



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: March 2018

What's On...

Thursday 1st March, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul: Feeling Good'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 4th March, 11am-noon
'Inside Illness'
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 7th March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 11th March, 11am-noon
'Healing and Health'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 11th March, 12.30-1pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Wednesday 14th March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 15th March, 7-9pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 18th March, 11am-noon
'Dimensions of Health'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18th March, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 18th March, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 20th March, 7-9pm
'How to be A Unitarian' Course
(*n.b. advance booking is essential*)

Wednesday 21st March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 22nd March, 7 for 7.15pm
'Singing for the Spirit'
with Corrina Dolso

Sunday 25th March, 11am-noon
'Connections Lost and Found'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
**Includes a charity collection
for Diversity Role Models**

Sunday 25th March, 12.45-2pm
Sunday Conversation:
On the theme of 'Health and Healing'.

Wednesday 28th March, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Friday 30th March, 1.00-200pm
Good Friday: Gathering to Witness

Sunday 1st April, 11am-noon
Easter Sunday Service
Followed by a Bring-and-Share Lunch

Health and Healing

A Message from our Minister

I'm hesitating in writing about this month's ministry theme of 'health and healing'. Who knows who might pick up this church newsletter and start reading? For anyone living with a chronic illness or a terminal diagnosis, or caring for someone whose life has been turned upside down by illness, this topic will be a sensitive one.

We'll be approaching the subject of health and healing from many different directions in the month ahead here at Essex Church, in Sunday services and small group conversations. If you have something to add to the conversation, do get in touch by phone or email, or arrange to come and have a cup of tea and a chat.

None of you need me to tell you that life itself is a terminal condition. None of us gets out of this adventure alive. And on the journey we'll have a host of medical conditions to deal with, distributed in a most unfair way. Some people spend much of their life in robustly good health, whilst others have the toughest of conditions to deal with – disabilities, pain, recurring illnesses, difficult medical interventions. Some of us will rarely need to see a doctor when others are dependent on medical professionals for support in managing their situations.

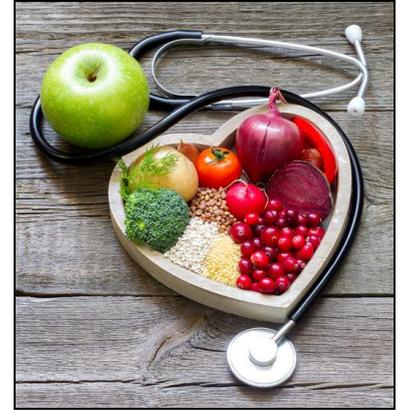
One of our recurring themes here at church is the value of telling our stories to one another, the benefits of sharing how life is for us. Health and illness are worthy subjects for this kind of personal sharing. Unless we tell one another how it is for us, we will have little idea what other people are dealing with in life. Let's take the time this month to listen a little more deeply, to explain more fully what we are experiencing.

Another theme we might consider is the inter-connection between all aspects of our being. We are physical beings, we are thinking beings, and we have a spiritual identity that embraces and transcends our bodies and our minds. In this spiritual realm lies the opportunity for health and healing, even in the midst of deepest suffering, but not the healing that makes everything better and promises that we'll live happily ever after. This kind of healing helps us find the path to wholeness in the midst of ill-health. Wholeness will be different for each of us in different circumstances. It may be discovering the courage that allows us to reach out for the help we need. It may be finding acceptance for that which is inevitable – a sense of being at peace with what is. Wholeness may encourage us towards forgiveness or some other resolution of issues that have long troubled us. It may be an opening of our awareness to our place in the greater scheme of things.

'We are such stuff as Dreams are made on, and our little lives are rounded with a sleep.'

I look forward to hearing from you and, for those able to join us here in church in London, do have a look inside at our activities for the month ahead, especially our marking of Easter and the longed for arrival of spring.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



In this month's newsletter...

* Good Friday – Gathering to Witness * Easter Lunch * 'How to be a Unitarian' Course *
Visit to the Mithraeum & London Museum * Annie Fowler on the Fort Lauderdale UUs in Florida
* Photos from the recent Inclusive Tea Dance * 'Grace' with London Playback Theatre *
'Sustainability Special' * Reflections on FUSE: 'Festival of Unitarians in the South East'
* Poem from Brian Ellis * 'Love Hurts... and Heals' by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and 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.



