



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: December 2015 / January 2016

What's On...

Thursday 3rd December, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' - 'Peace Within,
Peace Without' led by Roy Clark

Sunday 6th December, 11am-noon
'Blue Christmas'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Tuesday 8th December, 7pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 13th December, 11am-noon
'Christmas Carol Service'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and our Quartet of Singers

Wednesday 16th December, 6.30pm
'Responding to Christmas'
Led by Sarah and Michaela

Sunday 20th December, 11am-noon
'Winter Solstice Celebration'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th December, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Thursday 24th December, 5pm
'Candlelit Christmas Eve' led
by Sarah Tinker & Congregation

Sunday 27th December, 11am-noon
'Reclaiming Sin in Liberal Religion'
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Sunday 3rd January, 11am-noon
'Moments of Epiphany'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 7th January, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul' Spiritual Gathering

Sunday 10th January, 11am-noon
'Both/And'
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 10th January, 12.30pm
Small-Group Communion with Sue

Sunday 17th January, 11am-noon
'The Mystics' Path'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 17th January, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Thursday 21st January, 7pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 24th January, 11am-noon
'Journey to the Heart'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 31st January, 11am-noon
'Stormy Weather'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Give, Receive, Give, Receive, Give...

A Message from our Minister

They say that time flies when you're having fun. That must be the explanation for how speedily the last ten years of my life have whizzed by. It's just over ten years ago that I started this ministry with Kensington Unitarians, the most fulfilling work I've been involved with in a long working life. To describe ministry as a privilege sounds a bit toe-curlingly clichéd but it is a privilege to be part of people's lives, to hear of people's struggles and joys and to walk alongside one another on our life journeys. Over these last ten years I've gone through many life changes and witnessed similar changes in the lives of others. The difficult times have been made infinitely more bearable because others have reached out to help and support me.



As we move towards the year's end and towards Christmas, it's a suitable time to ponder giving and receiving. They form one of life's many cycles and our attitudes towards giving and receiving can tell us more about our particular take on life. Most of us have our favourite. We'll tend more towards one or the other. And some of us will remember times when we gave, motivated by secret hopes that we'd receive back maybe or get our own way. Giving can unconsciously become a means of control. Some of us will be more aware of yearning to receive, of feeling helpless and needing to be rescued perhaps.

But when giving comes from an open-hearted place in us it feels light and joyful and we expect nothing in return. And when we are receiving open-heartedly we are able to accept easily and graciously. Our lives are unequal and our giving and receiving will not always be balanced. There will be times when one or the other is in ascendancy.

A church community like ours can be a perfect place to experiment with giving and receiving and to take responsibility for maintaining a balance between the two. Kensington Unitarians exist and flourish because of our volunteers and all that they do, so a big THANK YOU to everyone who has contributed in any way to the running of this community over the past year. In the year ahead there will be plenty more ways to get involved and hopefully there will be times for all of us when we simply and graciously receive as well as times when we make a vital contribution to our community life.

All good wishes for Hannukah, for the Winter Solstice, for Christmas and the New Year.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Responding to Christmas' with Michaela and Sarah * 'Feel Free to Roam' by Carolyn Appleby *
'Making Change Happen': Report from Vision to Action Day in Sheffield by Carole Grace
* Emergency ICUU Appeal for Unitarians in Burundi * 'Meet the Neighbours': Annie Rose *
'The Beauty of Challenging Children' by Jonathan Crawford * 'Paths to Peace' by Roy Clark *
* FUSE 2016 * 'Our Body of Politics' reflection by Rev. Sarah Tinker and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursday 3rd December 2015 from 7-8pm

Thursday 7th January 2016 from 7-8pm

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



Come and join us for our monthly alternative spiritual gathering, with music and silence, words and prayers, and a chance to explore the evening's topic in relation to your own life. This will be followed by refreshments and fellowship. Our December gathering will be on the theme 'Peace Within, Peace Without' and will be led by Roy Clark.

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

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

6 th December:	Heidi Ferid
13 th December:	Brian Ellis & Runa Alam
20 th December:	Natasha Drennan
24 th December (5pm):	Carole Grace
27 th December:	Michaela von Britzke
3 rd January:	Alice Lambert
10 th January:	Alison Smith
17 th January:	Natasha Drennan
24 th January:	Ted Nist
31 st January:	Juliet Edwards

Coffee:

6 th December:	Kate Brown
13 th December:	Eliz Beel & Sue Smith
20 th December:	Ben Champion
24 th December (5pm):	Veronica Needa
27 th December:	Sue Smith
3 rd January:	Heidi Ferid
10 th January:	?
17 th January:	Sue Smith
24 th January:	Roy Clark
31 st January:	Jane Blackall

Greeting:

6 th December:	Gina Bayley
13 th December:	Carole Grace & Ted Nist
20 th December:	Annette Percy
24 th December (5pm):	Juliet Edwards
27 th December:	?
3 rd January:	Annette Percy
10 th January:	Roy Clark
17 th January:	?
24 th January:	Runa Alam
31 st January:	Natasha Drennan

**We'll need people to fill the gaps
in the January rota nearer the time so
do check your diaries and let Jane know
the rota slots you'll be able to fill.**

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

Responding to Christmas



Wednesday 16th December 6.30-8.30pm
led by Michaela and Sarah
Here at Essex Church

A classic Kensington Unitarians festive season group, with conversation and quiet reflection, readings and music, and followed by festive food and fun - an opportunity to explore our responses to the festival of Christmas and its many religious roots, to long dark nights and our ability to create meaning that we truly value. Please let us know you plan to attend.

Sarah Tinker

Kids' Club



Letting you know that we'll have a short Kids' Club break over Christmas and meet again in the New Year. So we won't be running children's activities on December 20th or 27th but we will be back on January 3rd and look forward to seeing you then.

Nadia Crippa

'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshops with Margaret Marshall



Sunday 17th January, 21st February 2016,
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm
(please note: no session in December and regular date will be third Sunday of each month in 2016)

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.

Feel Free To Roam



Are we making a prison for ourselves? In the media we repeatedly hear of so much brutality. This leads to suspicion and distrust of other people. Who is immune to this?

