuts and bolts of putting together a Sunday service. In the second on 8th May, we'll explore alternative forms of worship, including Table Service (set around a meal), Cafe Connect (discussions/sharing, similar to Death Cafe), engagement groups and the Chapel's own evening service.

You'll benefit most by attending as many of the sessions as possible, but you won't be required to attend all the sessions!

**For more information and to sign up, please contact Kate:
revkatedean@gmail.com or 07870 322 519**

New Library Book God Is Watching You: How the Fear of God Makes Us Human



Thanks to Mike Killingworth we have a new book by Dominic Johnson to borrow in our church library down in the basement. According to its publishers, this book

- Proposes a new theory of the origins and evolution of not only religion, but also human cooperation and society
- Explores how fear of supernatural punishment exists within and outside of religious contexts
- Uses an interdisciplinary approach that draws on new research from anthropology, evolutionary biology, experimental psychology, and neuroscience

It's just the kind of topic we Unitarians like to think about so watch out for a service on this theme before too long and do borrow it, or any other books, from the library. There are some great titles down there on the shelves.

‘Finding Our Voice’ Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



Sundays 17th April and 15th May 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.

Services at Essex Church



Sunday 3rd April, 11am – ‘Leftovers’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Unitarian Universalist minister Gordon McKeeman says ‘in making a life, we’re all cooking with leftovers from childhood, even infancy. The longer we’re at it, the more leftovers there are... You open the door, and you are faced with the problem, “*What can I make of it?*” Let’s consider this big question together.

Sunday 10th April, 11am – ‘Freedom in Faith’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The first of three services exploring what we Unitarians bring to the world. For centuries Unitarians have encouraged people to explore faith in freedom. But what does that mean in 21st century Britain.

Sunday 17th April, 11am – ‘Celebrating Life’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Unitarians offer people the opportunity to create unique ceremonies to mark life’s transitions and encourage people to become celebrants. Power then is shared, not held by just a few.

Sunday 24th April, 11am – ‘Simple Gifts’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Carole Grace

How shall we find our unique gifts and use them to make the world a better place. With a collection for Simple Gifts the Unitarian social action project based in Bethnal Green.



‘There have not been many moments in my life in which I ever imagined the life that I am living now, and so I am cautious about predicting what may or may not happen to me next. The best things in my life have all been a surprise to me, and I have learned just to be still and be ready.’

Robert Benson

Good Cause Collection of the Month

‘Simple Gifts’

Unitarian Centre for Social Action



Collection on Sunday 24th April

Simple Gifts works in one of the most deprived boroughs in London and from its small beginnings it has rekindled the aspirations of the original Mansford Street Unitarian church to help the local community. We run ESOL English language classes, a Sewing Club, a lively Afterschool Club for children and a New Neighbours, Old Neighbours community lunch.

SimpleGifts has been running community programmes from its premises – generously donated by the Chalice Foundation – along with providing training at district and national Unitarian events. Dozens of children, parents, elders, new migrants and other local residents benefit from the supportive programmes run each week at the centre. Its future success is entirely dependent on donations from people like you, which is why we’re asking for your support this spring!

As well as looking for donations, SimpleGifts is also very keen to recruit volunteers! Programmes run during the day Monday-Thursday so if you are available there are lots of different kinds of volunteer roles you could try.

For more information see: www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk
or contact Ann Howell at ann@simplegiftsucsa.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:

December – Glass Door (local homeless charity) - £374.93

January – Unitarian Youth Programme - £666.37