



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2016

What's On...

Thursday 4th August, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul'
'Nature Inspiring Reverence'
Led by Jeannene Powell

Sunday 7th August, 11am-noon
'The Resistance'
Led by Jane Blackall

Sunday 14th August, 11am-noon
'Strong Foundations'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker.

Sunday 14th August, 12.30pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Sue Smith

Sunday 21st August, 11am-noon
'Summer Pavilions'
Led by Roy Clark and Sarah Tinker.
**Followed by an Outing to the
Serpentine Gallery Pavilions**

Sunday 21st August, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 28th August, 11am-noon
'Spirituality on the Streets'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 4th September, 11am-noon
'Singing Our Faith'
Led by Members of the Congregation

Thursday 1st September, 7-8pm
'Heart and Soul'
'A Life in Balance' led by Roy Clark

Sunday 11th September, 11am-noon
'Gathering the Waters'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 11th September, 12.30pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by Tristan Jovanović

Tuesday 13th September, 7-9pm
Management Committee Meeting

Sunday 18th September, 11am-noon
'Peace Within'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 18th September, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 25th September, 11am-noon
'Harvest Festival'
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
Followed by a Congregational Lunch

Responding Creatively A Message from our Minister



In Britain this year we're marking the centenary of the First World War's Battle of the Somme, which lasted for 141 days and resulted in over a million soldiers' deaths. It's not easy to find appropriate ways to commemorate such a ghastly time in Europe's still quite recent history and I find myself drawn to the artists and writers who, at the time and afterwards, helped ordinary people come to terms with the reality of war, to make some kind of sense from the senseless. A stamp on an envelope I received recently caught my eye. In calligraphy is written just one line from Vera Brittain's poem *To My Brother*, recounting her emotional response to his physical suffering, He'd been wounded in battle and brought by chance to the hospital where she was working as a nurse. She wrote: 'Your battle-wounds are scars upon my heart', a line that could speak for us all as we hear reports of 21st century struggles around our world. Artistic expression can I think help us feel more, empathise more, rather than closing our hearts to the sufferings of others.

If you happen to find yourself in Margate this summer I highly recommend making a visit to the Turner Contemporary Gallery, where two works by Yinka Shonibare are on show. Both are exploring issues of empire, conflict and migration in colourful ways. One is called *The End of Empire* and features a pivoting see-saw with two balancing figures representing the warring countries of the First World War. The other is entitled *The British Library* and fills the exhibition space with brightly coloured books. Each book's spine bears the name of first and second generation immigrants who have enriched British society. The exhibition leaflet explains that 'from T.S. Eliot and Hans Holbein to Zaha Hadid, *The British Library* reminds us that the displacement of communities by global war has consequences that inform our lives and attitudes today'. With immigration so high now on the political agenda I'm grateful that Shonibare is encouraging us all to consider its benefits to our country.

In his 1991 poem *Cure at Troy*, Seamus Heaney wrote:

*No poem or play or song,
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.*

Art and cultural expression can't be a cure all. But they can help us think more deeply and reflectively upon events. We're not all artists or writers but perhaps we all have within us an ability to respond creatively to life, to find ways through times of difficulty, disappointment and dismay. Greeting a stranger, tending a garden, mending things, sending someone a card: I wonder what creative responses you're drawn to this summer?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* 'Something More' – a four-part course coming soon * Building News – Spotting What's New * Warden's Report * Report from the Recent Unitarian Theology Conference by Howard Hague * Summer Pavilion Outing with Roy Clark * London District Quarterly Meeting at Golders Green * 'Gathering the Waters' in September * Harvest Festival and Congregational Potluck Lunch * News from the Committee * 'Truth Seekers' sermon by Sarah Tinker and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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

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



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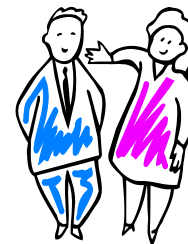
Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk



'As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems.'

Pope Francis

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

7th August Brian Ellis
14th August: Melody
21st August: Gina Bayley
28th August: Julia Alden

4th September: Brian Ellis
11th September: Juliet Edwards
18th September: Michaela von Britzke
25th September: Kendra Torgan

Coffee:

7th August Juliet Edwards
14th August: Veronica Needa
21st August: Melody
28th August: Edward Goodall

4th September: Kate Brown
11th September: Jonathan Crawford
18th September: Kate Brown
25th September: Kate Brown

Greeting:

7th August Sue Smith
14th August: Roy Clark
21st August: Brian Ellis
28th August: ??? (can you help?)