The recent atrocities in nearby Paris could make one think, 'Oh, I won't go in to London for fear of it happening to me. Oh, I won't make a journey abroad in case I die.'

And on a less drastic tack, many people have a fear of going out on the streets in the dark, for fear of being attacked. I have this fear sometimes. To counteract it I go for walks after dark. Walking is good for us. It is good to notice benign reality. Recently regardless of whatever damage fireworks do, it has been a pleasure to see the pretty, sparkling colours in the sky. In fact, most of the time on my evening walks I see nobody so I am not in danger from anyone. I live in a very friendly area, where everyone says hello or stops for a chat in the street. It is good to communicate with strangers, whether it's dark or light. What I notice here in any part of London is that we are all going about our business respecting one another, above all.

Don't let your fear imprison you.

Carolyn Appleby

Good Cause Collection of the Month

'Glass Door'

Homeless Support in West London Churches



Collection on Sunday 13th December

As London's largest emergency winter night shelter, Glass Door (formerly WLCHC) provides a safe, warm place to sleep for up to 100 men and women a night in partnership with churches across Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington, Chelsea, Barnes and Putney. Homeless guests also access advice, food, showers and laundry facilities year-round from our Chelsea drop-in day centre. Glass Door not only saves lives by providing refuge from the cold, we also help our guests build more stable futures.

For more information see: www.glassdoor.org.uk

Unitarian GA Youth Programme



Collection on Sunday 24th January

The GA Youth Programme follows the Unitarian ethos that we are all free to explore our own beliefs and views on life. The values of respect, tolerance and compassion towards others are reflected in the activities we offer. The youth leaders aim to create safe spaces where young people can explore their identity and direction in life. Participants are encouraged to celebrate diversity and difference in each other whilst cherishing all that binds people. The aim is to see young people relaxing, laughing and having fun together. Everybody's thoughts and opinions join together helping to create a rich and inspiring atmosphere. Activities are open to those who want to join a welcoming and encouraging community.

For more information see:

www.unitarian.org.uk/pages/youth-programme

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:

September - Mind - £270.47

October - Red Cross Syria Appeal - £168.42

'The purpose of life is *to be alive*. Not to gather successes, achieve, accumulate successes, or forge your body to fit a mould. It's simply to be alive. To touch, feel, sense, hear, see, and live in a dynamic flow of whatever arises in the moment; to accept the wild and crazy thoughts



that go through your mind, your animal nature, your wisdom, the fears that arise and grip your chest, the laughter that brings tears, and the joy that takes you beyond yourself. To be alive is to meet and accept every part of yourself – the scuzzy, sweet, passionate, talented, or slow. From this place of self-acceptance you can be a good friend to yourself and others.

This does not preclude achieving, learning, or taking good care of yourself, but you do so because your body, mind and energy converge to do whatever feels in harmony with the aliveness that you are.

From this point of self-acceptance our consciousness spills over into the vast expanse of human experience and we start to see the connections between all sentient life, between our brothers and sisters everywhere. Said another way, we start to experience love.'

Charlotte Kasl



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

**Second Sunday of the Month
from 2-3pm: 10th January 2016**

PLEASE NOTE – NO CLASSES IN DECEMBER

Midweek classes on TUESDAYS - 12.30-1.30pm

(please note that Tuesday classes will also be taking a break during December and will resume on 5th January)

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.

Making Change Happen: Report of a Vision to Action Day Held in Sheffield in November

Ever since I joined the Unitarians I have promised myself that I would learn more about this movement. When I decided to cut back on my teaching hours it coincided with joining the Committee and becoming involved with social justice. I also wanted to find a concrete way of expressing my gratitude for all the beauty and kindness which surrounds us. I wanted to find a way to express my prayer for loving kindness in practical ways.



I find Unitarians modest about their achievements so one way of seeking out this wisdom was to attend more national events and so the 'Making Change Happen - From Vision To Action' day was irresistible. If I had looked at the weather forecast which was a maximum 4 degrees and the train times meant I had to get up at 5.45 am on a Saturday I might have re-thought my decision. However, spending a day with 90 other Unitarians proved to be well worthwhile.

A similar vision meeting last year had led to a booklet of vision statements (worth reading in itself). Now we were being asked to consider our next steps as a movement. The introduction was about how we agree and follow through - not easy!! We need a plan for action. A helpful process put us in groups to consider particular issues.



- Ministry in all its forms
- Being relevant to the world
- Doing things differently
- Lifelong spiritual development
- Leadership
- Sustainability

I tackled our work in the world and doing things differently and Sarah joined the groups considering ministry in all its forms and lifelong spiritual development.

There were lively discussions about all aspects of Unitarian life. Do we need churches, does it have to be on a Sunday, how do we engage people with our questioning on difficult subjects. Could we accept the Golden Rule as a universal moral belief. We were still shocked by the attack on Paris however we were able to think about trying to understand the perpetrators and even consider forgiveness.

Some groups explored the nature of ministry and reminded us that we all minister to one another in one way and another. Could we offer more professional training for our volunteers and also offer our small group resources more widely. Unitarians are good at group work and offering facilitator training could get people more enthused.

We also asked ourselves whether we could be spiritual without a church. I pointed out that Kensington does a lot to invite people through the doors, it did not have to be a Sunday morning thing. It was clear that we are a comparatively well-resourced church and there was some discussion about whether there could be some mechanism whereby the rich could help the poor. These were lively discussions with no universal answers; what I noticed though was how engaged people were. A fascinating array of moral dilemmas were expressed regarding what had happened in Paris and would / should we 'go to war'. Unitarians do not have one stance on this or any other complex issue.

The day was well organised with an attempt to give everyone a voice, although I did notice how the proceedings were run almost entirely by men – they even made the tea! We didn't reach firm conclusions about ways forward. More time is needed to clarify our next steps but it was interesting to hear some examples of projects that are being developed.

The Bangor community are involved with campus ministry. One speaker has made connections with the Findhorn Community and plans to host a Unitarian gathering there. People from the Simple Gifts project in Bethnal Green spoke of their work of bringing 'diverse people to a shared table'. Other congregations offer a simple space for silence and meditation during the week. One of the day's themes was how can we best share good practice and learn from others. Our autonomous congregations too often feel they have to go it alone – how can we encourage our interdependence?

