



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: April 2019

What's On...

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

Thursday 4th April, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'The Heroic Journey' with Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7th April, 11am-noon
'Great Lives'
Led by Jane Blackall and
Members of the Congregation

Sunday 7th April, 12.45-1.45pm
Concert after Church

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

Sunday 14th April, 11am-noon
'Memorable Unitarians'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14th April, 12.30-1.15pm
'Find Your Voice'
Singing Class with Margaret

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

Friday 19th April, 12.15 for 12.30-1.30pm
Good Friday Gathering

Sunday 21st April, 11am-noon
'Easter Service: Us and Jesus'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st April, 12.30-2pm
Congregational Easter Lunch

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

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

Sunday 28th April, 11am-noon
'What Makes A Life Great?'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 28th April, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation

A Date for Your Diary:
Sunday 12th May, 12.30pm
Essex Church AGM

Great Lives

A Message from our Minister

'What makes any life 'great' and who decides?' are some of the questions we'll be asking during this month's ministry theme of 'Great Lives'. Why not take a moment, as I've just done, to make a list of people whose lives you'd describe as 'great'. My list includes some very obvious famous people, whose lives have made a profound difference to the lives of others. Significant leaders who changed the course of history, brought about social change, transformed the society in which they lived.

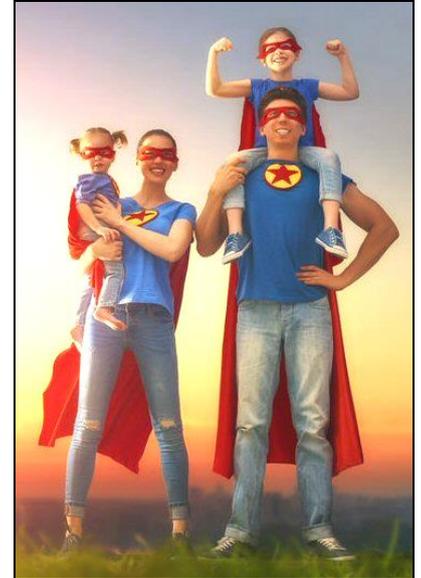
I wonder if your list includes any film stars or TV personalities, sports people or pop stars?

You're reading this in a church newsletter so I'm guessing that celebrity culture is not top on your list of interests. But if you *are* a fan of Love Island, please know that you'll always find a welcome here with Kensington Unitarians. We already have a lively bunch of toe-tapping *Strictly Come Dancing* fans.

Some cultural theorists have suggested that our religious impulses are sometimes now channelled into a fascination with famous people; that our societal obsession with certain individuals is akin to worship. But some celebrities' rise to, and fall from, fame can be so very fast. Some objects of our worship may change quite rapidly, whilst others endure. Greatness is often intertwined with power. Perhaps true greatness could be said to involve the use of one's power for the greater good of all rather than for self-interest. As our politicians struggle to reach consensus, some of us yearn for inspired leadership, which holds 'the greater good of all' as a guiding principle. Yet we know that every human is flawed, that every life has its shadowy, hidden elements, inextricably combined with all that seems impressive and brilliant.

Perhaps the best we can aim for is to bring back to ourselves our projections on to others, to be inspired by the qualities we admire in great people and to strengthen those elements in ourselves. As we mark the Christian festival of Easter this month, we Unitarians will be pondering what we know of the historic Jesus, a minor celebrity in his own time, yet with a worldwide following two thousand years after his death. Do come and join us at various activities in April, including our *bring and share* lunch after the Easter Sunday service, a singing recital, dance classes, a Sunday conversation about great lives, and a whole month of thought-provoking spiritual gatherings with singing, silence, words and prayers. You'll be most welcome, however great or small you feel yourself to be.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



In this month's newsletter...

