



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: November 2017

What's On...

Wednesday 1st November, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 2nd Nov, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul: Lessons of Mortality'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 5th November, 11am-noon
'The Mystical Art of Unsayng'
Led by Jane Blackall

Wednesday 8th November, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 12th November, 11am-noon
'Remembrance Sunday'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12th November, 12.30-1pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Sue Smith

Wednesday 15th November, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 16th Nov, 7 for 7.15pm
'Singing for the Spirit'
with Corrina Dolso

Sunday 19th November, 11am-noon
'Healing Arts'
Led by Sarah Tinker and Heidi Ferid

Sunday 19th Nov, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing Workshop with Margaret

Sunday 19th November, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Wednesday 22nd Nov, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 26th November, 11am-noon
'Mystery of Life'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
Includes a charity collection: Red Cross Appeal for Rohingya People

Sunday 26th November, 12.45-2pm
Sunday Conversation:
On this month's theme, 'The Unknown'

Dates for your Diary:

Sunday 17th December, 11am:
Christmas Carol Service & Lunch

Thursday 21st December, 7pm:
Solstice Gathering

Sunday 24th December, 5pm:
Candlelit Christmas Eve Service

Sunday 31st December, 1-4pm
'The Year Compass' Workshop

The Unknown

A Message from our Minister

If you could get rid
Of yourself just once,
The secret of secrets
Would open to you.
The face of the unknown,
Hidden beyond the universe
Would appear on the
Mirror of your perception.
— Jelaluddin Rumi



I wonder what comes to mind when you think of our theme for November: 'The Unknown'? It sends me off in two seemingly opposite directions –both exciting paths of exploration. As a Star Trek fan I'll forever be enthused by their mission statement: to 'boldly go where no-one has gone before'. The, to me, unimaginably vast reaches of our possibly ever expanding universe are filled with unknown possibilities. Can it be that we are the only sentient life form to have emerged since the Big Bang some 13.7 billion years ago? Might there be life forms far in advance of us, perhaps even now observing us in all our human peculiarities? Will we human beings ever learn to travel at a speed needed to reach anywhere further than the moon and still be alive to enjoy the experience?

We live *within* the universe and scientists tell us that we are the universe, our bodies made of stardust, our molecules released by dying stars. Quotations from two of my favourite physicists bring us from the expansiveness of space to the mysteries of human consciousness.

"We are the cosmos made conscious and life is the means by which the universe understands itself." ~ Brian Cox

"We are a way for the cosmos to know itself."
— Carl Sagan, Cosmos

Human consciousness is understandable as our experience of physical reality but to many of us it has some deeply mysterious qualities too. I'm often surprised by glimpses of my unconscious mind, where issues bubble away still from childhood times and I find myself driven by unexpected impulses.

'Why did I say that?'
'What's made me feel so awful ... or so energised today?'
'How come I find this person so very interesting ... or so very annoying, when we've only just met?'

The non-duality of mystic paths such as Sufism helps to take me beyond such personal concerns, back to the universe where all is one. Perhaps that explains why I sometimes find myself thinking of someone and then the phone rings and I hear their voice. Perhaps consciousness has other dimensions yet to be explored.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Festive Gatherings at Essex Church * 'Singing for the Spirit' * London Playback Theatre * Thematic Ministry: 'The Unknown' * 'Meeting Maimonides' by David Talbot * FUSE 2018 * Warden's Column: Reviewing our Bookings * Chinese Teak Sideboards looking for a home * 'The Banned Monologues' * 'Thames Estuary' poem by Brian Ellis * Nia Dance with Sonya Leite * Recent Collections * 'Sweet Charity?' 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.