This was an inspiring day and I left wanting to take the message of social justice work being a spiritual practice back to our congregation and out into our wider world.

Carole Grace

Emergency ICUU Appeal to Support Unitarians in Burundi

The Unitarian Church of Burundi is in the midst of crisis, under attack from their government for reasons of religious identity. The church has been attacked, ransacked and robbed. Church members, including the minister the Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana, have been jailed, threatened, and forced to flee for safety.

As of 24/11/15 the Rev Fulgence Ndagijimana remains in police custody but he is being "reasonably" treated. He has full access to his lawyers and both Rev Steve Dick (ICUU) and Rev Eric Cherry (UUA) have been able to speak directly with Fulgence.

Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists around the world are taking action – from the Philippines to Canada, South Africa to the USA, Romania, the UK and beyond. Embassies, United Nations officials, congressional and other governmental offices, and human rights organizations have been contacted and asked to join in our efforts to bring this persecution to an end. We are working together on many fronts.

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists asks for your help in these efforts. Beginning with the members of our Francophone East Africa coalition, congregations which have supported the development of U-U-ism in East Africa for several years, we are calling on all our member groups and contacts around the world to help raise funds in support of Unitarians in Burundi.

Your donations will enable help for displaced persons, address legal fees and building repairs, and let our siblings in Burundi know with certainty that they are not alone – that they are indeed part of a global Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist community. We welcome your participation.

You can donate online via credit card or PayPal (visit the ICUU webpage for a link to donate: www.icuu.net)

Cheques in pounds sterling can be sent to Burundi Appeal, ICUU, 345 Addiscombe Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7LG, UK

"When strangers meet,
endless possibilities emerge:

New experiences,
new ways of understanding,
and new ways of taking action.

When strangers meet,
each pays special attention
to the other.

Each is called to serve
something larger than the self.

Today, this morning,
let's light the chalice:

For openness,
for willingness to grow,
for rich curiosity and,
for common purpose."

Rev. Fulgence Ndagijimana



[Note: A collection for this Appeal was held at the Vision Day event in Sheffield on 21 November 2015 and raised £346.70 – Derek McAuley]



'Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbours worthy, if anything can.'

Thomas Merton

Festival of Unitarians in the South East: FUSE: 19th-21st February 2016 Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing



Join over a hundred spiritual seekers for a weekend by the sea, filled with celebration, inspiration, and education. Over twenty workshops on leadership, worship, community, social justice, personal growth and spirituality. Inspirational worship that speaks to the diversity of belief in our community. Full children's programme led by John Harley and Liz Hills. Inclusive and accessible space.

Cost of the full conference weekend, adult: £245 (single room), £195 (shared room). Take advantage of the early bird discount of £20.00 if you book before 1st December. There will be a limited number of bursaries available that will cover up to 50% of the registration costs. Our Essex Church committee are also interested in helping people to attend so please speak to Sarah if you'd like to go.

For more information on programme, prices and registration see: www.fusefest.org.uk

'Journey to the Heart'

Service on Sunday 24th January

Join us for a special treat on 24th January when we will be joined by musicians who will introduce us to ancient gnostic rhythms, played on a Persian frame drum.



Small Group Communion



20th December, 10th January
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:

20th December (*irregular date*) – Tristan Jovanović
10th January – Led by Sue Smith

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

Hucklow Summer School 'This Changes Everything'

20-27th August 2016, The Nightingale Centre
Great Hucklow in the Peak District



Make a note of the dates for next year's summer school. More details will be released by the end of the year and we can promise you a great programme of engagement groups and theme talks. Group facilitators for 2016 are Lindy Latham & Elizabeth Birtles; Michael Dadson & Jo O'Sullivan; Katie McKenna & Robin Hanford; Margaret Kirk & Cody Coyne. John Harley will be our minister of the week. If you would like to find out more about Hucklow Summer School speak to Jane Blackall.

One Light Spiritual Gathering 'Gifts of Light'



Friday 11th December, 7-8.30pm
also Friday 9th January, 7-8.30pm
Here at Essex Church

One Light Spiritual Gatherings are offered by Joanna Ryam and Suzanne Cohen. We are open hearted One Spirit Interfaith Ministers offering blessings, celebrations, services and spiritual counselling to people of all faiths and none. Members of the Association of Interfaith Ministers - trained and ordained by the Interfaith Foundation. In response to requests, we're are going to start 30 minutes later than usual at 7pm to allow more time to get to gatherings from work. This means that the service part of the gathering will finish at 8.30pm and because of the lateness, we won't be sharing a pot-luck supper. However, you are most welcome to join us for tea and cake until 9pm if you wish.

For further information contact: onelightlondon@gmail.com



Looking for Young Unitarians Behind the Iron Curtain

On 30th December 1965, just fifty years ago, I set off by train from Frankfurt to look for Young Unitarians behind the Iron Curtain. I had been working for the Youth Department at Unitarian Headquarters since the previous March but was already immersed in the International Religious Fellowship, our youth movement for liberal religious youth in Northern Europe and the US, and in July 1965 I had taken on responsibility for links with Eastern Europe. Our conference in Scotland that year had been attended by a Czech and a Pole and the Czech had invited me to spend New Year in Prague.

Boris was the only person I knew in Prague and I must admit to being a bit nervous as I sat in the train for about 11 hours hoping that he would be there to meet me. There was snow everywhere and at the last station before the Czech border most of the passengers left the train. Those who remained leant out of the train windows to buy nets of oranges to take to fruit-starved Prague. The train crossed the border through a cutting guarded by watch towers with guards armed with machine guns but in contrast the first people I saw on the other side of the border were kids playing ice hockey on frozen puddles.

I arrived at the station in Prague at about 6.45 p.m. It was a miserable evening and everything was grey and gloomy, but there were three people waiting to welcome me. Boris was there, and also a man and a girl of about my age holding a small bunch of bright pink cyclamen. The cyclamen glowed in the darkness and Zdenka who held them is still a good friend.

