



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: October 2014

What's On...

Thursday 2nd October, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'Strength despite Adversity'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 5th October, 11am-noon
'Over and Over'
Led by Jane Blackall

Monday 6th October, 6pm
Cultural Outing:
'Catching Dreams' Exhibition at the
Royal Festival Hall with Carolyn

Tuesday 7th October, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 9th October, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: Stitchcraft
(or bring your own craft project)

Sunday 12th October, 11am-noon
'What's a Church?'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12th October, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 12th October, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Tuesday 14th October, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Sunday 19th October, 11am-noon
'Counter-Culture'
Led by Sarah Tinker and Symon Hill

Tuesday 21st October, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

Thursday 23rd October, 7-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Saturday 25th October, 10.30am
'Spiritual Leadership' District
Workshop at Lewisham Unitarians

Sunday 26th October, 11am-noon
'Where No-One Stands Alone'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

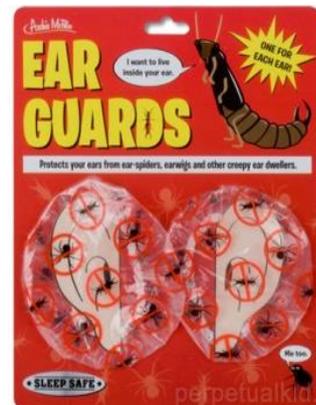
Sunday 26th October, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Tuesday 28th October, 12.30-1.30pm
Nia Technique with Sonya Leite

A Message from our Minister:

'It's What Earwigs Do'

It shouldn't have been a surprise. It's what earwigs do: crawl into seemingly impossibly tight spaces and then wriggle excessively when discovered. But finding an earwig when removing my car's petrol cap at the petrol station did give me a shock. And it wasn't an isolated incident. My car had suffered from two other insect invasions already that week.



This wriggly week took place in the middle of July. I know the date because the first invasion happens around that time every year. It's the week of the flying ants. But this year for the first time ever, they found their way into the door well of my car and when I opened the door they scattered at great speed. What had been a large lump of swarming ants disappeared just like that, but where did they go? I feared they would keep appearing as I drove the car but I never saw them again. The second incident took place at the garage when a mechanic opened my bonnet to take a look at a blocked heating duct. He did one of those slow exhaling of breath that denotes trouble and pointed out to me that a family of wriggling mites had taken up residence in a wedge of rotting leaves. How had they found their way into my car engine I asked, partly to establish my own innocence and to avoid any potential accusations of lousy car care. 'It's what insects do' came the wise reply from the mechanic, who helpfully took a pressure spray to the engine. So when the earwig gave me a bit of a fright I calmed myself with that thought – *it's what earwigs do*.

If we apply a similar way of thinking to us humans perhaps we won't find our behaviour quite so disturbing. Taking hostages, invading other countries, abusing the vulnerable, threatening those who are different from us, changing the rules to suit ourselves – *it's what people do*. We have always had a warlike, aggressive way of being and a tendency to care for our own family or tribe at the expense of outsiders. And in the interests of fair play we'd better mention that earwigs, ants and mites all perform useful tasks in breaking down rotting plant matter. Useful human behaviours include creativity, compassion, humour, altruism. Perhaps the question then to ask is what conditions are most likely to bring out the best in us all. And how can we give all beings space to be themselves on a busy planet. I wonder what conditions help you to be the best you can possibly be: hopefully not wriggling around in my car munching on damp vegetation.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'How Can I Help?' – Volunteering at Essex Church * Reflections on Hucklow Summer School *
'Soul Writers' – course with Caroline & Sarah * 'A Life of Prayer' – workshop with Jef & Jane
* 'Buy Social' by Roy Clark * 'Celebrating Life's Moments' report by Veronica Needa *
'Who Are You?' – responses to a recent service on the Authentic Self * Warden's Report
* Christmas Cards * 'Maps of Our Lives' sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

Kensington Unitarians are a community of kindred souls who meet each week at Essex Church in Notting Hill Gate to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey. We are proud to be part of a worldwide and historic liberal religious tradition.

Our main activity is Sunday worship and we hold a service each week at 11am. All are welcome. Services are usually themed and include readings from a variety of sources, prayers, music, singing, stillness, and a short sermon. Our children's leaders provide an alternative programme of activities for younger people.

Small-group activities are another key part of our programme. We offer courses and one-off workshops exploring spiritual and religious matters and considering life's meaning together with others on the spiritual journey.



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'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 2nd October 7-8pm

Gathering at 6.45pm downstairs in the library

Followed by social time and refreshments



Our October gathering will be led by Jeannene Powell and will be on the theme of 'Strength Despite Adversity.' Adversity is something many of us have faced in one way or another. In this month's 'Heart and Soul', we'll explore how we can find strength despite those experiences of adversity.

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

If you would like to know more about these gatherings please contact jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Creativity Group: Stitchcraft & Craftivism

**Second Thursday evening of each month:
9th October, 6th November, 11th December from 7-9pm**



The creativity group's final project for 2014 will be based on stitchcraft: embroidery, knitting, crochet and so on. From October to December we will share our skills in these crafts and also encourage each person attending the group to make a small (15cm) flower for the Wellmaking Craftivists' Garden. Have a look at their website for details: www.craftivist-collective.com/wellmaking.

To start off with, everyone is invited to make a flower, either by cutting and embroidering fabric, or knitting or crochet. Ideally everyone should bring along their own materials and equipment (fabrics, needles, thread, yarn, knitting needles and crochet hooks) but if you are a complete beginner just get in touch with Jane as soon as possible and we will rustle up some supplies to get you started. Several regular members of the group (including Juliet, Sue, and Caroline) are willing to help beginners get underway.

Once we have made flowers we can branch out into other craftivist projects. And if you're wondering what craftivism is, someone called Betsy Greer coined the term, and defined it as "a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper, and your quest for justice more infinite." You can find out more at the first of these three sessions!

As ever, if this doesn't appeal you are welcome to come along with your own craft, and simply enjoy the company of the group.



Our creativity group meets once a month to focus on a particular art or craft medium or a certain project for each quarter of the year so that we can go deeper into it during that period. One of the particularly enjoyable features of this group is the space it offers for fellowship and conversation while we are each working on our individual projects alongside one another. If you don't fancy the art or craft we are 'officially' focusing on then you are always welcome to bring along whatever you're working on and do your own art/craft whilst enjoying the good company of the group.

Jane Blackall



'The longer we pray, the more we realize prayer is bigger than we are, more expansive and deeper. When we least expect it, our prayer brings us into further clarity about who we are and how we are to be with God and the world. These experiences

encourage us to lessen our stronghold on wanting to control, to know and have proof. Unexpected graced moments in prayer restore our confidence in the process and help us trust our intention to become more loving. These little glimpses encourage us to give ourselves to what we believe to be of most value. We leave the finished product of prayer to the One who knows the longings of our heart."

Joyce Rupp

'Soul Writers'

**Tuesdays 28th October and 25th November
6.45 for a 7pm start (finishing by 8.45pm)**

Led by Caroline Blair and Sarah Tinker



Using a simple technique of free writing with visual and written prompts to get us started, this course will encourage us all to write in new ways, to care less about writing 'well' and more about writing from an authentic place within ourselves. There'll be exercises to follow in the month between our two meetings and chance to share our work in an atmosphere of curiosity and acceptance. We will be actively encouraging one another to move beyond judgement and criticism, or concern about approval or disapproval, to a deeper 'soul space' and an appreciation of our common human threads and unique life journeys.

No particular skill or experience required, just a willingness to use the written word as a method for deeper exploration of ourselves and this world in which we live.

There's no charge for this workshop but we'd appreciate people booking a place in advance by emailing info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk or ringing the church office on 020 7221 6514. We'd suggest attending both sessions but it will be possible to attend just one.