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Notting Hill Gate
London W8 4RT*

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

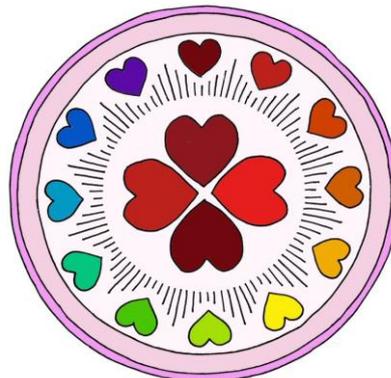
Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 2nd November, 7th Dec 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. November's Heart and Soul will be led by Jeannene Powell on the theme of 'Lessons of Mortality: With our Heart and Soul falling on "Day of the Dead" and All Souls Day, we'll gently reflect together about what we can learn from living a mortal life.' This will be followed by refreshments (Jane's home-made cake!) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you would like to know more about 'Heart & Soul' gatherings at Essex Church email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Festive Gatherings at Essex Church



Save the dates for our various Christmas services/events. We will be having our traditional carol service and bring-and-share Christmas lunch on Sunday 17th December. Please do plan to bring some treats to share (and bring your friends!)

On Thursday 21st December there will be a special winter solstice gathering from 7pm. More details next month.

On Sunday 24th December there will be no morning service. Instead we will have our traditional Candlelit Christmas Eve service at 5pm. In previous years a small group have gone out for a meal at a local restaurant after this service. We are thinking of giving it a miss this year but if you were hoping to go out for a meal please let Jane know by the last Sunday in November so that we can judge whether there is sufficient interest for it to go ahead: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Volunteering Rotas:

Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting

Stewarding:

5 th November:	Luke Murriot
12 th November:	Heidi Ferid
19 th November:	Gina Bayley
26 th November:	Veronica Needa

Coffee:

5 th November:	Rebecca Hope
12 th November:	Bobby Rebeiro
19 th November:	Maureen Cummings
26 th November:	Sue Smith

Greeting:

5 th November:	Abby Lorimier
12 th November:	Erica Zaiser
19 th November:	Sue Smith
26 th November:	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

London Playback Theatre

Returns to Essex Church
on Friday 24th November at 7.30pm

(PLEASE NOTE CORRECTED DATE)

'Stories of Not Knowing...'



Tuning into the theme of this Sunday's service, we invite you to take this opportunity of exploring feelings, memories and stories around the times when we have not known something and then it became known.... what happened? Or perhaps we still don't know... how does that feel? Let's boldly go into this exploration of the unknown together... (CUE music from Star Trek...)

London Playback Theatre is a multicultural team of highly experienced professional theatre practitioners, consultants, educators and therapists, who have been practising and performing together for many years. Through the spontaneity and vibrancy of improvisational techniques, we bring real stories to life which have been volunteered by the audience and inspired by the theme of an event.

All welcome. Members of the congregation of Essex Church free of charge.

'The basements of the churches I've loved reveal the foundation of the spiritual life to be not belief so much as engagement with the mystery lurking at the root of all things. We build a framework on top of mystery because we need someplace to live, some manner of surviving nature's fury and our mundane, daily needs. The structures that support our growth and exploration and insight are the ones that encompass the known as well as unknown. I was fortunate that the faith of my upbringing included both the unexpected in gloomy basements and the inexplicable in twists of narrative; without these I might today be confined to a static, stifled doctrine of unyielding answers and a self-righteous God. Or I might have rejected faith entirely for the clarity of science, with its propensity to trust explanations. But even Albert Einstein felt imagination to be more valuable than knowledge. Whatever framework we choose to make our home, room for the imagination is what allows us to reach forward into possibility. The unknown keeps us lively, growing, and in love.'

Elizabeth J. Andrew

Thanksgiving Service

Hosted by London Episcopal Chaplaincy
Sunday 19th November, 5-6.30pm at Essex Church

American Thanksgiving Service



Celebrate American Thanksgiving using the US Book of Common Prayer (1979) and featuring traditional hymns. All are welcome! Please note that this is not affiliated with the US Embassy.

For further information speak to Mark Franklin or see the London Episcopal Facebook page: www.facebook.com/LondonEpiscopal

'Singing for the Spirit'

Thursday 16th November from
7.15-8.15pm here at Essex Church



Singing for the spirit will run again on November 16th 7:15-8:15pm. 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 accapella 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 in November, 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

Thematic Ministry



Our theme in November will be 'The Unknown'. 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 this month's theme and do get in touch if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to offer on a Sunday or maybe a piece you'd like to write for the newsletter. Let us know. Future themes: December – 'Hospitality', January – 'Chance, Luck and Randomness', February – 'Love and Kindness', March – 'Health and Healing'. Here are some ways you might choose to explore our theme for November.

