



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: October 2019

What's On...

Wednesday 2nd October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 3rd October, 6.45 for 7-8pm
'Heart & Soul' Spiritual Gathering
'The Religious Life' led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 6th October, 11am-noon
'Evidence of a Spiritual Life'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Wednesday 9th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 13th October, 11am-noon
'Mystics and Militants'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th October, 12.45pm
'Some Trees and a Few Flowers'
Poetry Reading with John & Heidi

Wednesday 16th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 20th October, 11am-noon
'Marvellous Matter'
Led by Sarah Tinker & David Talbot

Sunday 20th October, 12.30-1.15pm
'Find Your Voice'
Singing Class with Margaret

Sunday 20th October, 2.00-3.00pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 20th October, 3.00-5.00pm
Happy Café @ Essex Church

Wednesday 23rd October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 24th October, 7.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Don't forget the clocks go back...
Sunday 27th October, 11am-noon
'Humanism and Unitarians'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th October, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation:
'The Religious Life'

Tuesday 29th October, 6.45 for 7pm
West London GreenSpirit Group

Wednesday 30th October, 12.30pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

The Religious Life

A Message from our Minister



Do you like a good sing? Do you like a good hymn sing? We Unitarians have an interesting relationship with hymn singing. Many of our services retain a quite traditional non-conformist structure of words interspersed with hymns. The tunes are often traditional. Yet for those who know their hymns there's sometimes a surprise because we Unitarians often change the words to reflect our theology. Many Christian hymns stem from the Victorian era. Their words are not sacred and they're not always still in copyright – fair enough to tweak them, I reckon. Back in the 1980s our movement pioneered efforts to remove sexist language in hymns, changing pronouns and avoiding gendered names for the divine. But I'm quietly pleased that they kept a few of the old hymns much as they were written. *'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind'* is apparently one of our country's favourite hymns, both at weddings and funerals. Its second line of *'forgive our foolish ways'* does cover quite a few of life's eventualities. Another old hymn that I'm glad to still have in one of our hymnbooks is the classic George Herbert hymn *'Teach me my God and King'*. I've always felt quite strongly that assigning a gender, and a male gender, to an unknowable, unseeable, possibly non-existent entity, has been a mistake for Christianity. Most of the references to 'King' and 'Lord' in hymns even now leave me cringing. But I can make exceptions for favourite hymns.

*Teach me, my God and King
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee.*

*Whoever looks on glass
On it may stay their eye;
Or if it pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy.*

This hymn, written by George Herbert in the early 17th century, encompasses something special for me about the religious life. The first verse contains a key spiritual teaching: 'find something of God in everyone and everything'. In the second verse he manages to express so succinctly the idea that there is more to this life than we may ever know. Look beyond the everyday reality and there you may catch a glimpse of heaven. In later verses Herbert encourages us to tackle the most mundane of tasks in a sacred manner and make 'drudgery divine'. Perform every action as for a higher cause, rather than for the self.

Do join us one Sunday morning in October as we explore this month's ministry theme of 'Religious Life'. Send us an email if there's a particular song or hymn or chant you'd like to sing – from any and every faith and era. We'll have a go at singing (almost) everything.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Photographs from Harvest Festival & Congregational Lunch * Q&A with Michaela von Britke * Reflections on This Year's Hucklow Summer School by Charlotte Chanteloup & Chloë Harewood * 'The Value of Travel' by Veronica Needa * 'Worship that Works' * Reflections on Greeting * Sunday Tea Dance * Poems by Marianne Harvey & Brian Ellis * West London GreenSpirit Group * 'Defying the Dreamcrushers' reflection by Rev. Sarah Tinker * and much much more ...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

If you are aware of any member of our community who is unwell or suffering in some way and who would welcome contact from others in the church, please contact our minister.



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Sunday Conversation

Sunday 27th October, 12.45-2pm
(don't forget the clocks go back!)



Join us at the end of our month on 'The Religious Life' for an in-depth exploration of how our faith shapes our living. Bring your lunch, your open mind and curious, loving heart.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



We need lots of lovely people to muck in to make the church a hospitable place so if you haven't taken on one of these volunteering tasks before please consider giving it a go (you might consider 'shadowing' a regular to get trained up). We realise that it can be hard to commit in advance but you could always ask someone else to stand in if it turns out you can't come.

Stewarding:

6th October: Abby Lorimier
13th October: Julia Alden
20th October: Brian Ellis
27th October: Annie Fowler

Coffee:

6th October: Heidi Ferid
13th October: David Talbot
20th October: Maureen Cummings
27th October: Brian Ellis

Greeting:

6th October: Charlotte Chanteloup
13th October: David Carter
20th October: John Newton
27th October: Roy Clark

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

jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Future Events: Dates for Your Diaries in Nov/Dec



Sunday 10th November, 1pm for 1.30 to 5pm
'Our Stories of Migration and Shakespeare's 'Plea for Hospitality' to Strangers' - An experimental group on issues of migration explored through Shakespeare's era and language, led by Michaela von Britzke & Sarah Tinker.

Sunday 24th November, 2pm for 2.30pm
Piano Recital of his own compositions by John Newton.

Tuesday 26th November, 6.45pm for 7 to 9pm
Poetry for a Winter's Night with Sarah Tinker & Brian Ellis.

Harvest Festival and Congregational Lunch

Thanks to all those who contributed to our harvest festival display (arranged beautifully by Michaela) and potluck lunch (many thanks to Maureen and Marianne in particular for taking on the kitchen on this hectic afternoon).