'A Life of Prayer'

Saturday 29th November, 11am-4pm

Led by Jef Jones and Jane Blackall



In this workshop we will encourage participants to explore what prayer means for them. We will learn from approaches to prayer from different traditions, and consider ways of integrating prayerfulness into our busy lives, in the hope of helping participants to develop and deepen their own spiritual practice.

Cost: £5 / £10 / £15 (please pay what you can afford).

BOOK NOW: email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Prayer - true prayer - never lives in isolation. For those persons who understand its meaning, it is not the hobby of the holy or a luxury in life; it holds the pattern for all life.' - Edward Hays

'We must no longer see prayer as preparation for action. Prayer must be understood as action itself, a way of responding. . . Prayer is not undertaken instead of other actions, but as a foundation for all the rest of the actions we take.' - Jim Wallis

'When we broaden our concept of prayer, we are able to be attentive to God during much of our daily activities. I believe that making all we do a form of prayer is what the apostle Paul meant when he told his disciples to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17).' - Jane Vennard



'We can learn to be honest in all of our relationships without being brutal. It requires nothing more than conscious intention to make yourself heard in a manner that is nonthreatening, nonharming, and peaceful. The best place to start this process is with those closest to you. They are the ones with whom we tend to be the most brutal in our communication.'



Dennis Merritt Jones

'How Can I Help?' – Volunteering at Essex Church

There are lots of ways to get more involved and help with the work of the congregation. One of the most visible is to take on the stewarding, greeting, or coffee-making roles on a Sunday morning. The stewards, greeters, and coffee-makers play a vital part in making visitors feel welcome, helping regular attenders feel cared for, and ensuring that everything runs as smoothly as possible. From time-to-time we review the 'job descriptions' of these volunteering roles and the latest updates are given below. Thanks to all of you who already volunteer. We would encourage more people to sign up as it's a great way to get more deeply involved.

The Role of the Steward:

Basic Role (*weeks where Sarah and/or Jane are present*):

- The steward should arrive early (by 10.30am at the latest).
- The choir/musicians will usually be rehearsing until about 10.45am so keep the door closed and do not allow people in to the church until you get the nod from the musicians. You can prepare the service sheets, hymnbooks, and any other items that are to be handed out (such as charity gift aid envelopes, occasionally handouts/pencils etc.)
- There are some slips saying 'seat reserved for latecomers' in the stewarding folder. Put these notes on some seats near the back.
- The steward should bring a glass of water to the reading desk.
- Once you have opened the door, hand out hymnbooks and service sheets (and any other items you have been notified about), and offer large print hymnsheets to those who need them.
- The steward is responsible for helping latecomers to come in quietly, and find a seat, without disrupting the service. We would encourage you to actually put your hand up to indicate that people outside the door should wait until it is an appropriate moment to come in (i.e. during a hymn and NOT during a prayerful moment). If possible, stewards should stop people from entering or moving around during the opening words and chalice lighting section, encouraging them instead to wait till the first hymn begins. To minimise disruption you can direct latecomers to the reserved seats.
- If it is busy then keep alert to the possibility that you may need to bring in extra chairs in from the hall – make it easy for people to join us without embarrassment – ask for help if needed.
- The steward should keep an eye on the foyer in case anyone comes in late and wanders off elsewhere in the church during the service. You might go out and check they are OK.
- Finally, the steward hands round the offertory bags during the collection, and counts the loose cash collection after the service.
- We keep a record of how much is received and also count how many people are attending each week (this information should be recorded in the 'Steward's Blue Book').
- The amount of collection money needs to be noted down on the A5 slips in the stewards folder, and the collection put in a brown envelope from that folder, and marked with the date.
- The collection money is handed to Caroline, Sarah, Jenny, or a member of the church committee to lock in the office.
- Thank you! The steward's work makes a lot of difference for worship leaders and is very much appreciated.

Extended Role (*when Sarah & Jane are both away*):

Check the following are all set up properly (try to do it quietly as the musicians are likely to be practising while you are setting up):

- ensure that the chairs in the church are laid out properly
- the sound system is plugged in and switched on
- the microphone battery has not run out (if it is flat you hear a 'clicking' sound - there are spares in the stewarding cupboard)
- the voice recorder should be switched on and blu-tacked to the lectern (the batteries should be replaced if running low)
- get the candles for joys and concerns out of the cupboard and put them on the central table (make sure there are lightable)
- ensure there is a taper and matches/lighter on the lectern
- that the seasonal wall-hangings at the front are neat and tidy
- that the multi-faith banner is displayed from the organ
- Find one of the office keyholders (Juliet, Harold, Caroline or Jenny) and ask them to go down to the office and bring up the chalice, and the Tibetan singing bowl with its stick and cushion.

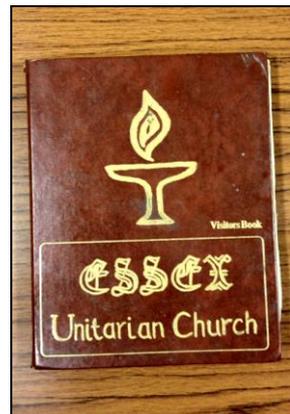
The Role of the Coffee Maker:

- It is a good idea for the coffee maker to arrive early (by 10.30am) and get the kitchen set up before the service. You can put the urn and kettles on to boil, get the mugs out, and a few plates of biscuits, so that everything is set up ready for you to serve.
- Since we committed to being a 'Fairtrade Church' we take care to stock up on fairly traded tea, coffee, and biscuits, and we generally buy these in bulk to ensure there are always supplies in the bottom right-hand cupboard. However, you are welcome to bring some extra biscuits or treats, if you so wish. If you notice that supplies of something are running low please leave a note to draw it to Jenny's attention so she can re-order as needed.
- The only thing that the coffee-maker needs to bring along on a Sunday is fresh milk as we do not generally keep the fridge stocked (you can claim back for the cost – ask Caroline or Jenny).
- Recently we have tried to get into the habit of making 'real coffee' which people seem to enjoy. The metal cafetières are usually kept in the cupboard under the cooker hob.
- It is usually a good idea to slip out of church during the final hymn to put the kettle on so you're ready for the stampede.
- After coffee-time you finally need to wash up (hopefully with help from your friends) and put everything away before you go.

The Role of the Greeter:

- The greeter should arrive early (by 10.30am at the latest).
- Unlock the door by 10.30am (by turning the key in the electronic lock to the left of the door – the key may be up on the ledge above the door) and stand in the foyer ready to welcome people, particularly newcomers, as they arrive. If the weather is fine you could hook the door wide open.
- You might encourage new arrivals into the hall where people gather to chat before the service (explaining that the musicians rehearse in the church until 10.45) and introduce them by name to another person, especially someone similar to themselves if possible.
- If you identify any newcomers, it may also be helpful to point out where the toilets are, mention that there is a coat rack in the church, and point them towards the kitchen if they need a glass of water. You could also ask them what brought them here today, where they are from or if they have any questions.
- If visitors are entirely new to Unitarianism then the greeter might offer some leaflets or a copy of our newsletter to help them get a sense of who we are. Useful leaflets might be our congregation's current leaflet or history leaflet (or a more general GA leaflet such as 'Your First Time at a Unitarian Service' or 'A Faith worth Thinking About'). Make it clear it is fine either to take the leaflets away with them after the service or to leave them here once read.
- As part of our congregational growth project we are asking our greeters to try and gather a bit of information about visitors and to let Sarah our minister know about them if their circumstances suggest they could become regular attenders. New people are much more likely to return if we learn their name and if they are spoken to by three people on their first visit, in addition to the minister, so do introduce them to others or suggest that they sit near someone in particular.
- Encourage people to sign the Visitors' Book and also to fill in a green slip (leave it in the marked box in the foyer) to give us their contact details if they want to be on our email list or receive the church newsletter.
- The greeter is also asked to take care of selling church 'merchandise' (e.g. mugs, books, t-shirts). Get the box of samples and price list display out of the stewarding cupboard and display in a prominent spot in the foyer or the hall. Give any money received to Caroline or a member of the church committee. Extra supplies are in the office (ask a keyholder to get them).
- We would also ask the greeter to continue their role after the service during coffee time, by keeping an eye on new people and ensuring that they are not left sitting alone nor trapped in an awkward conversation. A simple 'hope to see you again next week' can also make a difference to a new person and encourage them to return.