Boris took me by suburban train to a village on the edge of Prague where I was to stay with him and his wife. When I awoke the next morning they had already left but there was a message to tell me to take the bus into Prague to meet Boris. We went to the main police station in Bartolomějská where I was supposed to register with the police within 24 hours of arrival. It was New Year's Eve and the police told us to go away because they were already celebrating! I was deeply concerned that I would not be allowed to return to Czechoslovakia if I didn't have the necessary stamp on the visa in my passport.

We went to the Unitarian building in Karlova Street and I was introduced to the minister, Dušan Kafka, and to a group of people from the Youth Circle who were there for an English lesson. I attended a New Year service, was shown some of the sights of Prague and started on a round of visits to young people from the group. Food was short and not very varied but my hosts had worked miracles and I enjoyed the national dish of pork, dumplings and sauerkraut five times in five days.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the young people better and Dušan Kafka suggested that since the young Czechs had no chance of getting visas to visit us I should bring a group of young people from IRF to Prague in the summer. They would be given hospitality and the young people would be our guides.

I returned in the summer of 1966 with a group which included British, Dutch, and Swiss friends. The political situation was relaxing a little by that time and some of the young people were allowed to come with us to our IRF conference in Offenbach-am-Main and then on to London to attend the IARF Congress. I was among those who slept on camp beds in the basement of the old Essex Church.

In 1967 my Dutch friend Paulien and I spent a week in Prague and then a week in Budapest getting to know Hungarian young Unitarians and the following year eight of us from the UK, Holland, Germany and Poland went by car through Prague and Hungary and into Romania to spend a week celebrating 400 years of Unitarianism in Transylvania and to meet young Unitarians there.

It was August 1968 and when we got back to Budapest we heard the news that the Russians together with the Warsaw Pact troops had invaded Czechoslovakia and the political situation which had seemed to be improving became very much worse.

Censorship of letters was at a peak, phones were bugged, and I decided to return to Prague in February 1969 to try to get a clear picture of what was happening. I took messages from members of the Prague Youth Circle who were now refugees in England to their families but our conversations were limited because the only language I had in common with their parents was German. My friends' mothers were eager for more detailed news and this made me more determined to communicate better with them.

I enrolled in evening classes in Czech in September 1969 and continued my journeys to Prague and subsequently to other parts of Czechoslovakia, especially in 1970 on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the founder of Czech Unitarianism, Norbert Fabian Čapek. In 1971, on a visit to a Unitarian family in Brno, I met my husband. But that's another story ...

Annette Percy

'Timeless Waves, Arms of Rock' Retreat



Pilgrimage to Inishmore, Aran Islands Ireland - 16-25 July 2016 with John Harley and Lindy Latham

Our retreat will include eight days of creativity, walks, exploration of ancient sites, meditation, storytelling, living mindfully, reflecting together and relaxing. Each day there will be time for group workshops and activities, sharing and free time. We will start each day with a sharing circle after breakfast so we can deepen our experiences and support each other. Each day will involve shared activities for all the group and free time for your own exploration or relaxation. People of all faiths and none are welcome. No previous experience of retreats or art necessary.

Accommodation: Mainistir House is a simple and homely hostel offering dormitory style beds and a few doubles/singles. It's a fun place to stay with very good vegetarian food. For those wishing for a little more luxury and space there is a B&B with en- suite rooms just over the road.

Costs: There will be a non – refundable deposit of £150 - this covers the leaders' expenses and materials – deadline for this is 1 April 2016. (10% discount for deposits received before 1 January). Flights from London to Shannon from around £75. Transport from Shannon to Inishmore via bus and ferry - around £35. 8 nights in Mainistir House – including breakfast and evening meal - £225. Retreatants to pay for their own flights and to book accommodation directly with hostel or the B&B after paying the deposit to the leaders. Retreatants may want to bring a little extra money for possible bike hire, a "pub" meal Irish style, and of course, the inevitable tempting tourist shop full of wonderful Aran knitwear!

Booking form available at www.beherecreate.co.uk

We hope you can join us! Any questions at all? email Lindy at lindy@belindalatham.co.uk or John at jharley@unitarian.org.uk or if you would prefer to speak to us: Lindy – 0117 950 7906 and John at 0208 670 9280



Christmas at Essex Church

Dates for your Diary



Carol Service and Christmas Lunch Sunday 13th December, 11am & 12.30pm

Bring your friends along to enjoy singing familiar Christmas carols on 13th December... and also bring some food and drink to share for a shared lunch (keep an eye out for a sign-up sheet nearer the time and let us know what you plan to bring).

Candlelit Christmas Eve Thursday 24th December, 5pm

We will be holding our candlelit service at 5pm on Christmas Eve. There will be time for a cup of tea and maybe a mince pie or two afterwards.

Christmas Eve Meal Thursday 24th December, 7pm

A small group from the congregation plan to go out for a meal at a local restaurant on Christmas Eve (as has become our tradition). If you would like to join us please let Jane know so she can book a table: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.



'One must live in the middle of contradiction, because if all contradiction were eliminated at once, life would collapse. There are simply no definitive answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.'

Barry Lopez

Warden's Column

In the last few days, we suddenly seem to have plunged from early autumn into winter. I'm very lucky that (with a warm church above and beside it) my flat doesn't require much additional heating – but I now have to turn the radiators on to get the tea-towels to dry and I've started wearing socks in bed.

Although a bit idiosyncratic, the church heating is generally pretty effective. The boiler is hidden away at the end of a long dark tunnel, which you have to crawl into through a hatch obscured by a leaflet display stand behind a locked door saying "Beware of the Leopard" [i] – but it's quite efficient and we're lucky to have an engineer willing to service it for us promptly on the odd occasions where it does go wrong.

The wall-heaters in the Lindsey Hall are a trap for the unwary, because although they spring to life encouragingly when you turn them on at the wall and start industriously blowing air into the room – if the central heating isn't on elsewhere, this is actually cold air. To get any appreciable increase in temperature, you need to turn up the lobby thermostat enough for the whole system to come on. However, this mainly effects regular users (e.g. yoga classes) who want extra warmth on days that aren't really that cold – and they've all got the hang of it by now.