Children's Group: Half-Term Break

The children's group will be taking a well-earned break on Sunday 20th. Please get in touch to check about 27th October.

'Hope is the capacity to work for something, to continually "go for it," simply because it is good, desirable, or "worthy" — and not because we have a fairly good chance of succeeding, and not necessarily because there may be some juicy reward in it for us. The more desperate the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the more forbidding the circumstances, the greater the odds against things turning out well, the deeper the hope. The more hopeless the present may appear to be, the more ardent our hope for something better...hope is the serene conviction that something makes sense, that it's worth it, regardless of how it might turn out.'

Michael Downey

Q&A

with Michaela von Britzke

#2 in a new series where congregation members answer a range of questions so we can get to know each other better.

Who are you?

I'm Michaela von Britzke – immigrant from Germany to take refuge in the Humanistic Psychotherapy movement which had not reached Germany at that point about 40 years ago. Now I am a retired Psychiatric Social Worker and practicing (intersubjective) psychotherapist. After doing a Masters in Shakespeare Studies after retiring I'm now engaged with inventing ways of using some Shakespeare plays to initiate generative conversations between 'all who are concerned' about Shakespearean dramatizations of the complex experiences of immigration – how we might think hospitality together. All this this 'places' me – even while I'm concerned with keeping any self-descriptions (of self and others) as open as possible. I have a survival-based investment in reframing difficulties into opportunities - identify unexpected resources. In the end of such efforts I eventually gather the courage to let myself fall into the all-containing hand of God – surrender control - the greatest act of courage for me.

When did you first come to Essex Church?

I joined over 20 years ago after a serious search for a spiritual community, following a sort of 'post-natal depression' after completing a Masters in Psychotherapy and Counselling which confronted me with my perfectionism! Being a member helped me to expand my self-knowledge and self-acceptance as part of the shared spiritual journey. Perfectionism only rarely rears its head now (still does from time to time!).

What brought you to this congregation?

See above. Concretely - I was attracted to the fact that Unitarians had a service for gay people and a service for people divorcing way before anybody else – that resonated with my deep-rooted wish for inclusiveness and commitment to equality.

What roles or tasks have you taken on at Essex Church so far (or which are calling to you)?

Various Sunday tasks – as well as doing a lot of Sunday services at some point. I was part of the Trustees group at one point. Doing services was part of my idea that I might become a Unitarian Minister – but my psychiatric social work with a very diverse group of older people with mental health problems – conducted with a wonderful multi-disciplinary team - was too compelling in the end. I contributed the team practice of acknowledging work well done – not normal in a British medical institution!

What other religious communities have you been connected to (if any)?

I'm a born and raised Catholic and belong to a Sufi order significantly influenced by Buddhist teachings.

What difference has belonging to this congregation made to your life?

I feel at home at Essex Church and part of the community, which I have tangibly benefitted from in any kind of need situation. My sense of belonging sustains me all the time – adding to my deeply cherished friendships and the mutuality and enrichment entailed in my psychotherapeutic work. Some people at church have become close friends and mates for all seasons, and belonging and membership is part of my sense of Identity. In many ways, being a member has enabled me to experiment with and to make some progress on the road of learning to articulate my needs and desires – while practicing surrendering outcomes. I have discovered that the world is full of resources, provided I let go of any resistance to recognizing my vital interdependency with all the life surrounding me.



What do you tell friends and acquaintances who ask you 'What's Unitarianism'?

Good question. Depends on who they are, their background and our relationship. I invite people to try out coming... Actually, most my friends are either Unitarians or agnostics – with little in between.

What is your favourite hymn (and why)?

I love the environmentally inflected blessings of the hymn: "May the road rise with you..." I love many of our hymns and find that most of them express precious realisations and ideas. Normally I love the singing part of the services, even while right now I'm prevented from joining in.

What memorable ideas, readings, or stories have you been introduced to at church?

Rumi's "The Guesthouse" which appeals to my non-dual/Sufi and psychotherapist's efforts to welcome whatever life brings (not always easy, as I'm sure everybody knows).

Would you like to recommend a spiritual/religious book which has influenced you?

Elias Amidon, The Open Path – Sufi non-dual teachings in the most useful, practical and loving way, also his book Free Medicine.

Would you like to tell us about someone who has been a spiritual/moral inspiration to you?

Elias Amidon, the current Pir of the Sufi Way spiritual direction. He is a radiant human being whose words have extraordinary power to comfort and sustain. Recently he sent this reminder of our true nature:

*You are made of light,
the earth turns green at your passing.
You are animal, you are holy,
you are the one you don't believe you are.
Your glance is love. Where it touches,
waiting ends, beauty rises like music.
You think I'm talking about someone else
but I'm not.*

Would you like to tell us about a social justice issue / good cause which is close to your heart?

Immigration issues are as close to my heart as can be – currently attached to a project exploring "Shakespeare and the Experience of Immigration" which Sarah and I are turning into a workshop for 'indigenous people' and people with an immigration background, hopefully to take place at Essex Church in November.

(continued on opposite page)

Q&A with Michaela von Britzke *(continued)*

Do you have any hobbies, pastimes, passions or enthusiasms you can tell us about?

I love learning something new – I have discovered with Arthur taught by Merlin to swim with the fishes in the brook, that learning something new drives away sadness. On a daily plane: I love watching and feeding birds in my garden, I love gardening, I love writing, when I get it together, singing, classical music. Having conversations with friends – this is my most favoured, most life sustaining activity.

How is creativity expressed in your life?

I guess in my passions...

What makes you laugh?

What do you mean? That is an English question. I laugh when I laugh!!!