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Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 1st March, 5th April 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. March's Heart and Soul will be led by Sarah Tinker on the theme of 'Feeling Good'. This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made apple and sultana cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about our 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Easter Lunch

after service on 1st April



After the service on Easter Sunday (1st April) we will be holding a congregational bring-and-share lunch. Please keep an eye out for the sign-up sheet during March and let us know what food or drink you are planning to contribute to the occasion. To avoid chaos in the kitchen we encourage you to think about bringing items that are ready-to-serve from the containers you bring them in. As ever we will be grateful of any offers of help with clearing up on the day!

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

4th March: Alice Lambert
11th March: Rebecca Hope
18th March: Juliet Edwards
25th March: Gina Bayley

Coffee:

4th March: Helena Coope
11th March: Sue Smith
18th March: Richard Levy
25th March: Kate Brown

Greeting:

4th March: Brian Ellis
11th March: Liz Tuckwell
18th March: Sue Smith
25th March: Roy Clark

We circulate the rota list each month by email. Please contact Jane if you are willing to be on the rota mailing list.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Good Friday: Gathering to Witness



**Friday 30th March, 1-2pm at Essex Church
led by Sarah Tinker and Tristan Jovanović**

Join us for this small gathering of witness to the unjust death of Jesus and the unjust sufferings that we humans inflict upon one another. There will be chance to name particular areas of pain and struggle, to light candles and to bear silent witness together. With Easter readings and music and beautiful flowers to remind us of nature's gracious springtime gifts.

An Essex Church Cultural Outing: Visit to the Mithraeum and London Museum

Thursday 29th March at 11.00am



We have six free tickets to visit the Mithraeum – the re-discovered Roman Temple to Mithras which has been partially renovated beneath a City office block. Followed by a visit to the London Museum, offering a rare sighting of a tiny piece of London's Famous Fatberg and chance to examine the Museum's exhibition on women's suffrage, as well as other exhibits. First come, first served with the Mithraeum tickets. All welcome to then join us at the London Museum where we will have lunch. See Sarah or Brian for more information. We can travel together from the church or meet in the City.

**A New Six-Week Course Coming up
at Essex Church this Spring:**

'How to be a Unitarian' led by Jane Blackall and Sarah Tinker



**Tuesday Evenings from 20th March
to 24th April, 7-9pm, in the library**

We're planning a brand-new course at Essex Church this spring on 'How to be a Unitarian'! Of course there are many varied ways to go about it and we'll explore just a few possibilities together over six Tuesday evenings from mid-March to late-April.

Reasons why you might want to come to the course:

- Because you like coming to church... yet you feel a bit hazy about what it means to be Unitarian.
- Because you want to reflect on your own spiritual journey and moral values together with others.
- Because you want to explore the experience of being both spiritual *and* religious in community.
- Because you want to connect more deeply with fellow congregation members in a small group.
- Because you value Unitarianism and you want to play a more active part in helping it to thrive.

Whether you've been coming to church for 3 weeks or 30 years there will be something for you in this course. Even if you don't yet consider yourself a Unitarian, but you appreciate what we do here at Essex Church, and want to come along to the course anyway to find out more, please do sign up – the more the merrier!

We need at least eight people to sign up for this to run (you'd need to be able to commit to at least four of the six sessions) and numbers will be limited to twelve so **please do register for the course ASAP**. Email Jane Blackall (jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) if you would like to sign up or if you have any queries.

'Unitarians are a community of people who take their religion, or their spirituality, liberally. That is to say, we hold that all people have the right to believe what their own life-experience tells them is true; what the prompting of their own conscience tells them is right. We say that each person's spiritual or intuitive experience deserves respect; that everyone's deep reflection and reasoning on religious and ethical questions should be taken seriously. Unitarians form a movement that tries to put these affirmations into practice. Our local religious communities offer a setting where people can worship, explore, and share faith together in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual respect.' – Cliff Reed, in 'Unitarian? What's That?'