The upstairs toilets used to be freezing (but installing double-glazing has sorted that out) and due to there being no valve on the radiator, the downstairs toilet often resembles a sauna (but nobody seems to mind).

The problem area for the last few years though, has been the main church space, which is a particularly tricky room to heat – because of the ceiling height and the single-glazed skylights. The gas fires that were installed in 1972 have proved very effective – but unfortunately, this particular model (fitting exactly into the purpose-built alcoves) has now gone out of production and there's nothing similar on the market.

While we work on a longer term solution, Sarah & I put our heads together to come up with the most helpful notice for hirers we could manage (now on display next to the church thermostat). My favourite instruction is number three

3. The heater by the door opposite is temperamental. If red light is not on: turn temperature dial off and on again (you should hear a click) and wait 20 seconds – repeat until red light comes on (prayer can also help)

I laughed when Sarah first told me her "prayer" technique – but having seen how remarkably effective it is, I've had to eat my words and adopt it too. So whatever your general attitude to intercession, if you need to get the worship space up to temperature in a hurry one Sunday morning, I highly recommend directing some healing energy to the heater by the garden door!

Jenny Moy

[i] This is literally true (well ok, the "Beware of the Leopard" sign is a quote from Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, but the rest is true) & I'm quite willing to do a guided tour for anyone intrepid enough to check.



Harnessing Anger:

Learn Creative Ways to Unlock Your Potential on a Journey to Wholeness
Led by Susie Courtault and John Harley
Saturday 23rd January, 10-5pm at Brighton Unitarian Church

A day workshop with opportunities for exploring the emotion of anger in a safe environment through a range of approaches including art-making, group work and mindfulness techniques. Learn about your anger style and the clearing process in order to access your aliveness and your stored power. No particular arts experience is needed and all materials are provided. All are welcome, from any spiritual tradition or from none. Please wear clothes you are comfortable to paint in. Please bring some food to share for lunch – savoury or sweet. Cost £40 waged to £25 concessions. Advance booking essential.

For further information: johnnigelharley@yahoo.co.uk and scourtault8@gmail.com

Location: Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road, Brighton, E. Sussex, BN1 1NF

For travel information go to: www.brightonunitarian.org.uk



The Beauty of Challenging Children

Congregation member Jonathan Crawford is a school learning mentor and life coach.

My father often tells the anecdote of how my brother learnt to say his first word...

"Steven, don't go near the fireplace - It's hot!" he warned.

But Steve looked confused.

"Huh?"

"Yes, hot!" replied Dad.

Unbeknown to Dad, Steve actually didn't know what 'hot' meant, but he did as he was told, because Dad had that familiar serious look on his face. Trusting Steve, Dad briefly stepped out of the room to grab his reading glasses.

"Hot!" screamed Steve from the other room.

Well, if he didn't know what hot meant, he certainly knows what it means now...



In my role as a Learning Mentor, I work with primary school children who are identified as exhibiting challenging behaviour. However, over the years, I have begun to see a pattern emerge in the motives of many of the so-called disruptive children. To make comparisons: the 'good' children are labelled so, simply because they do not challenge authority. They can thrive in a rote learning environment by following instructions and memorising abstract theories and codes. This makes life stress free for a teacher, and safe for the child. On the other hand, challenging children will challenge authority. Irrespective of social norms or traditions, they demand to know why they must conform to certain rules, why they must conduct themselves in a certain way, and why they should exert effort into learning subjects they don't enjoy. Abstract theories or "just is" answers do not make sense to them. They are therefore suited to more experience based learning. However, these children are often labelled as 'bad', 'disruptive' or 'high risk' - but are they?

If an authority figure were to abuse his or her position, which of the two child profiles is more at risk to being taken advantage of, or even worse, groomed? Without challenging social norms, how can a child find tomorrow's answers to the problems this generation has bestowed on them? How can a child learn to be creative, unpredictable or innovative? How can we produce tomorrow's leaders who will stand up against injustice?

In nativity plays, we traditionally tell the story of the 'Good' Baby Jesus, but when we look a little closer at the Bible's account of Jesus, we see that Jesus was a challenging child who questioned authority, and became a very disruptive adult.

In a world where only 1% of the world population own over 50% of the world's wealth, do we really need another generation of 'Good' children? Or should we encourage our children to challenge authority until they get the answers that make sense?

Jonathan Crawford

Assisted Dying

I regularly attend Dignity in Dying's faith leaders' group, which aims to educate us about assisted dying and to explore theological and moral issues relating to this emotive subject. At a recent meeting we heard internationally renowned pain consultant Professor Rajesh Munglani speak about his support for assisted dying. He was very clear that there are still many circumstances in which end of life pain cannot be alleviated, hence his support for assisted dying, within strictly limited parameters. We heard that amongst those opting for assisted death in places like Oregon where it is legally available, pain relief was a lesser issue than a perceived loss of autonomy, a lack of meaning in life and a wish no longer to be dependent on others. In Oregon, where assisted dying has been available for 18 years, it is notable that many terminally ill people seek a prescription but then do not choose to use it. In that time there have been no cases of abuse, nor any calls to extend the legislation to cover other categories of people.

Dignity in Dying's chief executive Sarah Wootton spoke of the disappointing result in the recent House of Commons debate on this issue and noted that the vote, which was 3 to 1 against, is not in accord with public opinion. Over 82% of us would now support a change in the law in favour of assisted dying for terminally ill adults, but because this is such an emotive issue, arguments supporting legislative change can be hijacked by other concerns. The faith leaders' group agreed to encourage conversations about this topic and to ensure an understanding that such a legal change would have no effect on the lives of the disabled, the mentally unwell or those suffering from dementia. If this topic interests you do let's have a talk sometime.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'Paths To Peace'

Address by Roy Clark from our Remembrance Service on 8th November

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

As we gather here on Remembrance Sunday, I suspect that for many of us it is a very difficult day. This is for a variety of reasons and not all of them shared by everyone.

It is of course a day designated by the government as a time to officially remember and honour the military personnel who fought on behalf of this country in various conflicts since 1914. Whilst seemingly an ideal opportunity to collectively reflect on war and its outcomes, it is for some of us difficult not to conclude that the ceremonies and the poppy appeal are (in part) used as justification for the furtherance of war, and furthermore mask a moral hypocrisy deep in the heart of the state.