What can you see from where you are sitting right now?

Green trees in my Square as they stage the perennial show of change...

How do you like to 'treat yourself'?
(or 'what do you do to relax?')

All the above, going for walks and going swimming as often as I can. I love to sing in my choir. Speaking with friends.

What would you do if you won a fortune on the lottery (with your time as well as the money)?

No idea – it seems unlikely, I don't do the Lottery!

What one piece of advice for life or pearl of wisdom would you like to offer our newsletter readers?

Be open to what arises now – it provides you with your curriculum for this day! And it may trigger using my favourite Sufi practice of: "This, too, is me!" – to expand self-awareness, to reduce the mental habit of constructing a large part of the world as 'not-me'. This practice helps to take ownership of 'the worst' and 'the best' in all human beings, instead of using others as projection screens for unwanted character traits, motivations, etc. This practice can be done in any situation – just by stopping to consider whatever crosses our path and meditatively welcoming it as "This, too, is me!" – grasping it in its specificity.

St Mary Abbotts' Churchyard

a blanket of bells
spreads in sunlight
stifles the city's noise
history is heard
alarms and curfews
calls to prayer
joys and mourning
until in silence
as the ringers cease
all that's tolled
are shadows
crashing to earth
before the city
breathes again

Brian Ellis

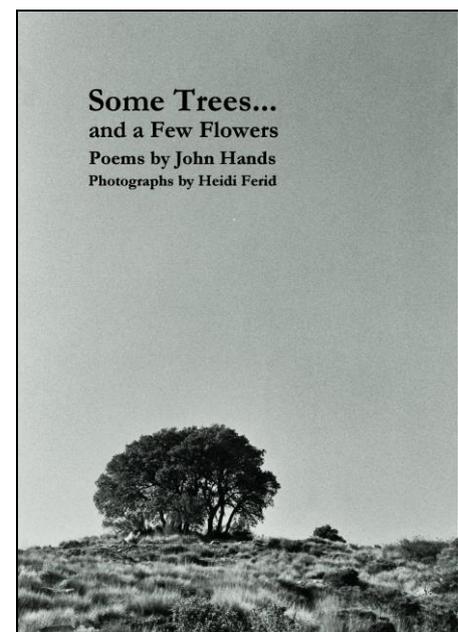
Looking for a Room



I've been renting a room (think posh bed sit with shower room) in Kensal Rise for 2 years now. The rent takes up 70% of my wages so I thought I would just put a little word out in case anyone ever hears of something affordable to rent. I am told that I am the best tenant/lodger anyone could wish for. I realise this is London so it's a ridiculous request but you never know! Thank you.

Annie Fowler
anniefowler@mac.com

Poetry Reading:
**'Some Trees...
and a Few Flowers'**
with John Hands and Heidi Ferid
Sunday 13th October, 12.45pm



After the service on Sunday 13th October our very own John Hands and Heidi Ferid will be holding a poetry reading from their book 'Some Trees... and a Few Flowers'. Copies of the book will be available to buy and all proceeds from the event will go to their nominated charity, the Red Cross.



‘Transitions’

Friday 15th November, 7.30-9.30pm

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

Last Month: ‘Moving On and Staying Put’



On the evening of the global climate protests, we asked “when is it time to stay put, and when is it time to move on?” Big thanks to our generous audience for their stories of coming of age, nesting and uprooting, finding a new family, and sticking with one’s community despite the ongoing challenges. Particular thanks to the young people who shared - young people are changing the world!

www.londonplayback.com /londonplayback@gmail.com

‘Life is as complex as we are. Sometimes our vulnerability is our strength, our fear develops our courage, and our woundedness is the road to our integrity. It is not an either/or world.’

Rachel Naomi Remen

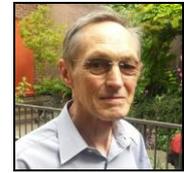
Church Committee News



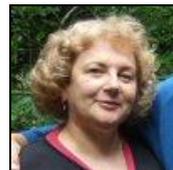
Roy



Maureen



Brian



Heidi



Harold



Jennifer

We’re always reaching out and making connections with other groups who use our building. In October we’re glad to welcome back old friends Beit Klal Yisrael who met for so many years in our building and still return for their High Holy Day festivals. Thank you to our regular hirers who have taken a week off or moved rooms to accommodate them – for Rosh Hashanah on September 30th, for Yom Kippur on 9th October, and for Simchat Torah on Sunday 20th October – a joyous festival which we are all invited to – complete with food to share and the Klezmer Klub Band and their joy-filled dance music. All welcome, 6.30pm onwards.

We’re glad to be hosting interesting events organised by the ever-busy Alternatives team, on Saturdays October 5th and November 2nd. Their events often sell out so check their website for details.

In October we’ll be welcoming Jenny our warden back from an exciting visit to the mountains of Georgia and Sarah our minister back from a trip to the Rockies in Canada. Thanks once again to Arda Ohannessian for standing in for staff on holiday and for keeping everything in such good order in our much used building. Just don’t ask him how often the bin at the front of the church needs emptying – it makes steam come out of all our ears! It’s also good to have Gitana Kleinaitiene, our loyal and hard-working cleaner, back with us after her summer break.

Our September Trustees meeting was pleased to see what a full programme our congregation has lined up for the autumn. We recognised our good fortune in having our church finances in good order, even though savings account income rates are almost non-existent. We agreed an increase to £100 a year to the Traidcraft organisation, in which we also have shares.

Our next meetings are scheduled for 24th October and 28th November, so do talk to our staff or one of the trustees if there are issues you want us to discuss.