Return of the Visitors Book



Date	Name	Address	Nationality
1/1/77	John Smith	12 Redoubt Lane, Wex	British
2/1/77	John Smith	20 King's Lane, Wex	British
3/1/77	John Smith	30 Broadwalk, Wex	British
4/1/77	John Smith	40 Broadwalk, Wex	British
5/1/77	John Smith	50 Broadwalk, Wex	British
6/1/77	John Smith	60 Broadwalk, Wex	British
7/1/77	John Smith	70 Broadwalk, Wex	British
8/1/77	John Smith	80 Broadwalk, Wex	British
9/1/77	John Smith	90 Broadwalk, Wex	British
10/1/77	John Smith	100 Broadwalk, Wex	British
11/1/77	John Smith	110 Broadwalk, Wex	British
12/1/77	John Smith	120 Broadwalk, Wex	British
13/1/77	John Smith	130 Broadwalk, Wex	British
14/1/77	John Smith	140 Broadwalk, Wex	British
15/1/77	John Smith	150 Broadwalk, Wex	British
16/1/77	John Smith	160 Broadwalk, Wex	British
17/1/77	John Smith	170 Broadwalk, Wex	British
18/1/77	John Smith	180 Broadwalk, Wex	British
19/1/77	John Smith	190 Broadwalk, Wex	British
20/1/77	John Smith	200 Broadwalk, Wex	British
21/1/77	John Smith	210 Broadwalk, Wex	British
22/1/77	John Smith	220 Broadwalk, Wex	British
23/1/77	John Smith	230 Broadwalk, Wex	British
24/1/77	John Smith	240 Broadwalk, Wex	British
25/1/77	John Smith	250 Broadwalk, Wex	British
26/1/77	John Smith	260 Broadwalk, Wex	British
27/1/77	John Smith	270 Broadwalk, Wex	British
28/1/77	John Smith	280 Broadwalk, Wex	British
29/1/77	John Smith	290 Broadwalk, Wex	British
30/1/77	John Smith	300 Broadwalk, Wex	British

It's brown and battered, but it's ours. Harking all the way back to 1977 and the opening of this congregation's new building the visitors book is full of interesting names and comments and we're going to ask our greeters each Sunday to invite visitors to sign it. At our AGM Gina suggested that since we get so many visitors it would be a nice way to record their presence and to have them feel valued.

But if people want to keep in touch with us and be put on our email information list then we have some bright green slips for them to fill in and then hand to one of the committee or put in the little box in the foyer.

Some of our summer visitors return each year to us and are part of the community – the Minghis, Rick Taylor, Lois and David – to mention just some of our loyal regulars. Others are in London for special occasions and include us on their tours. It was lovely to meet the Hermans this summer and Diane Wright who fulfilled her mother's yearning to come to London and who left us gifts of beads of compassion – part of the Compassionate Cincinnati project she is involved with. We still have four sets of beads to give away– ask for some when you're next with us.

Heidi's 70th Birthday Party Sunday 2nd November at Essex Church



A date for your diary – Heidi Ferid will be holding her 70th birthday party at Essex Church after the service on Sunday 2nd November – and members of the congregation are invited to stay for the buffet lunch and celebrations.

A date for your diary – LDPA event this autumn:

Unitarian District Quarterly Meeting Workshop: Spiritual Leadership in Worship



Saturday 25th October, 10.30am-4.00pm
Lewisham Unitarian Meeting,
41 Bromley Road, Catford, SE6 2TS

Sarah Alexander, will present a day long workshop on the theme of Spiritual Leadership in Worship. She is a published author and speaker, and attends Meadow Chapel in Godalming. See www.sarah-alexander.co.uk for more information about Sarah. There will be a charge of £15 per person, payable on the day, cash or cheques made out to LDPA, or PayPal to daniellewilson@ldpa.org.uk

2014 Channing Lecture by Rev. Dr Ann Peart

'Help to Correct Me' William Ellery Channing and British Unitarians

Saturday 1st November, 6 pm at
Golders Green Unitarians, Hoop Lane, NW11 8BS.

Admission: donation of £5, which will be donated to the Clara Barton Disasters Emergency Appeal (British Red Cross Iraq Crisis Appeal) and the GGU organ restoration fund.

An historian with a particular academic interest in the achievements of Unitarian women, Rev. Dr Ann Peart is a former Principal of Unitarian College Manchester and chair of the GA Social Responsibility Panel and of the Ministry Commission.

The quotation in the title of Dr Peart's lecture comes from a letter Channing wrote to Lucy Aikin. 'In looking over my letter I see that I have written too dogmatically. I rather intended to give you my views that I may obtain yours. I am too far from you to judge the true state of your country, and perhaps my error is always that I overlook details, and judge too much by general principles. Help to correct me.'

If you want further details please contact Rev. Feargus O'Connor at ggunirev@aol.com or on 020 7837 4472.

'Our Living Stories'

True Heart Theatre at Essex Church



Our very own Veronica Needa directing playback theatre here at Essex Church recently in another sparkling and moving afternoon. Crossing continents and linking cultures we were left with greater insights into each other's worlds. Watch out for more playback theatre at Essex Church in 2015.



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3pm:
12th October, 9th November, 14th December

Midweek classes on TUESDAYS from 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 (£7 to concessions / church members).

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674.

'Celebrating Life's Moments' Workshop

with Ant Howe and Sarah Tinker



'Celebrating Life's Moments' took place on Saturday 20th September. One in the series of 'spiritual life skills' workshops, 16 of us gathered for a rewarding day of exchange about how to create ceremonies that honour significant transitions in our lives – in particular funerals, weddings and blessing events for children.

It was a special pleasure for us to host Ant Howe from his very busy parish in Worcestershire, and receive the fruits of his wisdom and experience. It is no surprise that he is in high demand for rites of passage ceremonies, many for people who are not members of his congregation. His natural energy and way of using words that reach people easily, directly and deeply was immediately inspiring. As well as serving his own congregation, he spoke of Social Services calling him out to officiate at funerals for people who have no known families, his conversations with funeral directors, and delicacy in dealing with people in deep distress. For him it is a privilege to do this sacred work – supporting people at the happiest and saddest times of their lives.

Our Sarah managed the process and timing gracefully as ever with moments of stillness, self-reflection, small group activities that helped bring our own experiences to the fore, and large group discussions that enabled sharing of collective wisdom. An early exercise invited us to remember bad experiences of these events - 'shocking, formulaic, shallow, empty, pompous, inauthentic, inaudible, dogmatic, impersonal'. In contrast good experiences elicited 'utterly moved, sacred, celebration, connected, loving, joyful, participatory, inclusive, real, personal, transformative....'

This day was a speed run of things to consider if any of us were to undertake this role. From businesslike considerations of fees, legalities, management of time and energy, to negotiating complex family dynamics and feelings, finding symbols, words, songs to create the ritual, managing rhythm, holding authority.

We need more ceremony in our lives. We are so depleted of these experiences that we hunger for catharsis through the BIG events. And if these are not well held, there is no shift, no feeling of connection – inter- or trans-personal. How can we all learn to mark, feel and share key 'life-moments' more frequently...

And for those who feel moved to learn how to anchor these events as a professional service, the 3-day Rites of Passage Course would be the more thorough training – register your interest, and it will happen!