* Good Friday Gathering * Children's Group Easter Break * 'Healing Hugs' * Sustainable Living * Invitation to a Private View of Heidi's Climate Change Paintings * Congregational Lunch * 'A Special Visit: Auroville' by Diana Halfnight * London Playback Theatre * Heart Meditation * The Prayer of Jesus * Unitarian Women's Group Conference on 'Women and Ageing' * Sunday Tea Dance in May * 'Oops!' address 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 Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sunday Conversation

Sunday 28th April from 12.45 to 2.00pm



Why not bring your lunch and stay behind after the service on 28th April for our regular Sunday Conversation in connection with this month's ministry theme of 'Great Lives'. Please come prepared to talk for a minute or two about a life you consider great or what qualities make a life great for you. All are welcome.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

7th April: Michaela von Britzke
14th April: Julia Alden
21st April: Brian Ellis
28th April: Billy Jackson

Coffee:

7th April: Pat Gregory & John Humphreys
14th April: Maureen Cummings
21st April: Geoffrey Olans & Rebecca Hope
28th April: Nadia, Enea & Greta

Greeting:

7th April: Liz Tuckwell
14th April: Roy Clark
21st April: Billy Jackson
28th April: Maureen Cummings

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you want to sign up for one of the forthcoming slots.

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Healing Hugs'



Varinder sent in this quote from an article in Stylist magazine:

'Had surgery? Try a really physical therapy: hugs. Research by scientists at the University of Rome found that a hormone secreted when we embrace a loved one can actually speed up the healing process of wounds and encourage a faster return to full health. Oxytocin, a neurotransmitter that creates bonding feelings when it's released, also doubles up as a secret weapon on the road to recovery. It activates regulatory cells in the immune system, relieves pain and defends against infections – and all you have to do is hug someone you care about'.

Good Friday Gathering

Friday 19th April, 12.15 for a 12.30 start,
finishing by 1.30pm (note change to time)



An opportunity for reflection: with music, poetry and stillness to accompany the Gospel narratives of Jesus' death.

Congregational Lunch

After the Service on Easter Sunday, 21st April



We will be having a congregational bring-and-share lunch after the service on Easter Sunday. Please look out for the sign-up sheet in early April and let us know what food or drink you plan to contribute (preferably something easy to serve, from the container you bring it in, so as to avoid congestion in the church kitchen!) Do feel free to bring your friends along – the more the merrier!

Children's Group Easter Break



Nadia and Enea our children's leaders will be taking a well-earned break over Easter so there'll be no children's group on April 14th or 21st. Young people will be welcome to come along to church as always and we'll have some simple activities for them to do in the service. There may be chocolate eggs to find in the church garden on Easter Sunday, if our fox hasn't eaten them.

'Heart and Soul' Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 4th April and 2nd May, 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This month Sarah Tinker will be leading Heart & Soul with the title 'The Heroic Journey'. The contemplative hour will be followed by time for refreshments (home-made cake) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you'd like to have a go at co-leading a Heart and Soul session, or doing a reading, please get in touch with Sarah or Jane to find out more.

Invitation to a Private View

New Work by Heidi Ferid & Louise Whittles

Wednesday 24th April, 6.30-8.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, London NW3 1LT



Heidi's work for this exhibition is about climate change. Exhibition continues 26th, 27th, 28th from 12 pm to 5pm. The nearest tube station is Hampstead (Northern Line).



Thematic Ministry



Get in touch! We three meet regularly as a team to plan services and other activities around our monthly themes and it's always more interesting when other people have made suggestions too. So do have a look through the themes for the year ahead and let us know if there's a particular song, poem or other reading you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering. If you took part in our March readers' workshop you'll perhaps have a reading you want to bring to a service soon. Or maybe you'd like to play an instrument or lead a meditation. Let us know. Here is a list of our remaining themes for 2019: Relating and Relationships (May); Coping and Flourishing (June); Curiosity and Wonder (July); Hopes and Dreams (August); Moving On &

Staying Put (September); Religious Life (October); Time and Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December). Here are some ways to explore April's theme of 'Great Lives':