Sunday Tea Dances in aid of Stonewall Housing

Next on Sunday 22nd December, 2-5pm (note change to advertised date)

Starting with a dance lesson for complete beginners!



We invite you to our next Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance in aid of Stonewall Housing! We had a great time in September (as you can see from the photos!) and we'll be back in December for a Festive Special (please note the change of date to the 22nd). There will be tea, cake, partner dancing and line dances from 2-5pm. All are welcome - complete beginners to life-long dancers alike - and even if you think you have two left feet this will be a relaxed and welcoming space for all to enjoy. The afternoon will begin with a dance lesson led by Rachel Sparks.

Save the date now to come to this fun event in aid of a good cause (£5 of the door price goes to Stonewall Housing, a charity providing safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people fleeing violence, harassment and abuse). There's no need to bring a partner so just come as you are - do tell your friends though - the more the merrier! We encourage gender neutral partnering which means anyone can lead/follow. We are family-friendly so children come for free with any paying adult. Tickets are limited and cost £12 in advance (£15 on the door). Pay it forward tickets are priced at £10 and all proceeds of this ticket will go to Stonewall Housing. Book online: www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk/book-online. Members of the congregation get free admission. You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes to help raise money for our nominated charity and of course donations are very welcome. If you have any questions do email Rachel on hello@rachelsparksdance.co.uk

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

Volunteers will be needed to help with the reception desk / tea stall – please email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you can help!



'Defying the Dreamcrushers'

Reflection by Rev. Sarah Tinker

From the service on Sunday 25th August

Today is the last service in our monthly theme of hopes and dreams and it's one of those themes that has grown on me as the month has progressed. It's really made me think. And one aspect of it that's got me thinking is the way that we can both encourage and discourage one another – and the ways that we allow other people and indeed our wider society and culture to encourage and discourage us. And sometimes we do the encouraging and discouraging all by ourselves – with those repeating messages that run round many of our minds – 'I can do this', 'no I can't, I'm useless', 'I always get it wrong', 'come on, it's worth a try' etc etc. A valuable exercise is to get to know our own internal monologue a bit better – so we can recognise the messages that are helpful – and more importantly quieten the messages that are unhelpful – don't most of us have an inner critic and even an inner saboteur..?

I've had to come clean about the ways that I have crushed other people's dreams at times – and the reasons for that kind of behaviour. As a parent and a grandparent, as someone who spends a fair bit of time with people younger than me – I've come to realise that I am sometimes made fearful by other people's high hopes – and that what I fear is their disappointment when life doesn't go as they'd planned. I've had to learn to watch out for that negative voice in me – that mutters – 'this will end in tears'. This kind of naysaying – is a protective response – I'm trying to protect others from disappointment – I'm trying to protect myself from their reactions to potential failure. But it's a bit like trying to shut down life's energy, the life-force itself. I reckon life is naturally exuberant if left to its own resources, naturally creative and full of plans, full of hopes and dreams – unless they've been crushed out of us.

That crushing process can happen very early on. Some of us like to refer to the Philip Larkin poem This Be The Verse, which I shall paraphrase as it's a bit early on a Sunday for full-on swear words:

*They mess(!) you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.*

*But they were messed up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were soppo-stern
And half at one another's throats.*

*Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself.*



Larkin was clearly a bit of a naysayer himself – but maybe through his poetry he was attempting a task that is required of most of us who have been raised by less than perfect parents – the task of coming to terms with the harmful messages we were given in childhood, processing them and replacing them, whenever we can, with messages more helpful to our lives today.

And alongside that work comes the need to accept that it is in the nature of life itself to crush some of our dreams – we can't have everything go the way we want it to go. And if our dreams involve other people – and we haven't actually shared our dreams with the person concerned and gained their agreement – well this is the land of fantasy and a pinch of reality may be needed; or at least a clear conversation, where we share our fantasy and see how the other person responds.

I've known and loved the WB Yeats poem on the front of today's order of service for many years. What an achingly resonant description of the vulnerability of romantic love is to be found in its closing lines:

*'Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light;
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.'*

That image of a soft carpet of hopes and dreams sometimes needs a bit of toughening up for the real world – a real world that is filled with risk taking and trial and error, and many failures that sometimes, but only sometimes, lead to success. But let's find encouragement from the power that emerges when we light an inner fire, when we find the strength to say 'yes' to life – when that inner fire energises us, engages us and brings us focus, providing us with valuable new perspectives and possible new steps. This is the creative process – and when we work with our own creativity I reckon we often discover the power to withstand dream-crushers, even the dream-crushers within ourselves. May it be so for all of us engaged in the vital task of creating a better world for all.



Spafford Supper Club – 'Palestine on a Plate' Thursday 10th October, 7-9.30pm – Here at Essex Church

Fundraising reception featuring a three course dinner of recipes by celebrity chef Joudie Kalla. Tickets are £50 and proceeds will go to the Spafford Children's Centre which provides healthcare for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Tickets via www.jumblebee.co.uk/SpaffordSupperClubOct2019 (or contact Sarah if you'd like to attend as the congregation has access to a free or reduced price place).

The Sounds of Tinnitus: The Woodpecker



Artwork reflecting on Tinnitus by our own Eliz Beel.

Good Cause Collection of the Month:



Collection on Sunday 27th October

From the Red Cross website: 'We help anyone, anywhere in the UK and around the world, get the support they need if crisis strikes. From hiring a wheelchair or dealing with loneliness, to adjusting to life in a new country - we're there when you need us. We work around the world to help people facing hunger, who are caught up in conflict, and who had to flee their homes. We partner with other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to prevent or ease human suffering. We help people in the UK when an emergency happens. We give care and support to trafficked people and anyone in forced labour. We help refugees and asylum seekers get back on their feet after a traumatic time. We speak up for changes in policy that would make life better.'