Whilst publicised as a unifying event, it does in fact only add to the disquiet of those like me who see the issues of war and its appropriate commemoration as far from black and white. Whether it is the pointless and wholesale slaughter of WW1 or the dropping of the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945 how can such acts ever be justified?

Among the other questions I ask myself are... is it right to bracket the sacrifices of the conscripted and volunteer men and women who fought against Nazi tyranny in the Second World War with professional soldiers sent to fight in recent dubious conflicts in the Middle East which I and millions of others do not support?

Yet these young women and men in our modern army who are killed or maimed doing what they see as their duty and the families they leave behind ...need our loving care too.

Another question; should the government force military veterans to depend on charities such as the Royal British Legion rather than fund their care and those of bereaved families through the public purse?

How do we justify the blanket bombing and ground fighting in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan and the inevitable untold numbers of murdered civilians? The human misery of loss of home and displacement which has led to the current refugee crisis are all too obviously a direct result of the wars waged and supported by the West. I take no pleasure from seeing that all that we foresaw happening, and marched and protested against before the Gulf Wars, come true.

The twisted logic that "might is right" which sustains and feeds the arms trade is another difficult fact to be wrestled with.

These and other similarly morally convoluted issues are what we all have to consider and in some cases untangle in order to make sense of and come to our own honest accommodation with an open and informed heart.

However for me there is an extra poignancy to Remembrance Sunday as it was on this day 18 years ago that my own dear Dad passed away.



Over the intervening years since that day, I have often reflected both on his life and the sacrifices made by his generation. Of all wars from the 20th century up until now, it is fair to assume that the Second World War has affected most of us sitting here in church today more than any other. We either grew up during it or in its aftermath, or were born to parents who had lived through it and in the case of my father fought in it.

My Dad answered the call up in 1939 and joined the Navy. He was on a destroyer, working on the perilous but essential Arctic and Atlantic convoys before later in the conflict being posted to India, Burma, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and South Africa.

Dad was a modest unassuming sort of chap, an ordinary working class bloke who had already endured a life of hardship and deprivation growing up in the London of the 1920s and 30s. He rarely spoke of his wartime experiences ... in truth he was not very good at articulating his feelings. However I think he would, if pushed by me, have said something along the lines of ... I decided to fight as the country was in direct and immediate danger of being invaded, and totally subjugated by a state led by a fanatical despot which was threatening our way of life, our freedoms and the lives of our fellow citizens.

Millions of people from these shores and across what is now the Commonwealth came to much the same conclusion.

Given the situation that was engulfing Europe and indeed the world, if we had found ourselves in Dad's position...what would we have done?

If on the way home from this morning's service you were unfortunate enough to witness a vicious assault, a robbery ... a rape? Would you intervene if this meant having to resort to a violent act possibly an extreme one to protect the victim? The truth is we just don't know how we would act or react until confronted with the situation. I think I would always step in in these circumstances. I am a peaceable man, a gentle person, I rarely get angry, but just cannot bear to see anyone hurt, exploited or abused.

It is now often forgotten that one corner of Britain was in fact occupied by the Nazis during WW2; The Channel Islands. Visualise for a moment if you will, what it would be like to watch while friends and neighbours were rounded up and taken away, shipped out to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. The local school teacher, the couple who ran the village grocery shop, the postman and his family ...because they were Jewish, homosexual, or considered mentally or physically impaired in some way. I don't think I could stand by without doing something ...and neither did Dad.

'Paths To Peace' (continued)

That is not to say that I think I am right and am closed to other interpretations, responses and conclusions. I don't believe that folk that in all good conscience came to a different view as to how to respond in the crisis were wrong. I believe that if one is receptive to the stirrings of one's true inner voice... (never an easy one to listen to) we will be able to act from our being and find what is the right thing to do.

I have nothing but admiration for the many conscientious objectors who chose to work in auxiliary roles in WW1 and WW2, on the land, in the mines, driving ambulances etc.. It takes tremendous courage to be true to yourself in the face of majority opinion and outright hostility. To refuse to fight on the grounds of pacifism is hard, and I admire the courage and respect the integrity of those that do.

Violence begets violence. This is a fact. Whenever people speak of the success or positive outcome achieved by violent struggle, revolution, or war, I always find myself reflecting on the individual tragedies. Try telling the widow of the policeman killed on duty or the husband of the woman and baby blown up by the bomb of the terrorist/ freedom fighter that they were a necessary sacrifice. Would you be able to look those left behind squarely in the face and say that the loss of loved one and the ruined lives were worth it?

Individual wars and conflicts have many causes of course, but ultimately war stems from social problems that are not addressed. If we do nothing, do not respond even in small active ways in our everyday lives to try to do what we can to help each other and fight injustice then as surely as the sun rises the poison will grow and spread. Surely that is one reflection and determination we can all agree today.

The paths to peace and the same as they have ever been. Compassion, empathy, kindness, understanding, honesty, fairness, justice. These are all amongst our many tools for building a world that works for everyone with nobody left out... and unconditional love of course is our greatest weapon.

But If this is so, why has it not worked or at least gone so catastrophically wrong on so many occasions in our recent history? Is it naive to think that love is the answer? Well of course I don't know for sure, but I believe it is because there was simply not enough of it deployed.

With the benefit of hindsight we can see the causes of the Second World War which include the discriminatory and unfair Treaty of Versailles imposed upon the German state after WW1, and the deprivations of the Great Depression During the 1920's and 30's. These situations and injustices fed into and fuelled the perverted views of humanity and life propagated by sick individuals and groups giving rise to the Nazi and other fascist and totalitarian states.

Many people from many nations worked ceaselessly during those years for peace in the form of democracy, economic and social justice. but as it transpired they were too few... with the result that in 1939 people like my Dad and his generation were left to make a terrible choice.. We must do more.

I wear a red poppy and a white poppy at this time of year. The former (for me) is in recognition of those who lost their lives, combatants and non-combatants alike. For the countless millions of victims of the madness, death and destruction of war.