Veronica Needa

Kensington Unitarians Christmas Cards



If you are already thinking about buying cards to send this Christmas – hang on a minute – we might have something that will interest you if you can wait just a few weeks...

I have produced a lino print image of Essex Church in the snow (see the snapshot above which shows a test print) and I am planning to turn this into a greetings card. It will be blank so that you can send it at any time of year and there will be some basic information about Kensington Unitarians, including our website address, on the back.

I am still in the process of confirming the cost of printing but I am hopeful that I can sell them at a reasonable price that is comparable to what you would pay for other charity cards. It will be possible to buy them singly but I will also sell them in multipacks of 5 and 10 with a (modest) bulk discount. It is my intention that a proportion of the profits will go to the Hucklow Summer School Bursary Fund as this is a Unitarian cause which is close to my heart.

All being well, I will have the cards ready for sale by the end of October, so listen out for further announcements.

Jane Blackall

'Whether you are conscious of it or not, it's in your power to increase other people's joy, satisfaction and safety through simple acts of kindness. A thoughtful word, a smile or acknowledgment, giving something that's needed, listening with care, extending your patience, expressing your concern appreciatively, ordinary courtesies, refraining from criticism or outbursts, acknowledging someone else's point of view or legitimate needs, making time for someone who is struggling, assuming the best: that power is worth everything. It's the basis of your confidence in yourself. It lets you know that regardless of what is happening outside your control, your life is vital, sustaining and absolutely worth living.'



Stephanie Dowrick

Good Cause Collection of the Month



The Prison
Phoenix
Trust

Collection on Sunday 26th October

For our next charity collection we will be supporting The Phoenix Trust, a good cause nominated by Carolyn Appleby.

The Prison Phoenix Trust encourages prisoners in the development of their spiritual welfare, through the practices of meditation and yoga, working with silence and the breath. They offer personal support to prisoners around the UK and Ireland through teaching, workshops, correspondence, books and newsletters - and to prison staff too. The Phoenix Trust work with people of any faith, or of none, and honour all religions. The aim of the charity is to "advance the education of and rehabilitate and promote the mental and moral improvement of prisoners and former prisoners, primarily in the UK and Ireland."

For more information visit: www.theppt.org.uk

Previous Charity Collections:

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

July – Mayhew Animal Home – £102.09 + £109 Gift Aid

August – Iasis (Medical Charity) – £132.05 + £49 Gift Aid

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



**Sundays 26th October, 23rd November
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice. These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

Forthcoming Essex Church Cultural Outings



'Catching Dreams' Art Exhibition

**Monday 6th October from 6pm
Meeting at the Royal Festival Hall**

Carolyn Appleby is organising an outing to the free 'Catching Dreams' exhibition of art by offenders, secure patients and detainees at the Royal Festival Hall. There is also a poetry event (the Koestler Poetry Workshop, reading poems by detainees, tickets £5 each) taking place at 7pm the same night and Carolyn suggests that a last-minute decision is taken on the night as to whether the group attends this as well.

Please contact Carolyn in advance so that she knows you are planning to come: appleby206@gmail.com / 07790862238.

'The Man Born to be King'

**Friday 28th November, 7.30pm
Hampstead Parish Church, NW3 6UU**

The Hampstead Players bring Dorothy L. Sayers' radio play to vibrant life in a staged version. Filled with personal betrayal, realpolitik, and surprising wit, this is a very raw, human re-telling of the last days of Jesus. This play features our very own Nicolas Holzapfel as Judas Iscariot.

Tickets are not yet on sale but you might like to save the date. Sarah Tinker is coordinating this outing so please let her know if you plan to come: sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Esterhazy Singers' St. Nicholas Day Concert

**Saturday 6th December 2014
St Giles Cripplegate, London EC2Y 8DA.**

The Esterhazy Singers, featuring our own Natasha Drennan, will perform a programme of music for St Nicholas's Day in the Barbican at St Giles Cripplegate.

Tickets are not yet on sale and the time is to be confirmed but you might like to put the date in your diary now and let Natasha know if you would like to come: tash_drennan@hotmail.com

Buy Social: A Unitarian Guide

With ever more demands on our money and retail fever seemingly forever tightening its grip on the public consciousness, it can often be a dilemma when you do need to buy something to find small individual, interesting local traders from which to make that purchase.

The big international conglomerates just seem to get bigger and bigger, strangling the competition of small businesses, which results in lack of choice and sometime dubious supply lines.

Well, help is at hand, in the form of Social Enterprises: businesses that work on ethical and sustainable principles that are changing the world for the better.

Social enterprises are businesses that trade to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community. And so when they profit, society profits.

Buying from a Social Enterprise means your money goes much further, benefiting people and planet. Ethically sourcing and trading alleviates poverty, creates employment opportunities and skills training and produces as professional and good quality a service/product as you will find elsewhere.

I am privileged to be involved with a local organisation *Staying First* which amongst other socially beneficial activities runs a re-use furniture shop "Furnish" in Shepherds Bush. The refurbishment, sale and delivery of goods allows us to employ a number of long term unemployed and disadvantaged people for a fair wage and helps the environment too, as much of this furniture would otherwise end up in landfill.

The store also provides an important community role as a drop in centre for local people struggling to make ends meet. They will always find a friendly face amongst the staff with whom to have a chinwag and as often as not a cuppa. The furniture is great too and cheaper than a certain Swedish chain I could mention!



A couple of happy customers!



Left to Right: - Pam Sedgewick (Director of Staying First), 'some big bloke', Cllr Sue Fennimore (Hammersmith and Fulham Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion), Mark Hardy (General Manager of Furnish)

As part of a special event on September 13th "Social Saturday" which aimed to raise awareness across the UK of the benefits of Social Enterprise, we had a number of free tea and coffee a half price sofa sale and even accommodated our fellow social sellers cheesemongers the East End Cheese Board.

When we cut the ribbon at 10.15 to launch the day I was surprised and gratified to see a long line of local folk waiting to come in. A splendid time was had by all and as always with social enterprise everybody benefits.

Here are just a few other Social Enterprise businesses that might be of interest.

From Babies with Love - frombabieswithlove.org
Sells organic baby clothes and donates all profits to abandoned children around the world.

Belu - belu.org
The world's most ethical bottled water donates all its profits to the charity WaterAid.

Bikeworks - bikeworks.org.uk
The bike shop chain that trains people at risk of homelessness or unemployment.

Who made your pants? - whomadepants.co.uk
Lingerie made by women from refugee communities, who learn language and business skills on the job.

Divine Chocolate - divinechocolate.com
The chocolate company whose farmers get a slice of the profits to invest in their communities.

Brigade - thebrigade.co.uk
Dine at this London Bridge restaurant that trains homeless people to get qualifications in catering.

The Big Issue - bigissue.org.uk
Buy a copy and help homeless people earn a legal income.

So next time you buy - Buy Social!

Roy Clark

Reflections on Hucklow Summer School 2014



Caroline, Natasha & Rita out walking on the free afternoon.

This year there were 67 people at Summer School – our biggest ever. It is always a joy to be among friendly, enthusiastic people, but exhausting as well. Mealtimes are full of laughter, but 67 people laughing and talking at once can be a bit overwhelming. Add to that the intensity of the workshops and activities – some active, some meditative, all engrossing, rewarding but exhausting. By evening most of us are content but tired, and in need of some peace and quiet. And that is what summer school offers, with the final activity of the day – a short, peaceful service, called the epilogue, in the village chapel. We walk down by lantern light in silence, just as the sun is setting. The chapel seems built specifically for calm: a simple building of grey stone, surrounded by fields of sheep; sometimes you can hear them bleating from your pew. Different people lead the service each day, but the brief is always the same: it should be a moment of calm at the end of the day; no sermons, nothing challenging, just some music, a quiet hymn, a prayer, a reading chosen to offer closeness and comfort.