- Make a list of ten people, alive or dead, you really admire. For each of them think of three particular qualities that you appreciate about them. Have another look at that list of qualities and imagine someone who knows you well pointing out that you too have some of their special qualities.
- Osho writes: "Listen to your being. It is continuously giving you hints; it is a still, small voice. It does not shout at you, that is true. And if you are a little silent you will start feeling your way. Be the person you are. Never try to be another, and you will become mature. Maturity is accepting the responsibility of being oneself, whatsoever the cost. Risking all to be oneself, that's what maturity is all about." How might you be a little more 'you' this month? What differences might other people notice if you were more 'yourself'?
- Modern western society has been described as a celebrity culture or a cult of celebrity. Our media is filled with stories of the lives of others. We watch celebrities being idolised and then sometimes reviled. How do you respond to all this? Have you ever enjoyed reading *Hello! Magazine*?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

'Andalusian Memories' by John Hands and Heidi Ferid Book Launch in aid of Red Cross



Thank you to John Hands and Heidi Ferid for their recent 'Andalusian Memories' book launch which raised £186.50 for the Red Cross Clara Barton Fund working to support lives in Mozambique, Yemen & Syria.

London Playback Theatre



Friday 17th May, 7.30pm 'Relating and Relationships'

London Playback Theatre is a team of internationally experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators, and therapists. We create spontaneous, improvised theatre through a unique collaboration between performers and audience. We encourage people to share their real life stories - through the magic of theatre - we bring those stories to life. Our work offers opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of each other and to develop authentic ways of communicating. As an audience member you are not in the spotlight unless you choose to put up your hand to share something - you will be engaged in the whole experience as friendly witness - and you can stay for conversation afterwards. Playback Theatre returns on 17th May, 21st June, 20th September, and 15th November. They offer their performances free of charge and welcome donations. For more information see:

Web: www.londonplayback.com/
Email: londonplayback@gmail.com

Concert after Church: Sunday 7th April from 12.45 to 1.45pm

Sandra Smith our pianist is bringing some more of her singing students to sing for us a delightful programme of solo songs and duets in this free concert after church (their first concert on 24th March is pictured below). There will be a retiring collection for the Red Cross Clara Barton Appeal to help with recovery work after Cyclone Idai in south east Africa. All are welcome to come along.



Worship that Works:

Equipping Unitarians to lead High-Quality Services through Reflective Practice



Saturday 21st September – 10.30am until 3pm
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead, NW3 1NG

Save the Date: This autumn's LDPA quarterly will feature a whole-day training session introducing participants to best practice in Unitarian worship. This will be particularly beneficial for anybody who would like to be involved in leading worship in their own congregation or in churches around their district. It would also be useful for people who already lead worship and who would like to develop their skills and share hints and tips with other Unitarians. However, all who enjoy Unitarian worship and would like to think about it more in a structured way are also welcome to attend. The workshop will have a particular focus on reflective practice and the meaning and purpose of the worship we do together. The workshop will also act as an introductory session for anyone wishing to undertake the Worship Studies Course (Foundation Step), a nationally recognised GA course, which we are intending to run once again in the LDPA at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, between autumn 2019 and spring 2020. The remainder of the course will be run over three further Saturdays, by a variety of expert tutors, and we would be glad to hear early expressions of interest from any who might wish to sign up.

Unitarian Women's Group Conference
Weekend of 18th to 20th October 2019
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow

'Women and Ageing'



Women of all ages are welcome to this weekend of friendship. We will be looking at the joys and concerns of ageing through workshops, discussion, story-telling and women's experience. The conference will be facilitated by Cathie Masztalerz and Sara Wilcox. Alongside exploration of the issues raised, there will be fun and laughter!

Single or shared standard room	£132
Single occupancy of standard room	£142
Shared or single en-suite	£142
Single occupancy of twin en-suite room	£152

Conference fee (payable on arrival): £10

Booking: Stella Burney: info@thenightingalecentre.org.uk
 or 01298 871218 (accommodation) and register with
 Margaret Robinson: margaretrobinson81@gmail.com

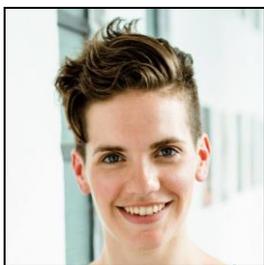
Sunday Tea Dances at Essex Church: Latin, Ballroom and Line Dance for All!