Thematic Ministry



Our ministry theme for March is 'health and healing'. One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. Below are some ideas of ways to explore our theme over the next month. Do get in touch if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering or maybe there's a piece you'd like to write for a future newsletter. Let us know. Themes coming up in the near future: April – 'Grace', May – 'Natural World / Earth', June – 'Creativity & Arts'. Here are some ways you might engage with this month's theme of 'Health & Healing'.

Draw a picture of yourself and mark on it your awareness of different bodily parts – places of pleasure, areas of concern, aspects of your-self that need loving attention or professional advice or assistance. Create a simple ritual to thank your body for all that it does for you.

One of the most healing actions we can sometimes take is to rest, but that is not always easy. We live in a frenetic world and we have busy minds that do not always let us be still and quiet. Do a 'rest inventory' this week and see how you could treat yourself more gently and bring greater ease into your life.

Dr. Yolanda Pierce suggests "Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound." Let us each find a trusted person we can speak to about our wounded places and about the pain we experience in life.

What are some of your favourite healing activities? Make a list of three healing actions that you enjoy in life and be sure to make time for them. Walking in the park? Eating good food that you cooked? Talking to a friend? Reading an inspiring book? What would be on your list?

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

A Visit to the Universalist Unitarian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida



Whilst being lucky enough to find myself in sunny Florida I decided to pop along to the local UU and was very glad that I made the trip. The first thing I noticed was the fabulous sign in the garden! I was warmly welcomed and I had emailed ahead to advise them I may pop along. The regular UU members tend to wear laminated name tags which they keep on hooks at the church; I was given a stick-on label which read 'Annie - From London'. This delighted a little girl there as her name was indeed London!

I would say there were maybe around 30 people there and numbers were slightly down as it was the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Susan Smith, the Minister, wears a clip on microphone and uses an AV system which displays the words to hymns and other 'pointers' throughout the Service. We were a diverse crowd and of course my favourite attendee was Lucky the Service Dog who goes every week with her owner, Richard. Richard is a lovely man who spoke openly to me about his recent encounters with cancer. He simply sparkles with the joy of being alive and was even kind enough to give me a lift home. Sitting behind me was a wonderful Native American man with a marvellous baritone voice and his name tag simply read 'Grandfather'.

In our Service sheets were strips of green paper on which we were invited to write things about which we felt blessed; these were collected and made into paperchains which were then hung on the Christmas tree - yes it was up already! As you enter their church they have a book for Joys & Concerns in which you are invited to write something which is read out during the Service but we also lined up to place little stones in water to silently recognise our joys and concerns. There was a generous offering of goodies to eat and drink afterwards as you might expect but I wasn't able to linger; my lunch date was beckoning!

Annie Fowler

Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance

Save the Dates: Sundays 6th May,
23rd September, 9th December 2018



Some photos from our recent tea dance on 11th February.

Essex Church Membership & Fundraising Drive



This year we're asking everyone to renew their membership of Essex Church by filling out a form that asks you more about you – ways you'd like to be contacted and ways you'd like to be more involved in the work and activities of this congregation. These bright **green** forms are available to fill in on Sunday mornings or we'll be in touch by phone or email with you. **If you'd like to become a member or renew your membership and nobody gets in touch with you, then please let us know.** Your membership matters to us and is a great way to demonstrate your support of our community and all it stands for.

This year we're keeping membership separate from fundraising. It doesn't cost anything to be a member though everybody's financial contributions are very helpful to us. We want to encourage people to think carefully about the financial support they can give our community and if possible to give a bit more. We've got important projects on the go and are increasing the hours worked by members of staff in order to get more done. Most of our income comes from our lettings but we want to ensure we can afford to continue giving free or reduced price meeting spaces to a range of community groups whose activities we support. We also want to keep our building in tip top condition and that requires lots of maintenance work. This year's two major projects are repairing the garden back wall and having all our electrical wiring checked before installing modern fuse boxes. Not exciting, but very important!

So please look out for our bright **yellow** fundraising letter and consider taking out a standing order or making a special donation if you can. Contributing to our Sunday morning collection is also much appreciated. Thank you to everybody who has already sent us a donation for this year. Your generosity helps to keep our Unitarian flame well and truly alight. (And Juliet our treasurer says: 'Can anyone who's a taxpayer please fill out the Gift Aid form on the back of our fundraising letter so our records are up to date.')