The timing of the epilogue is perfect: we walk down as the sun is setting over the hills and fields, and walk back, only 20 minutes later, by starlight. Sometimes you can see bats flying round the cottages. There are no lights on the way, and the lanterns make little points of light along the track. The day's programme is over. The epilogue is voluntary, but I don't think I have ever missed one over the years. I only wish I could bring it home with me, and finish every day in that exact way.

Caroline Blair



Carole, Natasha, Carol, Jane, Tyler and Jo travelling home.

The overarching theme for this year's Summer School was 'The Authentic Self' and this provided a rich and diverse seam of thoughts on just what is meant by those three words. For me the theme presented another opportunity to look at a subject that I have generally been pursuing for much of my life and, in particular, over the last three years that I have been fortunate enough to attend the Summer School at Great Hucklow.

I know that I have often felt the need to live my life being less than my true self. I also know that I have sometimes had to wear many different masks in order to get by. There has been a feeling that I am not being true to myself and the way I want to live my life but that, in order to survive some very difficult situations, I have had almost to play a part. However, since finding my way to John Pounds, the Unitarian Church in my hometown of Portsmouth, and then, quite soon after making the move up to London, I have felt less and less need to adapt this way of being.

So for me, as mentioned above, this year's theme presented me with another way of looking at a familiar topic. During the first year's engagement group I created a simple ritual for myself of letting go of some very old and rather negative ways of being that had served me well up to a point but no longer seemed relevant to the way I wanted to live my life now. Last year's theme entitled 'Living on the Edge' encouraged me to look at the ways I had quite literally been taken to the edge and back by the issues and concerns of my own life that were mine to confront and deal with in some way. This summer then was about identifying and living as the real me. The real Carol. Or to quote Jane - from the wonderful theme talk that she gave on Monday morning of summer school week - being my whole self, wherever I am, and whoever I'm with.

And I realise that this is what I want for myself. It is exhausting being other than who you really are. Sometimes it is necessary to approach situations and other people with caution - that is an unfortunate result of living in a world that is very often far from being the tolerant and receptive place that it could be - but it would seem to me that the task of trying to live a more spiritual life is to align as much of one's own world so that there is a congruence with inner and outer, how we live our lives at home and how we present ourselves out there in the wider world.

One of the things I most love at Summer School is also one of the most difficult things to come to terms with and that is that the whole week is a wonderful bubble of trying to live in a way that feels most authentic and as close to our true selves as we can only for the week to come to an end and then having to put those things into practice in the outside world. Not easy then. But that for me seems to be a big part of the work that needs to be done. And I would also say that an on-going commitment to attending Church, being part of the ritual of listening, exploring, praying, meditating, singing and all the other things we do in our religious community is a vital part of trying to live that more authentic life. I say that because I am someone who has found it quite difficult to admit that I go to church on a Sunday morning and that I am trying to live a more spiritual and religious life and that that is nothing to be ashamed of. And that is something I am going to make a real commitment to - just how important this newly developing faith is to me. I have much to thank Summer School for and I know that it is a very important part of my attempts to live my authentic life and be my true, whole self.

Carol Sheppard

Reflections on Hucklow Summer School 2014



Carol, John Harley, and Natasha out on the terrace.

As a first time attendee to Hucklow Summer School, and as a newcomer to this type of residential Unitarian retreat altogether, I really didn't know what to expect. Those who had been from Kensington urged me to apply and said it is a valuable and intense experience; it certainly was that for me.

The range of activities are excellent, with enough time to oneself if that is the preference on a given day or evening. The optional activities include talks, art sessions, and the opportunity to get out and enjoy nature and the spectacular views in the Peaks. I made the effort to rise early every day and start with a meditation which was the perfect way to focus on the day ahead in a quiet space.

I participated in the morning engagement group 'Coming Home to Ourselves' which explored our sense of home and belonging. We looked at places we have lived, those we have lived with, experiences that have caused us pain, along with losses throughout our lives. We worked on creating a visual representation in the form of a timeline of our life journey throughout the week, which gave us time to personally reflect on the small group exercises and thoughts that were shared in the circle. We wrote thank you cards to the others in the group on the last day to tell them what we appreciated about them. I am still carrying these cards with me to remind me of the deep connections made.

Another highlight of the week was going out one evening for a walking meditation where we walked very slowly and were encouraged to look at minute details of the things around us, finding the beauty in everything. We spent a long while staring at the sky and watching the ebb and flow of the clouds as the sun set, a local farmer walking his dog found us very strange indeed!

There are several things I took away with me from the week at Hucklow, most notably new friendships and a recognition that the Unitarian church is definitely my spiritual home.

I would like to thank the organisers and leaders for putting on a fantastic Summer School and I hope to come to Hucklow again in the future.

Natasha Drennan



Jane giving the first theme talk on 'The Authentic Self'.

I was glad to be returning to summer school this August after a year off – the first I had missed since I started attending in 2000 – making this my fourteenth summer school. I first went along in the insistence of Patricia Walker-Hesson who told me in no uncertain terms that I would love it (as was so often the case, she was right). Back then, I was extremely shy, and stayed on the fringes as much as I could. I enjoyed the experience enough to return the following year, of course, but was still a bit tentative about it all.

Over the years I gradually got more and more involved, first by helping to run the silent auction which raises funds to provide bursaries for people who would not otherwise be able to attend, then by joining the organising panel which puts summer school on, and eventually becoming a regular group facilitator. It is no exaggeration to say that summer school has changed my life and lured me into achieving things that I would not have thought I was capable of. For this reason, I am positively evangelical about summer school, and each year I encourage others to attend and experience it for themselves.

The one thing I never quite thought I would do, however, is give a summer school theme talk! Each morning, a different speaker is invited to talk for an hour and a quarter on the theme of the week, which this year was 'The Authentic Self'. When I was asked if I'd be one of the speakers I – surprisingly – said yes without (much) hesitation. It is a real honour to be asked and I instinctively felt it was a topic I would have something to say about. However, it was a really big deal for me, and way out of my comfort zone. I therefore insisted on going first, so that I could get my talk out of the way on Monday, and not have it hang over the entire summer school week! I then spent months on end worrying about doing a good job (and I agonised particularly intensely throughout August as the big day approached)... I am pleased to report that the talk went down really well in the end.

Jane Blackall

This year's series of theme talks are available to listen online via the summer school website or as a podcast via iTunes:

www.hucklowsummerschool.org.uk/themetalks2014.html



Jane with her chums, Mel & Ned Prideaux, at the end of the week.

Reflections on Hucklow Summer School 2014



Getting out all my papers and accoutrement (artwork, Playmobil figures etc.) to reflect on Summer School for this piece has made me wistful for my total immersion in Unitarianism. I have so many memories of the week it is hard to know where to begin.

Engagement groups: Mine was on 'Coming Home to Ourselves' and took place 2 hours a day for 6 days. It was a mixture of inspired readings, group work, work in pairs and individual work on timelines. We heard and supported each other (the work wasn't necessarily easy) and although it sounds quite pretentious we really did share our humanity. It was an absolute joy to come home with the little envelopes we created for each other containing appreciations from the rest of the group.

Optional activities: Too many to mention them all but I loved walking the labyrinth by candlelight, the local ramble, making sun prints and an 'in and out' swim in a cold river in breath-taking scenery where there was just us lot and the sheep.

Whole group sessions: The daily theme talks on various aspects of the Authentic Self were excellent - stimulating and sometimes challenging. I found Ralph Catts' Loving Kindness whole group exercise surprisingly powerful and will be purchasing the book 'The Most Human Human' on which Maria Curtis based her talk on artificial intelligence and the Authentic Self.