Website: www.redcross.org.uk

Recent Charity Collections:

June 30th – **Unitarian GA** – over £150

July 28th – **H&F Foodbank** – over £300

September 22nd – **Simple Gifts** – over £150

West London GreenSpirit Group



Next meeting: Tuesday 29th October 2019
Here at Essex Church, 6.45 for a
7.00pm start, finishing by 8.30pm

Our new GreenSpirit group held its first meeting in September and eight of us shared autumn fruits, spoke of our gritudes, our hopes and intentions. We held a ritual to mark the autumn equinox, planting crocus bulbs that had been kindly left for us on the church front bench by someone – part of the National City Park initiative here in London. We ended with a chant of the elements – *'the earth, the water, the fire, the air – return, return, return, return'* led by Andrea, acknowledging our place in the interdependent web of all existence. We explored our varied ideas of the sort of group that would best serve us and decided to combine different activities in varying ways – pagan earth-based ritual, alongside information sharing, invited speakers and empowering one another to become more active in seeking more sustainable ways of living. We agreed not to make one another feel 'bad and wrong' about our lifestyle choices – our decisions about diet and travel choices, for example, need to be respected not picked upon.

We'll vary our meeting dates and times and plan to meet every 4 to 6 weeks over the next year. Once we have a programme arranged for 2020 we will advertise it on the GreenSpirit website as well as through our own networks and this group is open to everyone. We're described as the West London Group so please do all you can to let interested people know that they're welcome to join us.

And do join us if you can for our next meeting on Tuesday 29th October, 6.45 for a 7.00pm start, ending by 8.30pm. We'll be honouring our ancestors in readiness for the many festivals at this time – Hallowe'en, Samhein, All Souls. Do bring a photo or some other item that connects you with an ancestor you might want to talk about.

David Carter & Sarah Tinker

Sustainability News

The end of September saw a day's strike for climate change with many thousands of people demonstrating around the world, asking their governments to take heed of the changes we are all witnessing. In October Extinction Rebellion activists will be making their presence felt here in London and we will be offering accommodation to a few people unable to camp out. Let our minister know if you plan to be at some of their demonstrations and would be willing to be put in touch with a fellow Unitarian who may need a shower and a place to sleep for the odd night. We've had several requests from congregation members around the country.

OneLight Gathering: 'At the Heart of It All'

Friday 11th October, 7–8.30pm at Essex Church

It is not always easy to find centre in the midst of busy, demanding, often challenging lives that pull us here and there, that rattle our emotions and stir us up. Yet what a blessing coming back to centre can be, offering a place to recoup, to nurture ourselves, to find perspective and stillness and to rest and recharge. In this circle, with the collaboration of Qi Gong facilitator, Nicki Day, we will create a sanctuary to find and be with our centre. We will use very gentle Qi Gong motions, each with a seated option, and we will use song, silence and creative ritual to come to centre. ...Or... if you simply want to rest in a supportive atmosphere, bring a blanket or mat and simply lie down. This circle is your space, to receive what serves you best. A co-creative circle held by Rev Alison Trower with Nicki Day and members of The Heart of London Threshold Choir.

Reflections on Greeting After our August Greeters' Workshop



The greeting workshop was very well attended, in fact people turned up who hadn't booked for it. It was interesting to see that most agreed that greeting could be improved and there were several suggestions made as to how this could be done, which were discussed to see how practical they were. One thing that seemed to get a consensus, was that it wasn't just up to the greeter to make visitors feel welcome, although the right of people not to feel up to doing greeting on a particular day was acknowledged. I know I left with renewed enthusiasm for being a greeter.

Liz Tuckwell

I enjoyed the workshop and was a little surprised to find it so helpful. There's humility for you! The idea of asking someone what had brought them to Essex Church should be an obvious first question but not one that I have always used! Definitely part of my future approach. Also when I am on duty will try and find new people after the service to perhaps take them into coffee or just to chat a little more if they seem to want that. The point was made about looking for body language and interpreting that. I'd previously always thought greeting was the easiest of the three rota tasks (i.e. compared to coffee-making and stewarding) but I have changed my mind and now think it is possibly the hardest and the most important.

Maureen Cummings

Happy Café at Essex Church

Sundays 20th October, 17th November,
15th December 2019, from 3-7pm

In autumn this year our church will be hosting West London's first Happy Café which will be open for the whole community and is free to visit. It will run here at Essex Church between 3-7pm on the 3rd Sunday of the month and we hope our members and friends will want to get involved.

Happy Cafes are part of the Happy Café Network which is being set up by members of the Action for Happiness network. A Happy Café provides a warm welcome for anyone interested in happiness and wellbeing and encourages them to meet together for a drink and a friendly chat. In a Happy Café you can find inspiring and informative material, participate in events and meet people to discover new ways to improve wellbeing and help make others happier too.

This Happy Café will be run and organised by two local residents of the Notting Hill area Nicola Webb and Mary Louise Morris. In January they ran a course at the church called Exploring What Matters, which was open to the whole community. Over a period of 8 weeks 20 people came to the church to reflect on what contributes to a happier and more meaningful life. Following excellent feedback about this course, Nicola and Mary Louise realised that there was a need for a regular place for people to meet and so the idea of setting up the café was born.