- Have there been times in life when you have found yourself stepping out into an unknown future? What gave you the strength to make the choices that needed to be made? Were there particular paths that insistently called to you, an urge to step forward that could not be ignored?
- Have there been times in life when you held back from the unknown. What stopped you?
- Create a mind-map with the word Mystery at the centre. What comes to mind?
- Some say that it is fear of the unknown that holds us back in life. Has a sense of curiosity helped you overcome your fears?
- Make a list of your Ten Greatest Mysteries of Life. Swap lists with someone else and see how they compare.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 19th November, 17th December**

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.

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

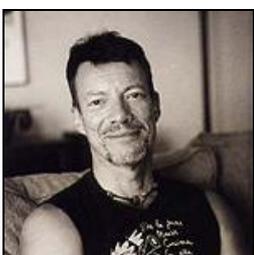
'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops

**Sunday 19th November from 12.30pm
to 1.15pm** (please note - no class in December)



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.



'Faith is first among the theological virtues because all virtue proceeds from it, including and especially love. Faith is the leap into the unknown, the entering into an action or a person knowing only that I will emerge changed, with no preconceptions of what that change will be. Its antonym is cynicism, born of fear. Prosperous America is a fear-filled society (consider our obsession with security, whether national or international, or in our financial, professional, emotional, and spiritual lives) because we are a faithless society. Without faith, without that willingness to embrace life, including its uncertainty and pain and mortality and mystery, the soul becomes stagnant. In choosing cynicism the soul may be the only aspect of the universe that can resist change and thus the only aspect of the universe that can really die.'

Fenton Johnson

Unitarian What's On List

Findhorn Unitarian Experience: 27th January to 3rd February 2018

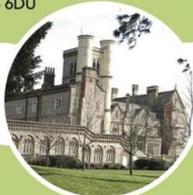
A unique opportunity to be part of a Findhorn Experience Week in good company with other Unitarians. The total cost of the week is £660 plus travel costs but there may well be possibilities of subsidies. If this week interests you, do talk to Sarah soon for more information. Findhorn is a community that places spirituality at the centre of all activities and it's an inspiring adventure in living in attunement with one another and with the environment. 'Love in action' is their approach to all tasks, with the option of joining in with daily Taize chanting and meditation sessions.

FUSE
FESTIVAL of UNITARIANS in the SOUTHEAST

16TH - 18TH FEBRUARY 2018

HORSLEY ESTATE
East Horsley, Surrey KT24 6DU

A weekend full of great opportunities to deepen your Unitarian experience!



FIND TIME FOR YOUR SOUL

INSPIRING WORSHIP

EXPLORE, DISCUSS, CREATE

MEET LOTS OF NEW PEOPLE



Enjoy good food and relax in beautiful surroundings

FUSE: Festival of Unitarianism in the South East 16th-18th February - Horsley Estate, Surrey

The 2018 Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) promises to be a weekend filled with great opportunities to deepen your Unitarian experience, find time for your soul, meet lots of new people, enjoy good food, sing with great music, and relax in beautiful surroundings! Rev. Jim Robinson, former minister at Hampstead, will be the keynote speaker on the theme of 'Fostering the Beloved Community'. There will be workshops on spirituality, our community, social action, creativity and music. The venue has extensive grounds, impressive architecture and an indoor pool. Booking is now open and the deadline for registrations is 26th January. Some bursaries are available. Standard cost for a single room is £240. See the FUSE website for more information:

For info / to book: www.ldpaunitarians.org/fuse

Inclusive Communion

Sundays 12th November and
10th December 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. Sue Smith will lead in November. 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.

Good Cause Collection of the Month

Red Cross Appeal for Rohingya People

Collection on Sunday 26th November



Our charity collection in November will be for the Red Cross Clara Barton Fund appeal to support the Rohingya people fleeing persecution in Myanmar. A recent surge of violence in Myanmar has seen around 537,000 people cross into Bangladesh in just under two months. Young and old are arriving exhausted, hungry and dehydrated. They join thousands of people already in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh, living in makeshift camps and temporary shelters. Adding to the misery, Bangladesh has faced terrible monsoon flooding. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is providing food, clean water, shelter and medical care.