There were an awful lot of hymns sung and strangely I came to enjoy it all – more immersion! The week started off in the big group and there were nice touches, for example, we each chose a coloured piece of wool for our neighbour and wished each other something good for the week. At the end we told the group what we would be taking home from the week.

Tyler's week was filled with good experiences. His highlights include wild swimming (he stayed in a lot longer than I did!), the end of week bonfire and toasted marshmallows and walking Stella's dogs. Stella is the Manager of the Nightingale Centre. I would often find him playing football with the village kids on the football pitch and all the children would be carefully avoiding the wigwam sited in the middle of the pitch – what peaceful co-existence! Testament to the fact he was having such a good time he told me on the last night he did not want to leave. He was looked after and accepted by the Summer School community at all times, it was as if he had suddenly acquired 45 aunts and uncles.

Our return journey to London involved a detour to Norwich where we attended the Sunday service at the Octagon Unitarian Chapel. Here I heard the words 'Life in community isn't always easy but it's the only place to practise being human'. To me that described Summer School.

Jo Tye

'It is far easier, though not very easy, to develop and preserve a spiritual outlook on life, than it is to make our everyday actions harmonise with that spiritual outlook. That means trying to see things, persons and choices from the angle of eternity; and dealing with them as part of the material in which the Spirit works. This will be decisive for the way we behave as to our personal, social and national obligations. It will decide the papers we read, the movements we support, the kind of administrators we vote for, our attitude to social and international justice... Therefore the prevalent notion that spirituality and politics have nothing to do with one another is the exact opposite of the truth. Once it is accepted in a realistic sense, the spiritual life has everything to do with politics. It means that certain convictions about God and the world become the moral and spiritual imperatives of our life; and this must be decisive for the way we choose to behave about that bit of the world over which we have been given a limited control.'

Evelyn Underhill

Small Group Communion



**Sundays 12th October, 9th November
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**

On the second Sunday of each month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. These services are led by different members of the congregation. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we can experience a variety of different approaches. The line-up for the next couple of months is as follows:

12th October – Led by Tristan Jovanović

9th November – Led by David Darling

21st December – Led by John Hands

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



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

W L McKinstry (from *uuchristian.org*)

Breathing Under Water

I built my house by the sea;
Not on the sands, mind you,
not on the shifting sand.
And I built it of rock,
A strong house
by a strong sea.
And we got well acquainted, the sea and I.
Good neighbours.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences.
Respectful, keeping our distance,
but looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always, the fence of sand our barrier,
always, the sand between.
And then one day,
- and I still don't know how it happened -
the sea came.
Without warning.
Without welcome, even
Not sudden and swift, but a shifting across the sand like wine,
less like the flow of water than the flow of blood.
Slow, but coming.
Slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight and I thought of drowning
and I thought of death.
And while I thought the sea crept higher, till it reached my door.
And I knew, then, there was neither flight,
nor death, nor drowning.
That when the sea comes calling, you stop being neighbours,
Well acquainted, friendly-at-a-distance neighbours,
And you give your house for a coral castle,
And you learn to breathe underwater.

Carol Bieleck, RSCJ

Read by Rev. Joy Croft in a recent service.

A Rwandan talking to a western writer, Andrew Solomon, about his experience with western mental health and depression. (From 'The Moth' podcast, 'Notes on an Exorcism'.)

“We had a lot of trouble with western mental health workers who came here immediately after the genocide and we had to ask some of them to leave.

They came and their practice did not involve being outside in the sun where you begin to feel better, there was no music or drumming to get your blood flowing again, there was no sense that everyone had taken the day off so that the entire community could come together to try to lift you up and bring you back to joy, there was no acknowledgement of the depression as something invasive and external that could actually be cast out again.

Instead they would take people one at a time into these dingy little rooms and have them sit around for an hour or so and talk about bad things that had happened to them. We had to ask them to leave.’

Sent in by SC

Unitarian Women's Group Autumn Weekend Gathering

24th - 26th October 2014, Great Hucklow

'Life through a Lens'



Do you see everything through rose-tinted glasses, or does life look blue to you? Come and explore the different lenses we see our lives through in a weekend of discussion, creativity and lots of laughter (bursaries available and smiles guaranteed!) For more info, contact: Angela (amaher@theiet.org) or Kate (07870 322 519).

'Happenstance' Photography Exhibition



**Zer Café, 59 The Broadway, Crouch End
London N8 8DT, United Kingdom
Hours: 8:00 am –11:00 pm**

Our very own Roy Clark has an exhibition of his splendid photographs which runs until 4th November. Roy says: 'If you are passing through Crouch End in North London pop in to Zer Café and have a look.'

'Occupational Hazards'



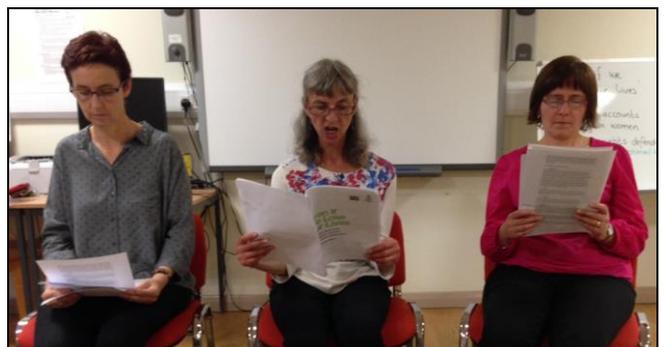
This is the title of Amnesty International's campaign to highlight the dangers women in Afghanistan face if they choose to work outside the home. Thanks to Carolyn Appleby for inviting us to her Hillingdon Amnesty group's recent scripted reading event, based on true life stories of women in Afghanistan. Entitled 'Even If We Lose Our Lives' the script, based on the words of three Afghani women – a doctor, a headteacher and a charity organiser, told us something of the pressures these women face. They and their families risk abuse and even death, yet they are prepared to campaign for their country and for women's right to work.

If you would like to know more then do ask to borrow Carolyn's script, which gives a most inspiring insight into these women and their courageous stance. They really are prepared to lose their lives for what they know to be right. You could meet one of these women at a World Teachers' Day Event focusing on keeping teaching and learning environments safe for women and girls:

World Teachers' Day Event

**Wednesday 1st October, 6-9pm at
The Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA**

Keynote Speaker: Parwin Wafa, an Afghan headteacher who has been threatened and suffered the kidnapping and brutal murder of her son after she opened a school for girls in eastern Afghanistan. A panel discussion and Q&A will be followed by an informal reception with refreshments, stalls from Afghan, teaching and human rights organisations, and an action centre where you can show solidarity with Afghan women .support workers' rights, and unite for quality education. This is a free event. Please book online at www.2014wtd.eventbrite.co.uk





A photo from our walk to the top of Horsenden Hill. Back row, L-R: Kate, Caroline, Jim, Ellen. Front Row, L-R: Carolyn, Jane, Roy.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful
friends and some genuine enemies.
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.
Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.
Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.
Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.
Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

These words are often attributed to Mother Teresa – they were reportedly written on the wall of her home for children in Calcutta – but in fact they seem to be based on a composition originally by Dr Kent M Keith. (for more info see: www.kentmkeith.com/mother_teresa.html)

Sent in by Carolyn Appleby

One Light Spiritual Gatherings 'Art'



**Friday 10th October 2014
6.30-8.15pm – Here at Essex Church**

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

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

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

For further information contact:
Interfaith Reverend Joanna Ryam 07929 836 935

*Forthcoming Gatherings: 10th October – Art;
14th November – Wisdom; 12th December - Gift of Light*

'Who Are You?'

As part of our service on 'The Authentic Self' on 24th August everyone was asked to respond to the question 'Who Are You?'

I am grateful. I am remembering and challenged to manifest my purpose in this lifetime. I am opening to the unknown and welcoming the revelation of what else I am here to be... do be do be do be do be do.