4th September: Sue Smith
11th September: Gina Bayley
18th September: Brian Ellis
25th September: ??? (can you help?)

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

Church Committee News



Our recent committee meeting was held on the hottest day of the year and poor Gina and Bonnie were stuck on the central line and couldn't join us. We spent time touring the heating installation, admiring our smooth new radiators, hoping the system will be successfully joined up with copper pipes soon. We had a look outside and appreciated Brian's efforts in sanding and staining our well-used benches, and trimming the sycamore, and Jackie the gardener's trimming of overgrown shrubs. We discussed the decorating due for August and the relative merits of cream, magnolia and white paint.

Jane described an interesting new four session small group course planned for the autumn: 'Something More'. We talked about Sunday mornings and asked for ideas for future service themes. A service celebrating pets was requested for October. Apologies to anyone who is waiting for us to update our photo-board in the foyer. We'll be asking all our friends and members to send Jane a photo you like or to ask Roy, Jane, Jim or Sarah to take your photo on Sunday morning. The photo-board is a great way for us to get to know people by name and sight but we do need help to get new photos taken. We have moved our next meeting forward to **Tuesday 13th September**.

'Something More'

A New Four-Part Course at Essex Church – Sign up Now!



**Thursdays 15th, 22nd September
and 13th, 20th October, 7pm-9pm**

This autumn we will be offering a short course based on the book 'Something More: Encountering the Beyond in the Everyday' by John Pritchard.

In these turbulent times, many of us feel a longing for something more, perhaps a greater sense of connection and engagement with other people, the world around us, and with life itself. We hope that this short course will provide an opportunity for you to reflect on sources of depth, meaning and purpose in your life and help you to develop greater awareness of the spiritual dimension in your everyday experiences. It will also be a good opportunity to meet new people and connect with them on a deeper level as we explore these matters of ultimate significance together. The sessions will be led by Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall.

Please put the dates in your diary NOW and contact Jane to let us know you are planning to come (email jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk). The course is free of charge but we need you to sign up well in advance as places are limited.

Inclusive Communion

**Sundays 14th August, 11th September 2016
at 12.30pm Down in the Church Library**



Once a month we hold a small-group communion, after the main morning service, downstairs in the library. A team of volunteers take turns in leading the services so we experience a variety of approaches. All are welcome to participate.

14th August – led by Sue Smith
11th September – led by Tristan Jovanović

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

Good Cause Collection of the Month Mayhew Animal Home



Collection on Sunday 28th August

The Mayhew Animal Home is one of the most effective animal welfare organisations in London, helping thousands of dogs and cats to escape a life of abandonment, cruelty and neglect each year. They help animals in need gain a better quality of life by delivering a broad range of community-based animal care, education and welfare projects.

For more information see: www.themayhew.org

British Red Cross Clara Barton Fund



Collection on Sunday 25th September

The British Red Cross helps people in crisis, wherever and wherever they are. They are part of a global voluntary network, responding to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies. The Red Cross helps vulnerable people in the UK and abroad prepare for, withstand and recover from emergencies in their own communities. The Clara Barton Fund is a British Red Cross fund set up in memory of Clara Barton, who was a founding member of the American Red Cross and a Universalist. This fund has been specially created for Unitarians to donate to emergency appeals such as the current European refugee crisis.

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

Previous Charity Collections:

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

April – Simple Gifts - £138 + Gift Aid
May – Christian Aid Week - £133 + Gift Aid
June – Unitarian General Assembly - £141 + Gift Aid

'Heart and Soul' **Midweek Spiritual Gatherings**

**Thursdays 4th August and
1st September 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. All are welcome to join us.

In August, Jeannene will be leading the session, and we'll explore the theme of 'Nature inspiring Reverence', through readings, music and prayer. If you wish, please bring in something to do with nature, which inspires a sense of reverence for you - it could be an object such as a stone or flower, a picture of a natural event or place, a poem, or quote, or something else. And if not, you're welcome to simply contribute with your words and ideas on the theme.

In September Roy will lead a session on 'A Life in Balance'.

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

LDPA Quarterly Meeting **Saturday 24th September** **Golders Green Unitarians** **31½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS**



Our London District is made up of lots of congregations and quarterly get-togethers are held in different venues. In September we've been invited to visit Golders Green Unitarians. We usually meet in the early afternoon, enjoy shared worship, an activity and some tea. Ask our minister for more information nearer the time. If you've not visited their building before, it has some beautiful murals that are very popular on Heritage weekends.