"We are really over the moon that the church has offered us this space. We want to make this Café a space where everyone feels welcome, all ages and all backgrounds. We will be providing tea and cakes, leaflets and information, friendly conversation, as well as a range of talks and activities, aimed at improving wellbeing. We are both passionate about and teach well-being and we will be offering our skills, talents and expertise. There will be gentle movement classes, art, creative workshops for adults/children, introduction to mindfulness meditation and relaxation classes. We will be sharing a lot of things that make us feel happy with anyone who comes."

'Finding Our Voice' Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 20th October, 17th November,
12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church

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

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

LONDON Heart Meditation



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

Beginners Course in Heart Meditation

**Classes Held on Various Tuesdays
8th and 22nd October 2019 from 6.30-7.30pm
Downstairs in the Library Here at Essex Church**

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

Special Afternoon Workshop

Sunday 13th Oct, 2.30-5.30pm – Booking Required

We will be hosting another Sunday Heart Meditation Workshop on the afternoon of 13th October. We will be discussing the process and many benefits of Heart Meditation, through the use of Gnostic teachings and ancient rhythms. We will provide the Daf Drums, just bring yourself, and an open heart!. If you wish to join please register via the event page on Facebook or via Eventbrite. The class will be tailored to accommodate beginners too, so feel free to share with anyone who might like to attend.

Beverley Eve

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

For more information visit: www.heartmeditation.eu

'What lies dormant in you? What plan remains unrealized, what ability under-utilized? Take time this week to celebrate it and dedicate yourself anew to the fulfilment of God's purpose.'

Terry Bookman

Worship that Works: LDPA Quarterly & Workshop

46 people from congregations as far afield as the Isle of Wight, Norwich, Portsmouth, and all over London and the South East gathered on at Rosslyn Hill Chapel on 21st September 2019 for this worship workshop led by our very own Sarah and Jane.



This day event in Hampstead was a wonderful example of how to make things work – not just services. Sarah and Jane got us to reflect on all aspects of Sunday worship, the structures which make up these services, and their contribution to the potential spiritual experiences which they are designed to facilitate. We listened, talked in pairs and in small groups, meeting a whole range of interesting people from all over the district and beyond. We were wonderfully challenged and supported by words from Sarah and Jane and highly sophisticated handouts which gave us useful directions for thinking and exploring our experiences and thoughts of aspects of our Unitarian services. I'm sure most of us went away wondering whether we too might join the other sessions of the Worship Studies Course. Miracles might be possible within the challenge of such illuminating teaching. The whole day was wonderfully supported by Rosslyn Hill Chapel's hospitality – the most amazing tea after our efforts – that, too, was a version of 'Worship that Works'.

Michaela von Britzke

'The Value of Travel'

Reflection by Veronica Needa

From the service on 1st September

My first big journey across the sea was to come to England to go to university in 1974. The most profound memory I have of that great adventure was looking down from the aircraft window and seeing glorious green...the green green fields and gardens of England... and I recall vividly sinking my face into the open roses so large and so beautiful, and breathing in such sweetness. I grew up with tall skyscrapers, concrete and glass all around me. So this was thrilling. And at Uni, listening to my fellow students as they talked about politics was very strange – I grew up in a paternalistic British colonial administration. No votes, no choice. Not much choice even now in Hong Kong. But I'm filled with pride as well as great trepidation in relation to political awareness and activism amongst its young people today.

My first visit to Finland was to attend an international PT conference, in the substantial home and grounds of our host Paivi Ketonen in the little village of Rautalampi. It was quite jaw dropping to walk...uh...in my case creep... completely naked into the Sauna, which was specially built for up to 30 people. Fortunately it was very misty, and we were encouraged to beat each other, gently, with whisks made of birch branches. Lovely scent and great for blood circulation. And then of course coming out steaming from every pore and jumping into the cold water of the lake. My first experience of compost loos was in Finland. In the open grassland, Paivi had built a little row of wooden compost loos, no building, no walls, just a row of loos to sit on - open to the world - for folks to have very convivial chats with each other enjoying the scenery and fresh air.

And then there is the compost loo in North Wales at Cae Mabon – the home of storyteller Eric Madden and his community of artists and friends. A little more sheltered but with another terrific vista of the countryside as one sits on the throne, contemplating the fables of King Arthur and Merlin, of dragons and magic. What a joy it was to be part of a community, sharing the fruits of our imagination, and our aspirations for a cleaner, greener world, honouring the old wisdom and stories of the land.

And then of course there was my first big camping trip across the desert of Israel. I found a website called Walkforlove... and together we were about 35 people of all ages from different parts of the world, of varied religious persuasions alongside a motley group of Israelis. I met a 70 year old woman from the Philippines, who had only started this walking lark just a couple of years before, and was seeing the world by walking the land. She had already traversed the Camino de Santiago in Spain. And here in the desert, we set a steady pace, no rush, and we would sing together. And an Israeli woman who held my hand when I needed her strength, and calmly gently stayed alongside me as we crossed narrow treacherous pathways and crevasses helping me face my terror of heights.

So many strangers to begin with, who were open to meeting and sharing - all willing to help one another along the path of life in more ways than one.

The quality of silence and clarity of light was extraordinary... and it was quite wonderful to learn how to do the necessary poos and wees behind large stones or trees, or just in the wide open space under the full moon at night, without leaving anything behind that was not organic and biodegradable of course. There are always new ways for us to grow in awareness, and practice, to live with tenderness and respect for our beloved Earth.