I am you, just different. A leaf in a tornado. A solid rock.

I can't answer – I no longer believe in identity – only a fluid, subtle responsiveness to the moment which arises – I do not control it, if it's "real" it arises "in between" and sometimes from "beyond".

I am a human being, concrete, no mystery, part of the fabric of society.

Female. Twin Sister. Writer. Leftie. Reader. Agnostic. Wife. Sister. Feminist. Esperantist.

Committed Unitarian at grassroots district, national and international level. Special interest in Central Europe.

Work in progress. Oh, to be released from those aspects that are unhelpful, thus allowing the real unconditioned self to shine through. As Ibn 'Arabi says 'you thought yourself apart, small, but in you there is the universe, the greatest.'

A mother, a daughter, a giver, people pleaser, a lover, childish free spirit, God's Child, spiritual, family-orientated, musical, stresspot, kind, happy.

I am Caio. I am a son.

I am Sam. I am a mum, a daughter, a sister, a friend.

I am the same and a different aspect to what you are and God is.

Male. Nowrotic. Logophile. Seeker. Finder. Wanderer. Masquer for Real. Dionysiact. Joker. Finder. Lazy Mystic. Liminal. Trickster. Enthusiast. Narcissist.

Something the Universe is doing.

I am a puss cat in human form.

Student of people, life, and self. Seeker. Honest. A giver, a listener. Universalist. A Ffriend. Vulnerable. A faffer. I make things happen.

Lover, liver, giver, taker, maker, faker, joker, non-smoker, walker, talker, open-minder... kinda.

I am the product of all that has gone before. I am in the process of connecting with the wider world. I am striving to be my whole self.

Exploring. A seeker, struggling to cope with failings, to deal with practicalities, to organise myself so that I can live with more genuine commitment to what I feel really matters instead of being bogged down in inertia or incapacity or mere laziness. Striving towards more nearly fulfilling potential – uniquely perceived.

Foodbank Update



Thanks to everyone who has donated so far to the food bank in the church foyer. We recently took the food collected to the Trussell Trust collection point, and they could not have looked more pleased. We asked them to give us a list of the scarcest foods and goods so we don't give stuff they are already over-supplied with – they were obviously not short of baked beans, for example. Top of the wish list was Smash instant mash – remember that some people may have no cooking facilities other than a kettle. Also ketchup, long-life fruit juice, UHT milk, tinned pies and stews, small packs of tea, coffee and sugar, and finally toiletries of all kinds including sanitary towels. Please consider dropping one of these products into the box when you are passing. It was very pleasant to see people picking their food parcels up, and seeing how pleased and relieved they were to get what they needed.

Caroline Blair

An UPDATED basic wish-list of items:

- Instant mashed potato
- Ketchup
- Long-life fruit juice
- UHT milk
- Tinned pies
- Tinned stews
- Small packs of tea
- Small packs of coffee
- Sugar
- Toiletries (including sanitary towels)

If you would like to donate any of these items please bring them along to church next time you come.



'Weakness and strength are necessary for balance. No one or nothing is only weak or only strong. But some of us overlook our weaknesses, and even deny that we have them. That can be dangerous, because denying there is a weakness is in itself a weakness. Likewise, accepting that we have weaknesses becomes a strength. And by the same token, overestimating strength is a weakness. You should not be blinded by your strengths. The feeling of strength is not the same as having strength.'

Joseph M. Marshall III



There was a great atmosphere and a bumper turnout for our congregational lunch after the service on Sunday 21st September.



Sue and Veronica helping out in the kitchen (many thanks to Carol too – not pictured)



Jim greeting district minister Rev. John Carter



[There is] a poster that is hanging in the school room at Dunham Road Chapel that reads "Unitarians: building bridges not walls". This, I believe, is the key to living religiously. True religion is about building bridges between what separates us from one another, from ourselves and from God. It's all about wholeness.

When we build these bridges we are atoning, we are becoming whole again. Atonement literally means at-one-ment. It is about bringing back together that which was once separate. I believe that to atone is to begin to build those bridges between our true selves, between one another and between God. This is true religion, building bridges that can begin to heal the troubles within ourselves and within our world. So let's not build walls that separate us from one another, let's instead build bridges of reconciliation between one another and all life. If we do we have already begun to build the Commonwealth of Love right here, right now. We can make ourselves and all life whole again.'

Rev. Danny Crosby

Bridges

Leaders in the world need to build bridges. Firm and strong bridges that generations after them can walk over. We need to reach for understanding. We need to apply all our kindness to make the bridges stay where they are. It's easy to burn bridges, sometimes you don't even need a fire to tear them down. Just a bit of water, snow or wind can destroy a bridge with no solid foundation.

Only, by always having people walking over the bridges holding hand with the people they meet on the other side, we can save the bridges and connect our minds and understand each other's differences.

© Digital Leadership Poems by **Sofie Sandell**

'The Maps of our Lives'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker – 31st August 2014

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

I'm strangely fond of old maps – the kinds that were drawn long before satellite images or proper surveying equipment – maps with strange creatures drawn in the seas and those evocative Latin words – terra incognita – unknown land – beckoning an explorer forwards to new adventures or perhaps warning the more wary traveller to keep away – all depending on your point of view.

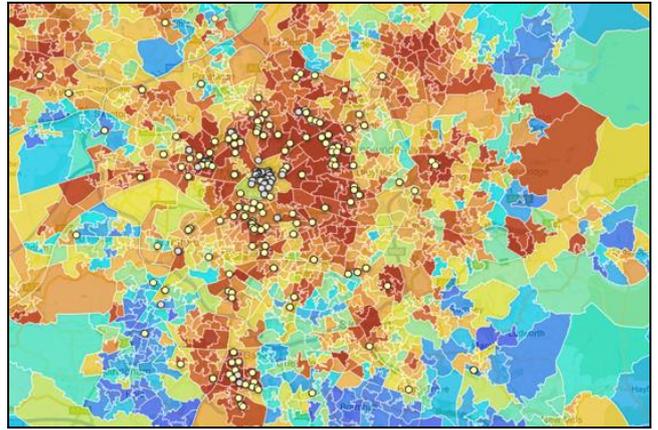
Maps in times gone by were largely works of fiction. They combined hopes and myths with bits of knowledge. There's a lovely example of such a map from south east Asia on the front of today's order of service (*see top of opposite page*), combining known landscape features like rivers and mountains with mythic places marking where events in the Buddha's life story occurred. Such maps were defined more by belief than by geography and such maps can be read – and when read they can tell us what's important to the people who commissioned and drew them. Many medieval maps from the western world have the city of Jerusalem in a central position because people's faith was oriented towards the so called Holy Land. In Islamic cultures you would find maps with the Holy City of Mecca at their centre.

In modern life, with the reverence we oft times give to our individual existences, we're likely to place ourselves at the centre of the maps of our own lives. A Mulla Nasrudin story illustrates this human tendency towards self-centredness – it's a story that resonates perhaps with the Health & Safety concerns of our own era. Nasrudin had apparently been reading that most accidents occur within two miles of our own homes and so in order to reduce his risk he moved house to a place three miles down the road.

But we can't escape from ourselves. We are the centres of our own universe and we view the world from our own perspectives. Perhaps the best we can hope for is to become more aware of our own bias and learn not to assume that our own perspective is the only way to consider the world, learn not to assume that our own perspective is the best way to view the world.

We heard an extract earlier from a book entitled *Off The Map: (An Expedition Deep into Imperialism, the Global Economy, and Other Earthly Whereabouts)*, written by Chellis Glendinning – an author who describes herself as "being in recovery from Western Civilization". She writes that "My entire education has been shaped by the defended, and banal, projections of conquest. The task now is to expand beyond the identity and experience of the empire world. It is to learn the stories so long squelched and denied: of native peoples, the vanquished, losers in war, survivors of conquest, the other side of the story. The task is to realize the culture and community that have been erased: knowledge of animals and seasons, music of the land, extended family, cooperation, celebration. The task is to remember. My people. Our history. The good and the horrendous, nothing left out, colonizer and colonized indelibly intermingled, indelibly embraced."