Next Dance is on Sunday 5th May, 2-5pm – in aid of Stonewall Housing
Starting with a dance lesson for complete beginners at 2.15pm



We invite you to our next Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance in aid of Stonewall Housing. There will be tea, cake, partner dancing and a few line dances from 2-5pm. All are welcome - complete beginners to life-long dancers alike - and even if you think you have two left feet this will be a relaxed and welcoming space for all to enjoy. The afternoon will begin with a dance lesson (cha-cha-cha!) led by Rachel Sparks.

Book now to come to this fun event in aid of a good cause (£5 of the door price goes to Stonewall Housing, a charity providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people fleeing violence, harassment and abuse). There's no need to bring a partner so just come as you are - do tell your friends though - the more the merrier! We encourage gender neutral partnering which means anyone can lead/follow during the partner dances. We are also family-friendly so children come for free with any paying adult. Tickets are limited and cost £12 in advance (£15 on the door). Book online: www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk/book-online. **Members of the congregation get free admission.** You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to help raise money for our nominated charity and of course donations to this good cause are very welcome. If you have any questions do email Rachel on hello@rachelsparksdance.co.uk



A Message from Rachel Sparks:

We are celebrating two years of Sunday Afternoon Tea Dances at Kensington Unitarian Church! It has been our intention to help build bridges between communities and this has only been made possible by the hospitality and support of the church. My aim as a dance teacher is to create safe social spaces for people to enjoy the benefits of dancing, particularly the LGBTQ+ community and others that can feel isolated; and I feel that the Unitarian ethos really supports an atmosphere of compassion and acceptance. For those enjoying learning to dance, on the other side of London I'm also working with Simple Gifts Unitarian Centre for Social Action in Bethnal Green and delivering regular group classes - details of all my offerings can be found on www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk. I look forward to dancing with you again on 5th May!

Tickets: £12 in advance, £15 on the door (free entry to members of Essex Church)

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

Save the Dates: 5th May, 22nd September and 1st December 2019



Sustainable Living



We had a weekend filled with both fun and challenge, working with the Youth Group at FUSE. The venue was inspiring, with excellent facilities, including a games room. The beach and pier were only metres away.

Our theme looked at how we could reduce waste and pollution. It soon became clear that reducing our consumption was paramount, followed by increased / better reusing and recycling of the items we have. The tragedy of single use plastics, creating and not recycling food waste and the failure to recycle aluminium cans were also passionately discussed.

On Sunday morning the youth team presented some facts and challenged the conference members. There was a clear focus on action. What to do? What changes would each person undertake? Stop! Buy fewer new items, no longer choose single use plastics, particularly drinks bottles and plastic bags. Be more efficient with paper (use both sides) and properly recycle. The team ended with a highly emotional song they created to highlight the impact of ocean pollution. It was a great weekend and all the young people hope to attend again next year. Come and join us!

James Blair and Jennifer Canfield

Eco-Church

Here at Essex Church we're probably ready to take the Eco-Church survey and let everyone know what steps forward we've made in recent years. Our fuel comes from a green energy provider and we're fitting more LED light bulbs that are much cheaper to run. We're hopeful that our more energy efficient heating system and programmable thermostat is reducing heating costs and we've fitted some double glazed windows. Do you remember how cold the toilets used to be?!

Our biscuits come from Fairtrade companies and most of our teas and coffee are Fairtrade and organic. Our toilet roll and office printing paper is recycled. Our bin bags are biodegradable. Our washing up liquid and hand soap are eco-friendly and we buy them in bulk to reduce packaging. We order all these things through SUMA, a wholefood co-operative. Our garden is tended so that wildlife is cared for.

What next? If environmental concerns are important to you too, let us know and let's see how we can encourage each other to live more sustainably here on our planet earth home.