'Don't be afraid of your despair. Be gentle with yourself. Take your time with this journey. Let despair guide you to the self you need to birth, the meaning you need to make, the world you need to serve. Let it reward you with a resilient faith in life.'

Miriam Greenspan

Building News: Spotting What's New



Our church building is in the midst of big changes and each week there's something new to spot. The 17 new radiators and boiler are already in place as we write this newsletter but that leaves the really tricky part still to do – linking them all together with lots of pipework and getting the gas supply connected. The team from Chris Dunphy's clearly know what they're doing so let's see if it's all working by early August. The new boiler doesn't give hot water so we'll need to have a small water heater installed for the kitchen and toilets. That will be much more efficient than our current boiler, which took so long to get the hot water to us. We're still deciding where that new water heater should be placed.

Meanwhile the scaffolding will soon be up, enabling the roofers from Classic Roofing to get up aloft and fit five new roof-lights plus a new membrane over the whole of our copper roof and into the deep gutters that take water to the downpipes. This is about as close as we can get to creating a new roof without ... creating a new roof, so let's all hope that this plan works. A side benefit could be a warmer church as the new roof-lights will be triple layered and carefully fitted. The original domed glass roof-lights are apparently collector's items – specially created nearly 40 years ago. If you were thinking of putting a shallow pond in your garden these make a great base according to those who know – but they are very heavy and awkward to transport, and are well over a metre wide. So tell us soon if you would like one.

We've no idea how much damage the fitting of the new roof-lights will do to the church interior but this should all be made good by the decorators who are booked in for the end of August. It'll be worth coming to church each Sunday over the summer, just to spot what's new. There'll also be chance to join in our prize competition to guess what the final cost of all the building works will add up to. At the start of the year I estimated we'd be spending around £100k but I'm now thinking we'll be going over that sum, partly because re-decorating a building as large as ours uses a lot of paint. Once again, many thanks to the individuals and trusts that have helped us with donations and grants. We've raised over £10k so far – 10% of the total estimated cost. All further donations will be gratefully received.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Report from the Unitarian Theology Conference



On Saturday 21st May Rev Patrick Timperley (our minister at the Hinckley chapel) and I attended the Unitarian Theology Conference which took place at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester. The event was chaired by Rev Jim Corrigan, and there were some eighty or more participants. The first speaker was Rev Stephen Lingwood, minister at Bank Street Chapel in Bolton, who gave an overview of the topic, looking at the meaning of both 'theology' and 'Unitarian'. He said that theology was the process of systematically analysing and creatively reinterpreting faith, and faith is our 'ultimate concern', the ultimate orientation for a person's life (or, as a member of the audience put it later, faith is the reason for getting up in the morning). Faith must live and find expression in the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral life of the faith community. He suggested that Unitarian faith is committed to the ever-unfolding nature of truth, and that revelation is continuous. We are a liberal and creedless tradition, and so can never accept formal and final statements of our theology. However this is no longer an excuse to be vague and unclear about our identity. We need to be able to speak clearly of who we are, and we cannot do that without doing the 'hard work of theology'. The next speaker was Dr Mel Prideaux from the University of Leeds, and a member of our Wakefield chapel. She said that in our desire to be creedless we risked throwing the theological baby out with the bathwater. To be creedless is in itself a deeply theological position. She noted the effect that secularisation has had on our movement, which is profound but often unexamined. Were we just a form of Sunday Assembly but with our own buildings? She also suggested that we were not as radical nor different as we often liked to think.

After lunch Rev Jo James, minister at our Mill Hill Church in Leeds, talked on 'The spirit in Unitarian and Judaeo-Christian thought'. He noted that in many cultures the word for spirit and the word for breath are often synonymous, emphasising the importance of breathing in spiritual practice. It is sometimes said that 'Unitarians don't do the spirit', but Jo looked back at the place of the spirit and spirituality in liberal religion over the centuries, coming up-to-date by noting the current popularity of Carolyn McDade's hymn 'Spirit of Life, come unto me'. It was also good to be reminded about the work of Unitarian minister Rev Sidney Spencer who gave the 1966 Essex Hall Lecture on 'Mysticism in liberal religion' and whose *Mysticism in World Religions* had been published by Pelican Books in 1963. The final paper by Rev David Steers 'Towards a Unitarian theology for the 21st century' was read by Rev Jim Corrigan as David was unable to attend. David noted the observation of Professor R.K. Webb that as Unitarianism lost its theological content it began to splinter. He felt it was important that we still 'did theology' but in recent years we have not taken that task seriously. He also looked at what defines us as a movement, and concluded that our Unique Selling Point is the balance our tradition strikes between faith and reason. We have to be people of faith, or there is no point to us at all, but we also have a vital tradition of rational dissent.