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Good Cause Collection of the Month



Collection on Sunday 25th March

Diversity Role Models (DRM) actively seeks to prevent homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in UK schools. LGBT+ youth are six times more likely to take their own lives. Two thirds of them suffer homophobic bullying at school. This can have a serious impact on their learning and achievement. DRM helps to stop bullying before it happens by educating young people about difference, challenging stereotypes and addressing the misuse of language. DRM workshops feature positive LGBT role models who speak directly to young people about their experiences. To date they've worked with over 220 schools and reached over 50,000 young people across the UK.

For more info see: www.diversityrolemodels.org

Recent Charity Collections:

December – **Glass Door (Local Homeless)** – £575
(including £175 donated by the *One Light Gathering*)

January – **Water Aid** – £169.74

February – **Kensington & Chelsea Mind** – £202.61

Inclusive Communion

Sundays 11th March, 8th April at 12.30pm



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

'Grace'

Your Stories in a Performance of Playback Theatre

Friday 20th April, 7.30pm at Essex Church



What does GRACE mean to you?

How have you experienced GRACE in your life?

It's not such an often-used word now as it was 200 years ago... The dictionary says 'elegance of movement', 'courteous good will', 'a divinely given talent or blessing', and 'the free and unmerited favour of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings'.

We have heard the saying "there but for the grace of God go I..." to acknowledge one's good fortune in avoiding another's mistake or misfortune. And something done 'with good grace, or bad grace' means something done in a willing and happy as opposed to resentful or reluctant manner.

So what is a story you could tell about GRACE?

We look forward to you joining us for a surprising and soul-satisfying evening of Playback Theatre. And do stay for refreshments afterwards for more conversation and convivial sharing on this rich topic.

This performance is free of charge / Donations are welcome.

London Playback Theatre Company is a team of internationally experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators, and therapists. We work with audiences in the telling and re-playing of their stories. We offer performances and workshops that provide a safe space for individual voices to be heard and collective themes to emerge. Through the spontaneity and vibrancy of improvisational techniques, we create theatre that engages audiences – body, mind and spirit. Our work offers opportunities for participants to deepen their understanding of each other and to develop authentic ways of communicating. We honour the multiplicity of voices in any group or context.

www.londonplayback.co.uk / londonplayback@gmail.com

AGM of the LDPA:

London & South Eastern Unitarian District
Saturday 17th March from 1.30pm
Croydon Unitarian Church
1, The Flyover, Croydon CR0 1ER

The AGM of the LDPA will be held on 17th March at Croydon Unitarian Church. The nearest station is East Croydon (approx.. 10 minutes' walk). The meeting is scheduled to start at 2:00pm. People are invited to arrive for tea and coffee from 1:30pm.

David and Ruby's Show



This photo gives a sense of the exuberant energy of David and Ruby's Little Big Show, filled with good humour and great tunes. Look out for their new show in the autumn.

Sustainability Special



David Talbot's re-usable coffee cup is a reminder to all of us that small changes may eventually make a big difference. Look out for further sustainability tips in future newsletters.

And thanks to Mark Franklin for pointing out to us the Anglican campaign for a Plastic-Free Lent. Here's what they say: Lent is the time when we remember the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, facing challenge and temptation. It is a time when we reflect on God's purpose for our life. This year we challenge you to give up single-use plastics – to reduce the actions which damage God's Creation.

Over 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced since the 1950s. That's enough plastic to cover every inch of the UK ankle-deep more than ten times over. Just 9% was recycled.

Here are a few of their suggestions for ways to stop using single use plastics: shop more in markets and less in supermarkets and remember to take your reusable shopping bag; avoid 'polyethylene' as an ingredient in body scrubs and other toiletries – they contain tiny plastic beads; use bar soap instead of liquid soap or buy in bulk with friends and reuse containers; avoid plastic pens and giveaways.