Jenny and Sarah

OneLight Gathering

Friday 12th April 6.45 for 7pm-8.30pm
Monthly Here at Essex Church



Led by Interfaith Ministers Rev Alison Trower and Rev Amy Firth this service will include music, prayer, reflection, silence, community connection and the beautiful Threshold Choir. Suggested donation: £5. You are welcome to arrive from 6:45pm and the gathering will be completed by 8:30pm with tea and treats. For more information see the OneLight website which helpfully includes all the resources they use in their gatherings:

www.onelightgathering.co.uk

early blossoms

open
bright white

silent white

each white
petal

light lays on waiting

before
they
cede
to the
seduced
flowers
a mystery
rich dark

latent dark

arcane dark
fruit

set to regain the future

Brian Ellis

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



Yemen Crisis Appeal Clara Barton Fund



Collection on Easter Sunday 21st April

Yemen is the world's single largest humanitarian crisis. More than 80 per cent of the population urgently need emergency aid. Around 20 million people do not have enough nutritious food and more than half of the population live without clean water. The worst cholera epidemic ever recorded is still active in Yemen. There have been over one million suspected cases and more than 2,250 deaths. Extreme hunger, disease and conflict are killing or injuring an estimated 75 people every day. The Red Cross works with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Yemen Red Crescent. Together they provide food, water, medical help & essential household items.

WWW: donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/yemen-crisis-appeal

Recent Charity Collections:

January 27th – **Hope Not Hate** – £193.98

February 24th – **Unitarian Youth** – £174.21

March 24th – **Steiner School Trip** – £198.48

'Everything that changes and ends evokes the archetype of renewal, shown in the mythic theme of resurrection. To let go of having things remain the same, to be open to change, to accept the varieties of human predicaments as fully legitimate, is rebirth into a spiritual world. The fact of renewal is itself an antidote to despair, a foundation for our belief that we never give up on the potential for redemption in anything or anyone.'

David Richo

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 14th April and 19th May 2019
(please note irregular date in April due to Easter)
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church



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

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



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 21st April, 19th May 2019**

Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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

Cost £10 for drop-ins (£8 to concessions / church members) or a block of 5 classes for £40 to use within a 3-month period.

'To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty; To find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.'

Bessie A Stanley
(quote sent in by Carolyn Appleby)

A Special Visit: Auroville



My time in India is always joyous and in recent years I have been fortunate to explore many different places in southern India.

My friend Meera, who originally hails from Tamul Nadu, is an absolute font of knowledge on Indian folklore and stories of all the avatars, and the history of Hinduism which, to me, has many of the same values as Unitarianism.

Auroville in Pondicherry is an international community established in the late sixties by The Mother. She was a spiritual teacher alongside Sri Aurobindo, both of whom were committed to the development of higher states of consciousness for humanity.

Auroville has long held a fascination for me and I was delighted that we could include a visit in our itinerary this year.

It is all that I had imagined and wandering through the grounds we both felt a complete sense of peace and serenity. The banyan tree is regarded as sacred in India and The Mother chose this particular tree, standing alone on a barren plateau on the Bay of Bengal, to be the geographical centre of Auroville.

I recommend viewing the website to learn more:
www.auroville.org

Diana Halfnight

LONDON Heart Meditation



*Using ancient rhythms,
played on a frame drum, the
classes will help you focus on your
heart beat, enabling you to start on a
journey of self-discovery, to uncover your true potential.*

Beginners Course in Heart Meditation

Classes Held on Various Tuesdays

Next: 2nd, 16th, 30th April from 6.30-7.30pm
Downstairs in the Library Here at Essex Church

If you're interested in tapping into a lasting source of inner-peace, and beginning a journey of self-discovery then come and join this Heart Meditation course for beginners. Using ancient rhythms played on a frame drum, the teacher will guide you on a step-by-step process for quietening your mind and truly 'listening to your heart'. Held on various Tuesday evenings, from 6.30pm-7.30pm, first class is free and donations are welcome thereafter.