Some Christmasses ago, I visited Bali to do some teaching and stayed with Annette, a woman of great heart and adventurous spirit, who decided that she would live the latter part of her life in a warm beautiful place – and so she moved to Bali. I look forward to another visit later this year and spending time with Annette ... again sitting quietly in the darkness of dusk - her favourite time of day - listening to the sounds of wildlife, and the gentle thump of ripe avocados and mangoes dropping to the ground of her garden. Last time it was a strange new experience for me to sit and do nothing in the darkness of the evening. Now I look forward to it and understand the treasure of this - just being present.

If we are open... travel can offer unimagined new ways of seeing and living in the world, of being with one another, and discovering what it is to be human.

In the service we asked ourselves the question: what have I learnt from my travels?

We reminded ourselves that our travels may occur out in the world and they may also be inner journeys of discovery.

Swing Dance Fundraiser for RAICES held at Essex Church



Johanna Novales organised this swing dance at Essex Church back on 1st September to support RAICES (www.raicestexas.org), a group working to oppose concentration camps in the US and help immigrants -- including children -- detained at the US border with Mexico. We gifted free use of the church space for this event and we are pleased to report that it raised £316.07 in total.

Thematic Ministry



Theme-based ministry is shaping activities in more and more Unitarian communities, both here in the UK and over in the States. It's designed to strengthen the life of a congregation through monthly themes - used in worship, small groups and other activities. It gives everyone an opportunity to get more involved so do have a look at the themes planned for the months ahead and let us know if you'd like to suggest a reading or a piece of music, bring your own thoughts to one of our Sunday morning gatherings, lead an activity or an outing, or write something for the newsletter. Here is a list of our future monthly themes for you to be thinking about: Time and Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December).

We'll be meeting in October to plan our themes for 2020 so do let us know if there is a theme for the year ahead that particularly appeals to you. Here are some ways to explore October's intriguing theme of 'Religious Life':

- How has your lifestyle changed and developed in recent years? Are some of these changes to do with your commitment to a particular spiritual path?
- Joseph Campbell wrote that 'every religion is true one way or another. It is true when understood metaphorically. But when it gets stuck in its own metaphors, interpreting them as facts, then you are in trouble'. What do you think about the role religion plays in human societies and in individual lives?
- Choose a particular religious / spiritual practice to use daily during October. Writing a gratitude list, spend time in prayer, take a meditative daily walk, sing a favourite chant each day, notice places of worship whilst you're out and about, silently bless all those you meet – just a few suggestions – and come to our Sunday conversation and tell us about your particular practices.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Autumn



T'is time to take a walk again
In the meadows where the pale sun
Warms the musty fallen apple
And bows low to the dying grass

T'is time to breathe the air again
Spinning mist twirls in the valley
And miss the call of the cuckoo
Now fallen silent in the woods

T'is time to sigh and sigh again
As stars shy away in the vast
As the piercing November wind
Hurls hail and whirls itself dizzy

T'is time to know sorrow again
On broken hopes and deadened love
On endings and neverendings
Caught in the wringing hands of time

T'is time to remember again
That the old newness of all things
The familiar the broken
The lost will rise with the light

T'is time to dare to dream again
Of one more dance in the meadows
T'is time to surrender and rest
In the perfection of it all.

Marianne Harvey



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms
Third Sunday of the Month from
2-3pm: 20th October, 17th November

Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm

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

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

'We can only see half of anything; the other half is the meaning that we give to what we see... In every apple, every snowflake, every flower and crystal, everywhere in nature, wherever you look and learn how to see, there is an aha! waiting.'

Alice O. Howell

Reflections on This Year's Hucklow Summer School



The Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow

As soon as my feet touched Hucklow soil and my senses were greeted with the sight of stone walls and the smell of fresh, clean air with the slight aroma of cow dung, I knew I was in for a rejuvenating week! I was told our accommodation would be basic, so I braced myself for 'roughing it' for seven nights, only to be pleasantly surprised by the familiar comforts of cosy B&B style accommodation. I loved the nice welcoming touches on the bed when I first arrived.

Spending the week with 60 or so strangers, let alone having to navigate meal times and sitting at tables with a bunch of people I didn't know, seemed impossibly daunting for a wallflower like me - and yet, it was always such a friendly, communal and inviting affair. I really had nothing to worry about. And oh, the food... the food! What a treat to be catered for three times a day, with such an array of abundant food! The hospitality of the staff was second to none and nothing was too much trouble!

The nightly epilogues at the chapel were stirring, rousing and contemplative; sometimes by candle-light, and often reverberating with the sounds of our voices, filling the atmosphere with songs and chants... The perfect precursor to bedtime. The ritual of the silent lantern-lit walk to and from the old chapel every night was particularly special. Participating in the daily engagement group was like the 'glue' which cemented our theme as the week progressed. It was a gentle, safe space in which to bring our curiosities, our vulnerabilities, hopes and truths, and it was so thoughtfully facilitated. I loved embracing my inner streak of childlike playfulness, which throughout the week, saw me getting messy and sticky with glue and paper whilst collage-making, crafting a dream catcher, and getting competitive playing Ten Pin bowling.

I realised early on that it would just be too tiring and unrealistic to expect to do everything on the timetable. Being somewhat of an introvert, it was important for me to have ample down-time and some solitude, and there was plenty of space and opportunity for that. My week in Hucklow was like being in an enriching bubble; of community, spiritual food, hospitality and connections - which I will treasure. I am excited to say I can now officially be dubbed a 'summer schooler'! A wholeheartedly massive thank you for the kindness and generosity of the church committee, for enabling me the privilege to attend and to experience this staple in the Unitarian calendar.