'Singing for the Spirit'

Thursday 22nd March, 7.15-8.15pm
(last in the present series)
Here at Essex Church



I've been using music from the Taizé tradition and other western music prayer chants, some with sacred texts accompanied on keyboard, and other simple acapella chants and rounds. The idea is to create a mild meditative state through the repetition of the songs followed by a short period of silence providing an atmosphere which is both informal but reflective. I provide the sheet music and I aim to keep the melodies simple enough to pick up instantly allowing room for people to add harmonies if they choose. There is no charge to attend, and if you'd like to come next month, and have a favourite chant then please bring it to share with the group! Please email me if you have any specific questions: corrina.dolso@btopenworld.com

Corrina Dolso

Warden's Column: Manic Wednesday



Back in October 2014 I wrote in this column about having 9 different groups using the church one Monday - Ashtanga Yoga, Monkey Music, Babybop, Dancing Angels, Chinese Choir, Feldenkrais, Tai Chi, Sufis and London Meditation Centre.

That record stood from then until last Wednesday, but has now been surpassed. On that day there were regular bookings from Ashtanga yoga, yoga with Catherine James, Nia dance, Little Foxes children's football club, Streetdance, Karate, Chi Gung, Alcoholics Anonymous and the London Meditation Centre - equalling the previous record of 9 - plus Jane made an all-day booking of the library & Sarah booked 2 hours in the Hall.

Thank you Jane and Sarah - I imagine this new record will remain unbroken for some time - possibly forever!

Jenny Moy

'Nobody gets everything they yearn for. I look at the world and see three sorts of people: those who dream boldly even as they realize that a lot of their dreams will not come true; those who dream more modestly and fear that even their modest dreams may not be realized; and those who are afraid to dream at all, lest they be disappointed. I wish for more people who dreamed boldly and trusted their powers of resilience to see them through the inevitable disappointments.'

Harold S. Kushner

LDPA Autumn Quarterly: Save the Date 'Circles of Connection' An Introduction to Engagement Group Facilitation Skills

**Saturday 15th September 2018 - 11am
arrivals for an 11.30am start until 3pm
(followed by worship and refreshments)**

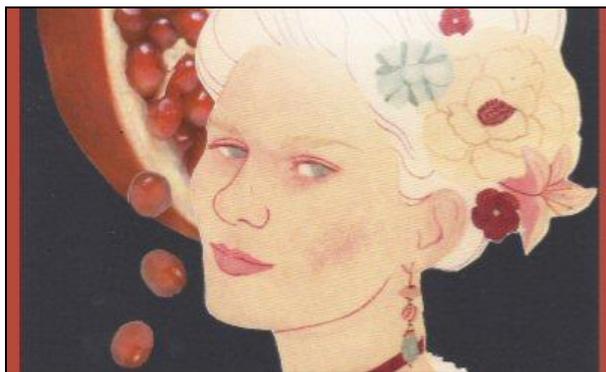


The term 'Engagement Groups' is given to a particular style of Unitarian small-group activity which has the intention to enrich the spiritual life of participants, cultivate right relationship, create community, and deepen participants' connection to each other and to their congregation. In this taster session at Essex Church, led by Jane Blackall, we will introduce some basic principles of Engagement Group facilitation, and give some pointers to further training opportunities and resources, in the hope that participants will be inspired to set up new Engagement Groups in their own congregations.

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

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

'Springtime and Creative Renewal' Intuitive Collage Workshop with Sandra Vigon



**Saturday 14th April, 9.30-4.00pm - Cost: £100
Held here at Essex Church (external event)**

In Greek myth Persephone is the Queen of the underworld. When she emerges each Spring she brings with her renewal, emergence of new life, potential and hope. Using the SoulCollage process participants will begin to create a personal set of cards depicting and symbolizing aspects of the personality, inner guides and significant figures. This is a fun and introverted way to mine inner resources creatively and develop a relationship to that source. No prior skills or knowledge necessary. For more information and to book contact Sandra Elsdon Vigon: svigon@sandravigon.com / 07913 821 626

FUSE 2018: Festival of Unitarians in the South East



I have been fortunate to have attended FUSE several times over recent years and have come to see it as something of a spiritual refuel! It is a great opportunity to meet and mix socially with fellow Unitarians from the Southeast, exchange ideas and explore faith in a beautiful country setting. As usual I enjoyed the mix of workshops and worship. This year I particularly derived benefit from Rev Jim Robinson's workshops on Beloved Community.