For more info: www.redcross.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

August – **Send a Child to Hucklow** – £124.74

September – **Refugee Children in London** – £305.13

October – **London Air Ambulance** – £91.03

Warden's Column

Sometimes I just run out of inspiration for this column! And on such occasions I often fall back on the game of calculating who were the highest paying bookings in the previous year. This time, I've run out of inspiration without even reaching the end of the year, but as everyone has already given me the dates of their Xmas breaks, it was still quite easy to calculate projected income figures for 2017. So here are last year's superstars:

2016 Highest Paying Users

1. John Stirk Yoga - £6k
2. Tse Qi Gung - £5.5k
3. Beit Klal - £4.5k
4. Little Foxes - £4k
5. Streetdance - £4k
6. Ashtanga yoga - £4k
7. Seicho no Ie - £4k
8. Meditation - £3.5k
9. IGAP Psychology - £3.5k
10. Analytical Psychology - £3k

Of these, John Stirk and Michael Tse both rent the church space for an evening class every week (Tuesdays and Wednesdays). We charge £180 for evening use of that space – reducing to £120 if you use it every week – and over a year, that really adds up. John also runs occasional teacher training courses here at weekends, which is why he pipped Michael for the number one spot.

Little Foxes & Streetdance are both daytime children's bookings, Ashtanga Yoga is a self-practice group (i.e. not a taught class) that meets here every morning and Seicho no Ie and Meditation are both spiritual practices – so there's an odd symmetry to last year's chart: with a pair of weekly exercise classes, followed by a pair of children's exercise classes, followed by a pair of meditation activities, followed by a pair of psychology lectures – and Beit Klal Synagogue as the wild card. Knowing that Beit Klal would be leaving us this year, my prediction was that either Sign & Sign (another children's group to teach sign language to pre-verbal babies) or Alternatives of St James would replace them in the Top 10 – and the winner was . . . Alternatives.

My prediction for this year's top 5 was John, Tse, Ashtanga, Streetdance, Foxes – I was right about the pole position, but substantially adrift after that. Here's the actual list

2017 Highest Paying Users

1. John Stirk Yoga - £6k
2. Streetdance - £5.5k
3. Tse Qi Gung - £5k
4. Meditation - £4.5k
5. Ashtanga yoga - £4.5k
6. IGAP Psychology - £4.5k
7. Little Foxes – £4k
8. Seicho no Ie - £4k
9. Analytical Psychology - £3.5k
10. Alternatives - £3k

Total £44,500 from the top 10 compared to £42,000 last year. This is usually about two thirds of total lettings income.

And now I need to stick my neck out and make a prediction for 2018. Alternatives started an 18 month training course here this autumn on Practical Spirituality which will continue to run monthly all next year, so that will push them up the chart – but will it get them all the way to the top? I'll take a chance and say yes. I'm also rooting for Ashtanga to edge a little higher now they're running 5 days a week instead of 4. So I'll go for a top 5 of Alternatives, John Stirk, Tse Qi Gung, Ashtanga and IGAP. You'll need to wait more than 12 months to find out if I'm right though – and meanwhile I'm going to need to think of some more original ideas for this column!

Jenny Moy

Meeting Maimonides



Here is a photo of the statue of Maimonides in the Jewish quarter of Cordoba in Southern Spain. It is said that if you rub the statue's slipper it will bring good luck. Rabbi Moses ben Maimon also known as Maimonides was a Sephardic Jewish philosopher, astronomer and physician born in Cordoba in 1135. He died in Egypt in 1204 and is buried in Tiberias in Lower Galilee. He is regarded as the greatest philosopher of the medieval period. When I visited Israel many years ago we passed by his tomb.

David Talbot

Chinese Teak Sideboards looking for a new home...