Chloë Harewood



Charlotte and Chloë at the Nightingale Centre

In August, I had the chance to go to the Unitarian Summer School in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. In total, among about 70 Unitarians attended, 7 were from the Kensington congregation, including our very own Sarah and Jane. The week took place at the Nightingale Centre, in the beautiful Peak District.

This summer, the theme was 'Theology in the Flesh' or how the experience of our bodies shapes our understanding of life. To delve deeper into this theme, every morning a speaker led a theme talk, sharing their own experience of life and faith. Everyone was also attached to an engagement group that they had chosen. Every day, I joined my group and shared more of myself than I ever thought possible with complete strangers. With such a supportive and warm atmosphere, it was easy to connect deeply with people met just a few days before.

In the afternoon and the evening, there was a variety of activities for all ages such as: walking and discovering more of the Peak District, singing, yoga, crafts, bananagrams, and of course an inclusive dance led by Jane. It was also possible to stay in and have a chat around tea or go to the next town and enjoy wild swimming, which many attendees enjoyed.

In every aspect, the event was more than well-planned: from activities, to announcements, to individual needs (such as dietary requirements), everything was organised seamlessly. It made the experience so much easier for a worry wart like me. It was truly a time to pause and recharge in a serene atmosphere, away from the business of London.

Without a doubt, my favourite part of the week was the epilogue. Every evening, once the sun had set, we left the centre for a short walk with lanterns to the chapel. Once in the chapel, a short service was held with thoughts about the day, hymns and time for reflection. We walked back in silence, still with lanterns, looking at the stars so visible in the night sky. The epilogues, and the week in general, were truly a magical experience. I cannot wait for next year.

Charlotte Chanteloup

Some Sights from Hucklow Summer School

Save the Dates: 22nd-29th August 2020 on the theme of 'Speaking the Truth in Love'



A lovely day looking out over the fields at Great Hucklow



Our tea-dance bunting decorating the yurt



Our very own Carole and Sarah enjoying a cuppa



'Summer School Bingo' – an icebreaker on the first night



'Life's Ultimate Questions' – Jane led a mini engagement group on the theme of friendship



Jen Hazel leading us all in song



Our very own Heidi at the singing workshop



Learning the samba at Jane's dancing workshop

Kensington Singers:

Join the Choir! New to Essex Church
From Monday 23rd September, 7-8.45pm



From this autumn a local choir, 'Kensington Singers', will be relocating to the church. Here's some text from their website:

Think you would like to sing in our friendly community choir? Everyone is welcome; our youngest member is 19 and our most senior is a young at heart 77, so we have a really great mix of experience and energy. The choir launched in January 2011 and is now established with around 50 singers. There are no auditions and you don't need to have any previous experience to join in – you'll be amazed at how quickly you can start making a brilliant sound. If you're not used to singing regularly you'll see a huge improvement in your voice after your first month or so. We always spend 15 minutes at the start having a good vocal warm up which will also include things like a bit of sight-reading practice, some rhythm games, vocal techniques and ear training.

Kensington Singers is led by Hannah Brine and the songs that we sing are carefully selected to offer something for everyone; from pop to gospel, classical to musical theatre, jazz to folk. Hannah writes: *'Kensington Singers is the first choir I started in London, having moved down from Leicester where I established a similar choir, Fosse Singers, back in 2007. I was extremely honoured in 2015 to be named a BBC Unsung Hero for my work with community choirs, as it's something I really love to do. In 2011 & 2013 I studied with the Association of British Choral Conductors and in 2014 I received my LRSM in musical directing with a distinction.'*

We meet on Mondays during term time from 7-8.45pm. The choir performs roughly 3 times per term and there are a number of social events throughout the year, including weekly drinks in the pub afterwards. We have performed at the Royal Brompton Hospital, for the Chelsea Pensioners, at the Southbank Centre Christmas Market and enjoyed joint events with the London Contemporary Voices, the Buzztones, Singology Gospel Choir and Kitsch in Sync.

Fees are normally £100 per term if you book before the end of the first week of term and are non-refundable. However, as we're offering them the room here at a discounted rate, they've agreed that **members of our congregation can join for free**. Commitment is required: singers are expected to attend 70% or more rehearsals in order to be prepared enough to sing in the end of term concert. E-mail pa@hannahbrine.co.uk for info.

www.kensingtonsingers.co.uk

Services at Essex Church in October



Sunday 6th October, 11am
'Evidence of a Spiritual Life'
Service led by Jeannene Powell

Unitarianism is often accused of staying on the surface of things, as it draws on so many religious and spiritual traditions. In this service we'll examine how we can go deeper in our own spiritual lives.

Sunday 13th October, 11am
'Mystics and Militants'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

We'll be exploring what author Ursula Le Guin might have meant when she said that 'the greatest religious problem today is how to be both a mystic and a militant'.

Sunday 20th October, 11am
'Marvellous Matter'
Led by David Talbot and Sarah Tinker

We live in an age when to be spiritual we need to take the material realm more seriously and take greater care of the physical world around us. With a meditation of compassion.

Sunday 27th October, 11am
'Humanism and Unitarians'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The many interweavings between Unitarian and humanist beliefs stem back to times when atheism was a crime.

Why not try the Belief-O-Matic quiz online before this service and see what your score says about your beliefs.

Find the faith that matches your beliefs.
ask the
Belief-O-Matic
powered by SelectSmart.com

Ever wondered what religion you are? Are you sure your faith is the best choice for you? Take our religion quiz to find out! Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and Belief-O-Matic will tell you what religion or spiritual path (if any) best suits your beliefs.

Get Started