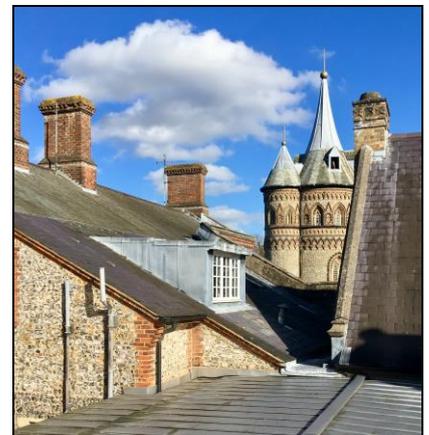
Roy Clark

This year's FUSE (Festival of Unitarians in the South East) weekend was my favourite. It might have had something to do with the upgraded bedrooms some of us were given in the old building Horsley Towers. The Towers were designed originally by Architect Sir Charles Barry who is perhaps best known for designing the Houses of Parliament and Highclere Castle (of Downton Abbey fame). A later Victorian owner, Lord Lovelace, added many gothic features and it's great to see this marvellous building in such good condition. This was the view from my bedroom window – so even though it looked like a room for one of the lesser servants in Victorian times it was still a big treat to stay in.

Sarah Tinker

I had a great time at FUSE. On Sunday morning I opened my bedroom window and over the courtyard, with its tremendous 'Pearly King & Queen' windows, I saw above the trees a huge rainbow – signifying our welcome of the LGBT community I thought. So beautiful.

Eliz Beel



I went to "The Spirit of the Land" workshop led by Sarah Tinker. This workshop was well attended, I suspect that many people were keen to take advantage of the sunny day and lovely, landscaped grounds. Sarah led us on a short walk around the grounds, giving us a chance to practice mindfulness and really look/smell/touch at what was around us. One highlight was when we linked hands around a giant redwood tree and someone found an appropriate prayer on her mobile phone to read out. The fact that the magnificent redwood tree would outlive all of us (barring accidents) and be admired by future generations yet unborn had a profound impact on me and made me think more deeply about mortality and eternity.

Liz Tuckwell



This year Jeannene and I once again took 'Heart and Soul' to FUSE so that members of congregations from across the district and beyond could get a taste of this alternative, contemplative, style of worship and see if it is something they might want to try out with their own home community. Despite being in a slightly inauspicious setting (an office-y conference room with swivel chairs where we couldn't light candles, not even for a chalice!) we held a lovely gathering on the theme of 'Encouragement'. Quite a few people came up to us afterwards excited about the prospect of adapting 'Heart and Soul' for their own situation so I'm hopeful that this style of spiritual gathering will continue to spread beyond Kensington.

Jane Blackall



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 18th March, 15th April 2018**

Midweek class on Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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

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

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

**Sundays 18th March and 15th April
2018 from 12.30pm to 1.15pm**



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

Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential.

Fun and achievement are guaranteed and sessions are designed for all, whatever your experience or ability.

Beethoven: The Creative Process



(Beethoven was thought to start work after a good breakfast, full English rather than continental, when he would go to the piano and compose)

one day, knew what he was after,
needed themes for the piano sonatas.

played awhile, didn't have to seek
too long for the 'Pathetique',
found the next phrases a little easier
made a start on 'quasi una fantasia',
harmonies peaceful and masterful
just what he needed for the 'Pastoral',
came across a tune that gave delight
eventually known as the 'Moonlight',
felt more cheerful and was full of zest
when he had inspiration for the 'Tempest',
played notes and chords he couldn't decline
that would be just right for the 'Waldstein'.

*(Here his house keeper knocked to tell him
the post had arrived and lunch was ready)*

later composing seemed a little harder
but he found a few bars of 'Appassionata',
gave old thoughts a quick review
used one or two in 'Les Adieu',
conceived some music without peer,
all the ideas for the 'Hammerklavier',
something arrived straight from heaven,
no name, but kept it for Opus 111.