Beverley Eve

To confirm course dates and book a place email:
infoheartmeditation@gmail.com

For more information visit: www.heartmeditation.eu

Progressive Christianity Network Conference:

'Religion and Atheism - Beyond the Divide?'

Saturday 8th June 2019, 11am-4pm

**French Protestant Church of London,
Soho Square, London W1D 3QD**

This conference offers an opportunity to engage with four speakers in a conversation about religion, atheism, seeking ways to dialogue and to search for meaning. It is hoped that, in our increasingly tribalistic world, this day will offer possibilities to go beyond the divides which separate us and to seek out areas of mutual agreement and understanding. The speakers at this day conference are Julian Baggini, Fiona Ellis, Harriet Harris and Richard Holloway.

Tickets are £20 (PCN members £15, full-time students £5)
Book via the PCN website - www.pcnbritain.org.uk – or email
info@pcnbritain.org.uk / call 01594 516528 for more info.

The Prayer of Jesus

In our March services we have used different versions of the Lord's Prayer each week. The most well-known version of this prayer probably bears little relation to the prayer that Jesus may have taught his followers, in spoken Aramaic, all those centuries ago. 'Our father that art in heaven' is the work of 17th century Bible translators. And yet in challenging circumstances these words have comforted me. Do you have particular words of prayer that comfort you? Is The Lord's Prayer important to you? Do some of these alternative versions appeal to you more?

Beloved,
Your wish is our wish
Your dreams and hopes for the world, mine also.
Nurture our soul
Release our mistakes and relinquish our greed.
Bless our living
Now and always
Amen.

Winnie Gordon

Abba, amma: source from whom I came.
I reverence your name.

Your child indeed,
I pray you to meet my need

from your bountiful store:
neither less nor more.

I confess my greed, the way I feed
my desires which then inflate my need,

blotting out care of the self and awareness of the other -
my sister, father, mother, brother.

Out of the largesse of your grace,
give us all a place

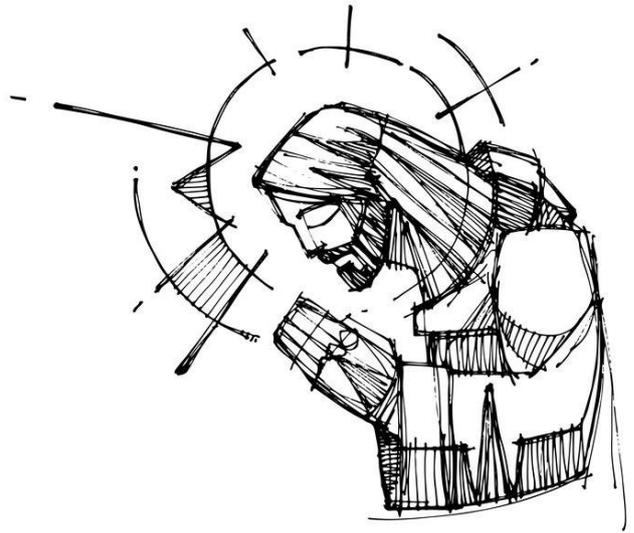
at your overflowing table.
Feed us, that we may become able

to quieten our own hungers,
attend to others, both near ones and strangers.

May we so linger in love
at your banquet - no hurry to move -

until we are filled with your joy
rising within and between us - pure, unalloyed.

Nicola Slee



Heavenly Mother, heavenly Father,
Holy and blessed is your true name.
We pray for your reign of peace to come,
We pray that our good will be done,
Let heaven and earth become one.

Give us this day the bread we need,
Give it to those who have none.
Let forgiveness flow like a river through us,
From each one to each one to each one.

Lead us to holy innocence
Beyond the evil of our days,
Come swiftly Mother, Father, come!
For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy-
Forever your name is All in One.