And the white poppy? The white poppy (for me) represents hope and in its way defiance and determination to show that there is always a choice, always a better way. It also is a symbol of my determination to work in any way I can however small towards that end. Amen.

Playing an Important Part in Couples' Weddings: Can you Help?

Over the summer I was delighted to enable two couples to become legally married, here at Essex Church by signing the Marriage register with them and their two witnesses. This role is known as being an "Authorised Person".

I've recently started applying to registry offices for part time work, however, and as I'm not allowed to hold the role as "Authorised Person" and work as a registrar at the same time, I have decided to give up the role at the church.

So, we're now looking for someone else to take over. It's a paid occasional role, where you'll receive full training.

If interested, please speak with me or get in touch with Sarah Tinker - sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk



Jeannene Powell

'Our Body of Politics'

Address by Rev Sarah Tinker from 22nd November

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

"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation." — Mahatma Gandhi

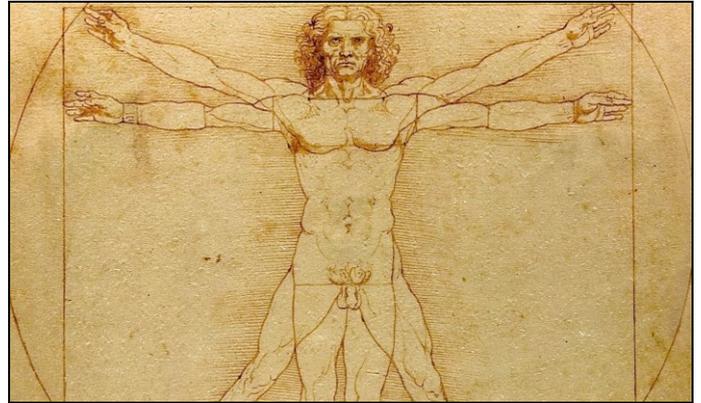
It may still be a bit too early on a Sunday morning to get ourselves too excited, but if you take a look at the front of today's order of service this is probably the only naked body we'll see in church today. In case you've not met this particular body before he's known as Vitruvian man – drawn by Leonardo da Vinci from an idea by Roman architect Vitruvius. It's about proportion of the human form and the idea that perfect proportions are pleasing to the human eye, can be found in the natural world and can be replicated in art and architecture.

If I was to sum up my message today it would be that we Unitarians have some vital tasks – to reclaim imperfection, to celebrate diversity, and to raise our own awareness of other people's life experiences. Yes perfect proportions are pleasing to the human eye but this is not a real human being – it is an image – and we are capable of going beyond external images to the wholeness that makes a human being, a real living being.

But let's start with vegetables. Parsnips to be precise. We have celebrity chef and restaurateur Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall to thank for his campaign to highlight the amount of food wasted here in Britain. He's been highlighting the plight of farmers who have any vegetables that are different from the norm rejected by supermarkets. They are usually forced to plough them back into the ground. One Norfolk farmer recently had to do just that with 40% of their parsnip crop because they were not a perfect shape.

What Fearnley Whittingstall is trying to do could be described as consciousness raising. His campaign aims to make us all more aware of what is happening behind the scenes, he's bringing an issue that was hidden out into the open to be discussed by ordinary people. These conversations and his campaign may bring about change. The term consciousness raising first emerged in the 1960s as part of the feminist movement. Women gathered together in groups to talk about their experiences of gender inequalities. Such conversations filtered out into wider society and helped to bring about change. The Equal Pay Act of 1970 is a good example. I still remember being paid less than my boyfriend when we both did the same job in a pub. I can imagine some of you here today will have similar memories. Feminist consciousness raising was borrowed as an idea from the Civil Rights Movement where it was called 'telling it like it is' – an encouragement for people to tell their life stories so that they themselves can better understand their own experiences and can put their individual experiences into a wider context. Hence the famous statement that 'the personal is political'. Every life is lived within a wider social and cultural context and is affected and even shaped by the world in which we live.

In the time of recorded history we humans have made steps forward in our awareness haven't we? No world government now allows slavery – though there is much work still to be done on hidden slavery – indentured labour and other practices which limit the freedom of individuals. The idea that one human being could own another human being was once common and it no longer is. If any of you are Biblical scholars you'll know that there are various passages in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures that tell people how to treat their slaves. They were



written thousands of years ago and are no longer appropriate in the 21st century. That's why most religious liberals regard the Bible as the work of humanity rather than God. That's why we despair at times when the word of the Bible on issues such as same sex relationships is used to oppress people and to try and stop them from loving the people they love.

In many of our lifetimes we have witnessed countries like the United States and South Africa introduce equality laws to stop the legally sanctioned unequal treatment of people because of race. Here in Britain we now have equal marriage legislation – with some of the campaigning for that issue carried by our Unitarian movement. Here in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea there are 80 churches and we Kensington Unitarians are the only one registered to conduct same sex marriage ceremonies. I'm proud that we're putting faith into action in this way. We support the inherent worth and dignity of each person. In Gandhi's words we find 'unity in diversity'.

I wonder what forms of inequality each of you has experienced in your lifetime. We all have stories to tell, don't we?

And there will always be more consciousness raising to be done. November is designated as Transgender Awareness Month. I was saddened to hear that a transgender woman Vicky Thompson had taken her own life this week after being sent to a male prison in Leeds. She was just 21 years old. There is much more I personally need to know about the experiences of people who identify as transgendered. As a congregation we have gender neutral washrooms – a small first step – but there will be so much more we need to know about how to be truly welcoming.

I personally want to understand much more about the lives of people living with disabilities. There are an estimated 1 in 5 of us living with disabilities - which may be visible or invisible, public or private. But during the course of our lifetimes won't most of us come to realise that we are only temporarily abled. Our bodies change and we will have new challenges to face. How then shall we best communicate with one another? How shall we encourage one another to tell our stories? I would suggest that we be curious, respectfully curious. To not so fear making a mistake or getting it wrong that we avoid the subject all together. Let's give each other chance to say how it is for us. And let's be prepared to make ourselves vulnerable by asking questions and admitting we don't know.