*(Feeling he'd done a good day's work by now,
he nipped round to the Rose and Crown for a
swift pint with the lads before supper)*

tomorrow he thought he might see
whether he could knock off a symphony,
or maybe a better bet.....
would be to roll over the string quartets?

Brian Ellis

'Love Hurts...and Heals'

by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From the service on Sunday 11th February

The service is also available online as a podcast.

There's an old rule for leading popular worship services – send 'em home happy. The last hymn in a service is often chosen because it has an upbeat tempo and even if the sermon is dealing with serious issues, it's supposed to have a positive 'take home' message. So I did wonder if any of you would show up today for a service prophetically entitled 'Love Hurts'.

You are probably all experts on this topic anyway – because I reckon most human beings get to feel the pain of loving sooner or later in life. Most of us have experienced the death of one we love; most of us have gone through a love that's unrequited and felt the anguish of a rejected love. Most of us know the love that is born of idealism – a sense that our world could indeed be a better place ...if only... if only... and then had to live with disappointment of reality where things are not how we dream they might be.

This address has the title of 'Love Hurts ... and Heals' because I want us to consider love in all its contradictory forms. I've mentioned some of the ways that love hurts – loss, rejection, disappointment. Let's also remember the ways love has healed us in life – perhaps through more varied experiences – do any of these match with your own life? The healing love of kindness – that reaches us out to us when we are low and brings us renewed hope? The healing love of humour and absurdity – the laughter that takes our despair and turns it around? The healing love of the natural world that reminds us we are part of something so much greater than simply ourselves?

It's often said that our English language with its one word 'love' lacks a vocabulary for such a complex and varied human emotion. How can we compare someone exclaiming 'I love this new tablecloth' here at church – (which I do!) with the love of a long life partnership or the love of a child or a pet or a landscape or a sibling or a book we've just read or work that we cherish.

But we know that words are merely signposts – often inadequate signposts, pointing to inner experiences, which we struggle to articulate. And love as an emotion is a constantly changing experience. It contains polarities – love hurts and heals, love is hard work and also effortless, love can be both liberating and restricting. It is not 'either this or that' – love contains contradictions within itself just as we do – and our task is to explore the contradictions – move between the polarities, keep struggling to understand how a human experience can both hurt and heal.

So finding a satisfactory definition for love can be a challenge. I wonder how you'd define it. After a week of thinking about this – the best I've come up with so far is that love involves an open-hearted relatedness with someone or something – that might be our pet dog or a friend or London Transport buses or the South Downs; it may be an openhearted relationship with ourselves – the ability to engage in inner dialogue with ourselves which needs to exist if we are to move on to true dialogue with others.

We heard the story earlier on of the child annoying every one by playing a very loud drum. None of the suggested solutions worked – until Nasrudin came along, the holy fool, who gave the child the necessary tools to look inside the drum. We laugh because we know the curiosity of children. We laugh because we know that if a child takes a hammer and a chisel to a drum, that drum won't be making any more loud noises. But the joke's on us as adults – because many of us, (and I'm speaking about myself here) too often shy away from the deep inner work that the chisel, hammer and drum represent.



There can be a destructive quality to such inner inquiry – meaning a de-construction of tightly held opinions and fixed ways of being. These are times when faith may help us, by holding us firm when all else feels like it might fall apart. We sometimes here at Essex Church describe God as Love – and when I use such a description it's an attempt to express an all-encompassing holding of all that is. A sense that we are all in this together, and that there is a unity to all that is. This is not the unity of sameness but rather of mutuality – an understanding of difference within shared human experiences. That's the point David Blanchard was making in the reading we heard earlier on – 'we do have to be one another's valentines'. It's easy to love lovable people who love us. There's no challenge there. But the real spiritual work requires us to delve deeper and to find well springs of love for those we find difficult, those we disagree with. Safety warning – this does not mean we should make ourselves unsafe – some difficult people need healthy boundaries in relationship – but if we always avoid or back away from difficult people and difficult situations we are missing important opportunities for spiritual growth. If you're interested in thinking more about all this – let me recommend to you a slim volume from our library – written by our very own Jane Blackall – based on her research on this topic – God as Love.