Parker J Palmer

Spirit of Life, the source of our being,
Where goodness and creative loving kindness dwell.
Help us to create a better world,
Where all creatures have food, shelter and warmth.
But remembering our frailties as humans,
So forgiving others as we forgive ourselves,
Let our conscience and reason
Lead us into paths of goodness and right conduct,
Where our fellowship of love
And service to humanity
Will lighten the darkness of the world
For ever and ever, amen

Lesley McKeown

'Feeling hopeless – be it repressed people in other lands or here in our own country – can cause people to lash out in violent ways, [towards others or towards themselves]. The resurrection story as it is celebrated is no longer primarily about new life 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. It is about finding life in each and every age amidst that which was or seems dead or hopeless! When you hear of something bad happening we wonder: "Why is life so difficult for so many?" "Why can't we be kinder to one another?" "Why is there so much selfishness in the world?" "How can we feel better about humanity?" My message today is not that we should, "always keep on the sunny side of life." That is not the message of the resurrection metaphor. Rather, the message is that even in the midst of that which is dead, even in the face of death, our own or that of someone we love, there can be the promise of life continuing. And the message of the resurrection is that regardless of the challenges or disappointments we face... there is hope.' – **Charles J. Stephens**

'Oops!'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker
From the service on Sunday 10th March

So in today's service I've already admitted setting fire to a friend's kettle and a bit of their kitchen. This is not the worst thing I've done in life but I'm not prepared to confess my worst blunders in front of you lot. Though I'd be very interested to hear about some of your life mistakes over a cup of tea later! There's no Unitarian tradition of confession though. Those of you who come from the Catholic tradition can probably tell me the downside of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, also known as confession, the making of ritual space for truth to be told safely and in privacy, the use of prayer to make amends, to right wrongs and to lift burdens of guilt and shame. As an outsider I can see the appeal of confession.

The Jewish ritual of atonement also appeals to me. Each autumn, in the days leading up to Yom Kippur the day of atonement, people will seek to make amends for wrongs committed during the past year. Where possible they will forgive those who have wronged them.

To be human is to make mistakes and we know that it's psychologically healthy to admit that. We know that striving to be perfect is psychologically damaging. It's not possible to be perfect and if we push children too hard to aim for perfection it can hurt them. If we're criticised too much when we're young and pushed too hard we may keep that pressure on ourselves into our adult lives and find ourselves never quite satisfied with what we've achieved, we may find ourselves troubled and burdened by our inevitable mistakes and failings. We may carry our errors around for far too long.

Healthier to accept that all of us make mistakes, healthier to acknowledge our shadowy aspects, that counterbalance all our efforts to be good, to be successful, to be nice.

Healthier to accept that life itself involves risk, risks of all sorts. If we carry a bottle of milk we risk spilling it. If we start painting our bedroom we risk dropping paint on the carpet. If we make friends we risk being emotionally hurt from time to time or risk hurting others. If we speak out about something we care passionately about we risk sounding foolish or having people disagree with us.

On the first Thursday of every month at 7pm we hold our Heart and Soul alternative spiritual gathering here at Essex Church, linking in with our monthly theme. This last Thursday Jane Blackall led us in an exploration of the word *sorry* – is it the hardest word to say? I shared that having worked with children over many years it's often a far too simple word to say – *soooooorry*, said in a not very sorry way at all. As a parent and grandparent I've had to develop the message that most apologies generally need



following up with action to make amends, to clear up the mess of the proverbial spilt milk, to listen to someone whose feelings have been hurt by my clumsy words or actions.

And most of us know, don't we, that some damage can never be put right. Even so I remain committed to the possibility of restorative justice. Later this month we'll hear more about schemes that bring criminals together with those they have harmed and how healing that can sometimes be for all involved.

So when we make mistakes we may need to own up for what we've done, we may need to confess, and sometimes that confession starts with ourselves – because we can off-times deny the errors we have made even to ourselves. Once we have told the truth, we may need to apologise to those we have wronged, we may be able to put things right, or to make amends in some other way.

And then we can learn from our mistakes. I promise you I have never put an electric kettle on a gas hob ever again. I have only ever driven off once with a boxed game of Monopoly on the car roof. I wish all my mistakes in life had only happened once, but that wouldn't be real life would it. I wonder if you are as aware in your own life as I sometimes am of mistakes I keep on repeating. Perhaps those are the lessons we have much to learn from – chances to learn about our personalities and our upbringing and our ways of being in this world. And we know all too well that some wrongs are deliberate and some errors can never be put right.