These two sideboards came from Hong Kong 40 years ago and still in excellent condition. Each has two drawers and a cupboard below. One cupboard has three large drawers inside. The other cupboard has two shelves. Each is 50cm deep, 90cm high, 90cm across. Veronica needs to let them go now – ASAP – free of charge. A donation to her favourite charity would be welcome but is not required! Call her on 07779945991 before Monday 6th November.

Veronica Needsa

'Sweet Charity?'

by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Adapted from service on Sunday 15th October

The service is also available online as a podcast.

Doing a confessional from the pulpit is generally not advised in ministry training but I have to ask today if any of you have done what I have done? If I see bouncy looking young people in the street who are clearly going to collar me and ask me to give money to a charity, I have been known to cross the road in order to avoid them. I have pretended not to be myself on the phone when I've realised that it's another charity worker ringing to ask for a donation. And worst of all I've even pretended at this very church door not to be me, when some troubled person smelling of alcohol has asked to see the minister because they've got a bit of a problem and need to talk it over - and could we help with a bit of money.

Charity is not a word I like much, do you? I wonder what connotations the concept has for you? I feel uncomfortable about its implications. It makes me think of Victorian workhouses, of well-meaning perhaps but nonetheless demeaning do-gooding. It reminds me of charity shops stuffed full with the excesses of 21st century western lifestyles.

I like a religious leader who challenges the way things are, don't you? Pope Francis really got me thinking at the start of this year when he was reported as saying that we should all be giving to people begging in the street. And if we hesitate because of concerns as to what the money might be spent on – alcohol or drugs perhaps – then we should look into our own hearts and see what secret, guilty pleasures we buy for ourselves. The pope challenged the part in each of us that judges the life of another. He also challenged our ability to cut off from other human beings because their existence makes us uncomfortable. He asked us to meet the eyes of those who are asking for help, to recognise them as fellow human beings. His words made me think about my own attitudes – not just to beggars on our streets but to giving to others more generally. How do we choose how to be charitable? And what is the best way to give to others?

Have a look at this list created by Jewish philosopher Maimonides in Spain in the 12th century, known as his famous ladder of charity. Do you agree with his ranking?

Bottom level:

Giving to someone in need unwillingly. It is better not to give at all.

Seventh level:

Giving to someone in need with a glad heart and a smile.

Sixth level:

Giving to someone in need after being asked.

Fifth level:

Giving to someone in need before being asked.

Fourth level: Not knowing who you are giving to, but allowing the recipients to know who their benefactor is.

Third level: Knowing who you are giving to, but not allowing the recipients to know who their benefactor is.

Second level:

Giving to someone in need, but not knowing who you are giving to, nor allowing the recipients to know who their benefactor is.

Top level:

Investing in someone, so that a solution to their problem is found.

I wonder how often, if at all, you have been on the receiving end of these different levels of charity? Or how often you have been the giver of charity, gracious and begrudging, anonymous or well known? The chant at the start of today's service – *ubi caritas, et amor, ubi caritas, deus ibi est* – simply translates as 'where there is charity and love, there is God.' But *caritas* is better translated using more words – it encompasses love and benevolence towards one's fellow human beings. In Pope Francis' view charity requires us to look another human being in the eye and recognise our shared humanity.

On the front of today's order of service there is a quotation from the previous chief rabbi here in Britain, Jonathan Sacks. '*Tzedakah* refers to distributive justice, . . . It is difficult to translate *tzedakah* because it combines in a single word two notions normally opposed to one another, namely charity and justice.' He tells us the meaning of *tzedakah*, a very important concept in Judaism. He explains that *tzedakah* has no direct translation from Hebrew into English because it combines two words that in English seem to pull apart from one another – charity and justice. But in Hebrew they are bonded together. And the reason for this is the Judaic idea that although we may possess material items in this lifetime, we do not ultimately own them. We hold everything in trust, as a temporary holding, because everything is given to us by and is owned by God. Sacks describes *tzedakah* as a word with the power to change the world – pointing us as it does in the direction of righteousness and right living. If we find ourselves fortunate in life, then it is through the gift of the divine. We have not deserved our good fortune, but are merely temporary recipients of it. Our duty then is to share these gifts with others through charitable deeds, in order to redistribute wealth and establish greater justice for all.