I've read lots this week about the campaign for women's suffrage in this country in the 19th and early 20th centuries. There's a particular photo doing the rounds on the BBC website and others – it shows a parade of mostly women, carrying posters proclaiming Votes for Women. It's been pleasing me all week because the second poster in the procession advertises a public meeting to be held at our very own Unitarian Essex Hall, in central London. And it's true that many Unitarians campaigned for universal suffrage. And there were some who said it would bring about the ruin of society. There will always be differing opinions on any subject – what we have to do is listen out for the voices, sometimes the single voices, who are shouting at the rest of us to wake up and pay attention to the issues of our time.

I think of those campaigning at present on issues such as economic injustice, on the degradation of our environment – and the de-humanising of certain groups in our world society. The use of descriptive terms that soon sound derogatory – refugee, immigrant, economic migrant. Where is the love in these situations?

No easy answers to these sorts of issues. But that's not an excuse to ignore them. Rather a signal that there's work to be done – it's not often we set homework but on the back of today's hymn sheet there's a list of 'Some Loving Suggestions for Lent':

How may I be more loving during Lent

- ...to myself?
- ...to my loved ones?
- ...to those I find difficult?
- ...to my neighbourhood?
- ...to our society?
- ...to all living creatures?
- ...to our world community?
- ...to the natural world?

And let's not stop once we reach Easter. Let's try repeating these words every day for the rest of our lives: 'How can I be more loving?'

Services at Essex Church in March

Sunday 4th March, 11am
– ‘Inside Illness’

Service led by Jane Blackall

In this Sunday's service we'll reflect on the experience of illness. How does ill health – from the mildest lurgi to the most serious of life-threatening conditions – affect our way of being in the world and the way that other people relate to us? And how can we best respond to the inevitable challenges that illness brings?

Sunday 11th March, 11am
– ‘Healing and Health’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker & Tristan Jovanović

How do spirituality and healing inter-connect?

Sunday 18th March, 11am
‘Dimensions of Health’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker & Jeannene Powell

Join us for an exploration of the meaning of health in every area of existence – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, social. This will be followed by Margaret's 'Finding Our Voice' singing lesson at 12.30pm, and Nia Dance with Sonya at 2pm.

Sunday 25th February, 11am
– ‘Connections Lost and Found’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Why social interactions matter and ways we can strengthen our sense of connectedness in life. The service will be followed at 12.45pm by our regular 'Sunday Conversation' on this month's theme of 'Health and Healing'.

OneLight Gathering: ‘The Budding Branch’

Friday 9th March, 7pm - 8:30pm
Here at Essex Church



'True life is lived when tiny changes occur.'
- Leon Tolstoy

What supports your wellbeing is a question that may give you cause for reflection. Can this question be asked in isolation - when what supports your wellbeing supports our wellbeing?

Wellbeing is not merely lack of illness but a state of healthfulness that connects us with wholeness - our whole world's wholeness.

We can speak of health on "all levels" of our being and perhaps this is the depth of balance that truly nourishes us. Wellbeing and connection in all directions therefore go hand in hand.

In this ceremony we will connect in circle around wisdom, personal intention, reflection, song and prayer and we will dream into our wellbeing. The ceremony will be held so that you may be deeply nourished and allied with a connectedness that supports us all.

Suggested donation: £5



A Conversation on ‘Love and Kindness’

Even though I had only been to one or two of the month's Services I joined in the "Sunday Conversation" on the last Sunday of February. I recommend taking part in them because it's a good way of getting to know fellows in the congregation. It's also an opportunity to discover what you think about the subject and air such thoughts. In a mere 7 minutes in a pair, I thought about my history of loving both people and the minutiae of life. It seemed amazing how much I covered. I mentioned a book on the subject I heartily recommend, "The Art and Practice of Loving" by Frank Andrews, Ph.D. (ISBN 0-87477-690-2) It completely changed my view of love, years before I came to Essex Church. It explores the limitless ways of loving, not restricting it to human relationships, which can be so complicated. Considering the loving acceptance given to everyone from the moment we walk into Essex Church, how can even the most damaged or us not begin to melt into more loving human beings, both to others and ourselves?

Carolyn Appleby