Our views of the world are shaped by matters of power, both economic and political. A simple illustration of that can be seen on maps showing the position north pointing upwards – it's a convention on maps and it stems from the economic and political dominance once held by countries of northern Europe. On a spinning globe there is no up or down – the directions



Jeannene called in at the start of today's service move in relation to where we ourselves are on the planet, move in relation to any fixed point.

If you're interested in exploring different forms of representation you might enjoy reading Bruce Chatwin's book *Songlines*, which was my first introduction to the Aboriginal Australian view of territory where human life, history, landscape, mythology, images and songs are all combined in one network of knowledge shared by all. It's a powerful reminder that there are many ways to view our precious world and the varied lives lived upon it.

There has to be bias in what we choose to include or exclude when making a map. A map is a physical representation of landscape but it can't include everything because if it did then the map would be as large as the territory – we would be covered by the map. Writer and mathematician Lewis Carroll delighted in exploring such ideas – he wrote of a country's leader who had tried out different scales of map:

"And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!"

"Have you used it much?" I enquired.

"It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr: "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well."

And so we all survey and select in our map making and in our living. We decide what to represent and what to leave out. On your hymn sheet today there is a map – a bit like the treasure maps you may have drawn in geography lessons at school. Beside the map are some questions for you to consider and perhaps to include in a map that could represent your life:

- What mountains have you had to climb in life?
- What helps to guide your path in life?
- What do you do when you feel lost?
- What seas, real or imagined, have you enjoyed sailing? What inner journey might you like to take?
- Are there safe harbours for you in life? How might you know when it's time for your ship to sail onwards?
- Have you known 'stuck' places that proved to be fruitful?
- What maps or guidebooks or other sources of information are useful for your journey of life?

‘Maps of Our Lives’ *(continued)*



And let's not forget the idea of viewing our own bodies as maps of our lives. Remember the words we heard earlier, written by ecstatic dance practitioner Gabrielle Roth, who created the Five Rhythms as a way for us to reclaim our whole selves through movement.

She writes that “Your body is the ground metaphor of your life, the expression of your existence. It is your Bible, your encyclopaedia, your life story. Everything that happens to you is stored and reflected in your body. Your body knows; your body tells. The relationship of your self to your body is indivisible, inescapable, unavoidable. In the marriage of flesh and spirit, divorce is impossible, but that doesn't mean that the marriage is necessarily happy or successful. So the body is where the dancing path to wholeness must begin. Only when you truly inhabit your body can you begin the healing journey. So many of us are not in our bodies, really at home and vibrantly present there. Nor are we in touch with the basic rhythms that constitute our bodily life. We live outside ourselves — in our heads, our memories, our longings — absentee landlords of our own estate.” Considering our bodies as maps of our lives, representations of our physical presence here on earth, can be a remarkably rich route towards deeper self-understanding. For every experience is in some way etched in our physical being.

A map is a guide — it can help us find our way. A map holds information for us and can pass it on to other people for their guidance. But a map is only as useful as the person reading it. I'm probably not the only one who has lost my way even with a perfectly good map in my hand — convinced that I knew where I was. So let's remember to check our guides in life from time to time, and remind ourselves, especially when we're sure that we're right, that it's worth stopping from time to time to take our bearings and have a good look round. Maybe we're not where we thought we were after all!

Just Another Manic Monday...



Mondays have long been the busiest day in the church diary — ever since we decided to have one day a week which we wouldn't make available for music exams so that we could take ongoing weekly bookings. On an average Monday, we now have 8 regular classes, but that hasn't stopped me from trying to squeeze in an extra one from mid-September.

Mondays start with our thrice-weekly Ashtanga Yoga self practice group, who start turning up around 8.30am. For a long time, there's been an uncomfortable overlap between the end of their session and the Monkey Music under 5s sessions — but I think we've finally resolved that now by getting the Monkeys to move into the larger church space and start a bit later. Monkey Music run three classes - 10.30 for 1+, 11.05 for 2+ and 11.40 for babies. There's actually a gap from 1-3pm — probably because youngsters are all napping - then from 3.30-5pm we have BabyBop with Miss Katie — or more precisely 3.30-4.15pm is Babybop (2-4 yr olds) and 4.15-5pm is Kiddybop (4-6 yr olds). While the Kiddies are still bopping in the Church, Marina Rogatcheva starts her Dancing Angels ballet classes in the Hall next door: 2-5pm for 4-6 year olds and 5-5.45pm for the almost unbearably cute 2s and 3s. Marina used to run a school in Moscow and has a strong following among Russian families in this area. The foyer is filled with chatting parents and burly minders during these ballet classes. Meanwhile the library is host to an after school Chinese choir — organised by local parents to help their children learn Mandarin.

After the 6pm watershed, children give way to adults. The most long-standing Monday booking — already here when I came — is the Sufi chanting group. Although they're down in the library, their chanting builds to such a crescendo that it's made it difficult to let the upstairs rooms. However, we're now used quite regularly by the London Meditation Centre, who manage to fit their meditation exercises into the quiet part of the evening and use the noisy part for questions and socialising. Another flexible group comes to practice Tai Chi — our deal with them is that we don't guarantee which room they can have (and occasionally they need to miss a week altogether) but we give them a 50% discount: this arrangement has enabled us to take one off bookings from time to time, or accommodate things like the church bible study group when that was running last year.

Finally the new group will be a Feldenkrais class, running from 6.30-7.30pm between ballet and Tai Chi. This is a welcome spin-off from the 3-day flute workshop that ran here in August and that I mentioned in my last article: one of the flute teachers that organised it is also qualified in the Feldenkrais 'Awareness through Movement' technique and asked if he could run a weekly class here — I'm very much looking forward to trying it ☺

Jenny Moy

Sunday Services at Essex Church

**5th October, 11am –
'Over and Over'**

Service led by Jane Blackall

In this service we will be considering the virtues of repetition and the ways in which it might help to deepen our spiritual practice, our collective worship, and our everyday lives.

**12th October, 11am –
'What's a Church?'**

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What's a church? A building? A community? An expression of divinity on earth? Let's find out what church means to us. This service will be followed by an inclusive small-group communion at 12.30pm led by Tristan Jovanović.

**19th October, 11am –
'Counter-Culture'**

Service led by Sarah Tinker and Symon Hill

We will be considering ways in which church communities have the potential to challenge some of the dominant values of today's society and modelling a different way of being in the world. How can we help bring about greater justice and peace? Symon is a Christian activist, pacifist, writer and trainer. He is an associate director of the left wing Christian think tank Ekklesia and will tell us more of his recent work including The White Feather Diaries project, a Quaker storytelling project.

**26th October, 11am –
'Where No-One Stands Alone'**

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this service we'll consider loneliness as part of the human condition and explore what we might gain from it.



The Meditational Fellowship Retreat Weekend

**November 14th to 16th 2014
Sarum College, Salisbury**



For further information about the retreat contact:
Richard Bober (Leader) 07884 251 294
Alf Withington (Bookings) 01942 733 553
or email: alf_withington@blueyonder.co.uk

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

5 th October:	Caroline Blair
12 th October:	Gina Bayley
19 th October:	Natasha Drennan
26 th October:	??? (<i>can you help?</i>)

Coffee:

5 th October:	Sue Smith
12 th October:	Juliet Edwards
19 th October:	Veronica Needa
26 th October:	Veronica Needa

Greeting:

5 th October:	Roy Clark
12 th October:	Annette Percy
19 th October:	Carol Sheppard
26 th October:	Allen Hawkin

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