This is not the time to tell you of one of my life's great loves – Max Weber, early 20th century German sociologist – who famously wrote about *The Protestant Work Ethic & The Spirit of Capitalism*. In this book Weber explored some of western capitalism's central beliefs and found their roots within Protestantism's individualism – perhaps most relevant for our theme of generosity being the idea that we can make our own fortunes through our efforts. We've all know the message of 'pulling up our socks' and working hard in order to be virtuous (and economically independent). You can hear such messages in speeches given by politicians the world over. Yet they gloss over the realities that unfettered capitalism creates 'haves' and 'have nots', that unregulated markets tend to treat the poor very badly indeed. We are surely shaken by deaths of those living in social housing so close to us here in central London. We are surely ashamed that our society's current obsession with 'less regulation' may have led to the deaths of people our society should have been protecting.

I'm no economist and so I'm grateful that we have economists today who are communicating in a way that all of us can understand. You can still listen to Michael Sandel's Reith Lectures online, in which he explored the possibilities of a new citizenship. One of his key messages is the importance of keeping morality apart from finance. In a world where it can sometimes seem as if money is everything, let's still remember that there are things money can't buy. It's also worth reading the work of French economist and philosopher Thomas Picketty who argues strongly for the need in modern capitalist systems to tax those who are well off, in order to support those who are financially struggling. These economists are reminding us, just like Pope Francis and Maimonides, that we should not carelessly and thoughtlessly accept the status quo. When capitalist systems tell us to 'trust the market' and to allow our free market economy to be unfettered by regulations, when we're told that wealth will 'trickle down' from the rich to the poor – we don't have to believe it. We don't have to join in the endless consumption that modern life seems to demand of us. Let's keep reminding one another that things don't have to be like they are. We humans are not meant to be passive consumers. Rather we are called to right wrongs, to re-balance economic imbalance and to bring greater justice to an unjust world. I wonder what you think?

Services at Essex Church in November

Sunday 5th November, 11am
– ‘The Mystical Art of Unsayings’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Keith Ward, priest and theologian, has said: ‘God is beyond all human concepts. The most that they can do is to point, very inadequately, towards God.’ This view of God as unknown and unknowable is in keeping with the tradition of apophatic theology. In today’s service we will consider what we can learn from this tradition and how it might be possible to speak of something which is beyond our capacity to comprehend through a process known as ‘unsaying’.

Sunday 12th November, 11am
– ‘Remembrance Sunday’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Are we humans inevitably war-like? Please arrive in good time to hold a two minute silence at 11am to honour all lives lost and harmed by warfare.

Sunday 19th November, 11am
‘Healing Arts’

Service led by Sarah Tinker and Heidi Ferid

An exploration of some of the many alternative paths and systems that have helped people regain health and well-being, though we may not be able to explain how they work.

Sunday 26th November, 11am
– ‘Mystery of Life’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Einstein wrote that “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.” How might embracing life’s mysteries help us find meaning and purpose?



‘The Banned Monologues’

‘Exploring my Middle Eastern roots,
reclaiming my Muslim Identity’



Friday 3rd November, 7pm at Essex Church

The Banned Monologues is inspired by the Muslim Ban, as Tara Jaffar is British-Iraqi in the process of moving to the US. This work addresses issues of identity, namely, the complexities of Middle Eastern diaspora and nonconformist British-Muslim identities. Series of monologues, with live folk songs from across the Middle East, where music and text compliment and complete one another, often juxtaposing cultures historically in conflict. Total duration will be approximately 75 minutes including audience discussion.

FREE entry, with donations for the church justice collection, this month for the Rohingya people of Myanmar.

Thames Estuary (from the Southend Train)

veils of uncertain colour
draw in from the sea
low over this slow land

a murmur of salt voices
spindrifts from horizons
towered by skies
destiny of all directions

tides dominate time
launder silk sheen mud
along the marshes’ creeks
lick the brackish grass
of the herd’s grazing

wash boats that lean
soon to rise from
listless moorings
restless souls unsure
of when and where
to journey until the
spirit of the earth
fills the sails of their callings

Brian Ellis