Let's encourage a view of difference as a gift to offer the world. We never have been and never will be perfectly proportioned like Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. Our spiritual imperative is to honour the worth and dignity of everyone, to challenge our own assumptions and stereotypes, to be as Margaret Wheatley said in the reading we heard earlier on 'willing to be disturbed' by difference.

Meet the Neighbours



Our church is in the midst of such a busy part of London that it's hard to get a sense of who lives and works nearby. So here's an occasional newsletter column to introduce some of our neighbours. Annie Rose has lived next door to the church for over 40 years, in the flat over the restaurant, and has many interesting stories to tell about this area and its cosmopolitan community. Annie works as an independent sexual violence adviser (ISVA) for a charity called Respond and in a recent Guardian 'Day in the Life' column she explained more about her work.

"Respond is a charity working with people with learning disabilities who have suffered trauma and/or sexual abuse. I am the only ISVA specialising in people with learning disabilities in the UK and I cover 13 London boroughs. I am the only Home Office-funded sexual violence adviser for people with learning disabilities. It's the most rewarding job I've done.

I have spent most of my life working with survivors of violence but it was by chance that I ended up at Respond. After running a Rape Crisis centre in Kent for 10 years, I felt it was time to move back to London and frontline work. I worked for a national charity, until its strict retirement criteria of 65 meant I had to leave. I knew it would not be able to cater for one of my clients, because she had a learning disability, so searched for another service that could. I found Respond and took her there to meet the ISVA, who happened to be leaving. That was five years ago."

Respond's vital advocacy role is threatened by cutbacks in government funding and so our February charity collection will be for Respond, a charity that seeks to give a voice to those who are too often silenced in our society.

Sarah Tinker

'Through our hospitality, we imitate the love and generosity of God. We respond to God's hospitality by exhibiting compassion and justice to all. We are especially to insure that the hungry are fed, that unjust distributions of wealth are adjusted, that the land is protected, that justice is done, and that the outcast is welcomed at table.'

L. Shannon Jung

Syria: a Concerted Unitarian Humanitarian Response?



If the war in Syria and its resultant refugee exodus of millions constitute, according to the United Nations, the International Red Cross and other international agencies, the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War is there not a moral imperative on each of us to act?

Fighting in Syria has forced over 12 million people to flee their homes, over 4 million refugees being now in exile outside the country. More than 200,000 have been killed and many more seriously injured. Right now millions of people are in urgent need of food, water, shelter and healthcare. This huge humanitarian crisis shows no sign of ending.

The British Red Cross is therefore urgently appealing for more desperately funds to support people in Syria and neighbouring countries affected by this ongoing conflict and this massive refugee exodus.

Millions of people have fled from Syria to Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Many have found themselves separated from loved ones and are desperately struggling to find shelter or a way to earn a living. The British Red Cross is working with partners in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to give these refugees the vital help they so urgently need but funds are running out.

'The British Red Cross has been helping in Syria since before the unrest began. We have now scaled up our response and are providing support across the region. Every month we get food, water, blankets, soap and other essential help to people caught up in Syria's terrible conflict. We're helping people get their homes ready for harsh winters and deal with the psychological impact of years of violence. And we have worked to fix water networks and health services, cutting the risk of deadly diseases.

Much of the help is given by staff and volunteers of our partner, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The British Red Cross has been working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent since 2004, helping the organisation prepare for a range of disasters. Their reputation for neutrality means we can send help where other aid agencies cannot. But these brave men and women still face huge risks—dozens have been killed in the line of duty.'

If you wish to respond to this urgent Red Cross appeal please kindly make your cheque payable to the British Red Cross and send it to British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL. Please indicate on the back of the cheque that you wish to earmark it to the Syria Crisis Appeal and write on the envelope 'Clara Barton Appeal for the attention of Laura Deacon'.

Thanks to Rev. Feargus O'Connor, our Golders Green and St. Albans minister, for encouraging our support for this on-going appeal.

Services at Essex Church in Dec/Jan



Sunday 6th December, 11am – ‘Blue Christmas’

Service led by Jeannene Powell

Despite what the adverts portray, Christmas isn't all happy times, mistletoe and tinsel for everyone. Through illness, loneliness, loss or estrangements of loved ones or other things, Christmas can be a difficult and painful time. In this service we'll acknowledge and make way for this truth, within this "festive" season.

Sunday 13th December, 11am – ‘Christmas Carol Service’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and our Quartet of Singers

Come and enjoy a good sing at our Carol Service. This service will be followed by a congregational Christmas lunch – all are welcome – please bring along some food or drink to share with others if you can.

Sunday 20th December, 11am – ‘Winter Solstice Celebration’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As the shortest day of the year approaches we'll gather to celebrate the darkness and to welcome warmth and light into our lives.

Thursday 24th December, 5pm – ‘Candlelit Christmas Eve’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for our traditional, contemplative Christmas Eve service. You might like to invite a friend along on this special evening.

Sunday 27th December, 11am – ‘P.A.L.E.G.A.S.: Reclaiming Sin in Liberal Religion’

Service led by Tristan Jovanović

Sin is often left out of discussions of liberal religion because of its associated baggage. Could it instead be a useful lens for us to examine moral and ethical issues, reclaiming the term without guilt, atonement theology or the threat of perdition?

Sunday 3rd January, 11am – ‘Moments of Epiphany’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Emerson writes: "To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom." Together we'll celebrate the Feast of Epiphany and the New Year.

Sunday 10th January, 11am – ‘Both/And’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Minister Amy Zucker Morgenstern says 'As UUs, we inherit a great legacy from generations of people who heard all the "NOs" of either/or thinking and responded with a both/and, affirming, "Why not?"' In this service we will consider the benefits of going beyond the binary of either/or thinking and of attempting to hold apparently contradictory ideas in creative tension.

Sunday 17th January, 11am – ‘The Mystics’ Path’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With oneness as our goal and love at the helm, we'll explore the timeless message of mystics throughout the ages.

Sunday 24th January, 11am – ‘Journey to the Heart’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With visiting musicians, using ancient Gnostic rhythms, and a simple yet profound heart meditation.

Sunday 31st January, 11am – ‘Stormy Weather’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Nobody promised the journey would always be easy. But what might help us through the stormy times? - with Benjie Del Rosario and his clarinet.