This week saw the start of Lent in which Christians remember the days leading up to Jesus' death. The gospel narratives show humanity at our worst – the fickle crowds, the friends that betray, the lies that are heard and acted upon, the abuse of power. Sounds a bit like life today doesn't it. So maybe this is as good a time as any to explore our theme of forgiveness and ask what that might mean for our own lives at this time. And in a world where we all make mistakes, let's nurture those gracious gifts of self-forgiveness, along with understanding for the blunders of others. Amen

'We will need to find our own authority and our own greatness of heart. *"Be a lamp unto yourself, make of yourself a light"* were the last words of the Buddha. No teacher or outside authority can give us the truth or take it away. In the end we will find that our heart holds the simple wisdom and unshakable compassion that we have sought all along.'

Jack Kornfield

'May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.'

John O'Donohue

Services at Essex Church in April



Sunday 7th April, 11am
'Great Lives'

**Service led by Jane Blackall and
Members of the Congregation**

In this service we'll think about the lives of some moral and spiritual exemplars which might inspire us to greater things in our own lives. Featuring personal reflections from congregation members Annie Fowler, Jennifer Young, Marc Viera, John Humphreys & Brian Ellis.

Sunday 14th April, 11am
'Memorable Unitarians'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

An opportunity to celebrate those whose liberal faith shaped their lives and their actions.

Sunday 21st April, 11am
'Easter Service: Us and Jesus'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

On this special day in the Christian calendar each of us can re-consider our own relationship with the historical Jesus.

Sunday 28th April, 11am
'What Makes a Life Great?'
Service led by Sarah Tinker and Jeannene Powell

What qualities do you think make a life truly great?

Warden's Column: Secret Cinema at Essex Church?



Last New Year's Eve the church was hired for an ecstatic dance event. They put a lot of effort into lighting the space atmospherically and as part of that they set up a projector on top of the hymn book cupboard to play on the wall behind the altar. At that distance the screen was so big it practically filled the wall and I suddenly realised how much potential the space had as a cinema.

Unfortunately, the church space is a bit low on sockets so to plug in the projector a lead had to be trailed across the doorway. It didn't really matter for that event as they were using both rooms with the partition open and wanted everyone to go in and out through the hall - but it would be a bit awkward in general.

I mentioned this to Simon when he was installing our Wi-Fi Booster in the same location & he said his friend Michael was an electrician and could put another socket in neatly for us. So they came back today & after much debate about precisely where to put it (which Brian turned up just in time to get dragged into) we now have a new socket just above the entryphone on the wall beside the door.

It wouldn't just be useful for a projector of course - it's also a good location for any small piece of equipment to be placed on the adjacent shelf - but I must admit I would very much like to have the experience of watching a film in the church space someday (as I live at the church, it would be like having the biggest home cinema room imaginable :-)

Apparently you can't show films in a public space without paying a license fee to the copyright holder - but there are organisations set up to simplify this for community groups. I found one called "Cinema for All" which costs £65 to join and has a substantial number of films you can hire for £85 each - here's the full list: cinemaforall.org.uk/booking-scheme/all

Essex Church Film Club anyone?

Jenny Moy

Essex Church Membership and Contact Forms

It's that time again! Each year we ask members to re-affirm their membership and confirm their contact details by filling in a form (this year it will be golden yellow – please look out for it at church on Sundays – it's easy to fill in and hand back during coffee hour). Membership does not depend on you making a financial contribution to the work of the church, though of course we are very grateful for your regular donations, which make possible the ongoing work of the congregation. Membership is instead about affirming your personal commitment to this community and to the Unitarian ethos. Each member is a vital and valued part of this church and its work in the world. If you are new to the congregation, we ask you to attend for three months before applying to join, so that you can get a feel for what the church is about. If you have any questions about membership do have a chat with Sarah, Jane, or a member of the church committee to find out more.