The afternoon concluded with a panel discussion involving Revs Sarah Tinker, Sheena Gabriel and Lewis Connolly (who was until recently an Anglican curate). Amongst the points made: we must offer an alternative to orthodox Christianity; people are crying out for a 21st century spirituality without the supernatural; a catch-all theology for our movement is unattainable (and undesirable); 'where there are no roots there are no fruits'.

I have attended many Unitarian meetings over the years, but this is the first one just on theology for a long time. The general feeling amongst those present was that it had been both enjoyable and useful, and there should be further such meetings in the future. The various talks are now available at: www.ukunitarians.org.uk/tv and click on 'Latest Films' for the Theology Conference.

Howard Hague

One Light Spiritual Gathering



**12th August and 9th September,
6.45 for 7pm (ends at 8.30pm with tea)
Here at Essex Church, Notting Hill Gate**

A OneSpirit Interfaith Service for people of all faiths and none. This One Light Spiritual Gathering is offered by Christopher, Bernd and Alison. For further information contact: admin@osif.co.uk

Summer Pavilion Outing After the Service on Sunday 21st August



After the 'Summer Pavilions' service on 21st August Roy Clark will lead a gentle walk across Hyde Park to the Serpentine Gallery to visit the summer pavilions and Sarah will be able to drive some people there. We'll do the trip in two groups so that anyone who wants to go to Margaret's class can join us after the singing. Let us know if you would like to come. Bring a packed lunch.

'Truth Seekers'

Sermon by Rev. Sarah Tinker from Sunday 3rd July

This sermon is also available online as a podcast.

I don't know about you, but every time I hear a report of a racist incident, of a hate crime here in Britain, committed by one individual or group against another individual or group, I feel deeply ashamed. The thought that there are people in our land who will shout at others or put nasty messages through a letterbox, physically assault someone because they are speaking with a particular accent or have skin of a particular colour, or throw a petrol bomb into someone else's shop, troubles me greatly. The potential for such violence lies here in the human heart, it's within each of us I believe. The potential for violence and cruelty always exists. But the recent campaigning on the issue of Britain's membership of the European Union, and the majority vote for leaving the EU, seems to have triggered violent responses within some sectors of our society. I have a friend and ministry colleague Wyn Thomas who works with six congregations in Wales. As chairperson of Unitarians in Wales this week he made the following statement which I think speaks for us all:

'Following various deeply worrying events over the past few days, I call on Unitarians and our supporters in Wales and further afield to put our values and ethos into practice. We are at a point in our history as a nation when Freedom, Reason and Tolerance are needed more than ever within the communities we serve.'

- *We must use our democratic and moral freedom to express our opinions publicly and without fear of reprisal.*
- *We must use our reason to take every opportunity to question everything we hear in this uncertain political climate.*
- *We must, above all else, exercise tolerance in our dealings with all people. Let us celebrate the wonderful and awe-inspiring variety of our communities, challenging xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and political hatred wherever we encounter it.*

Unitarians have a rich history of fighting social injustice. Let us embrace that history, and take a stand for our future.'

Words of the Rev Wyn Thomas, minister with Welsh Unitarians.

In our community here at Essex Church I like to think of us as truth seekers, exploring our own faith and sharing that respectfully with others. Such an approach recognises that we all have different views and opinions, based on our differing life experiences and thought processes. We recognise the unfolding and nuanced nature of truth when we explore our faith. But we also know well that for some people faith is a clear and certain matter, a place where there can be right beliefs and wrong beliefs.

When it comes to the world of politics perhaps it has always been the case that political leaders hold their ideas as correct and therefore all other views as wrong, as incorrect. Potential leaders vying for power will put forward their vision of how the world might be if their approach was followed. Yet in a world as complex as ours should we expect more of our leaders? Should we require them to be more aware of how their statements might be interpreted by some of their listeners? A friend living on a troubled housing estate described how some of their neighbours genuinely thought that on the day after the Referendum immigrants would be rounded up and sent 'home'. This is in an area of economic deprivation, where a string of austerity budget cuts have hit hard. Many of us are far too aware that the economic depression of the 1920s led to the rise of fascist movements in the 1930s across Europe. And police here in Britain in 2016 are now reporting a five-fold increase in hate crimes.



The reasons for such crimes are many but their roots may be found in individual and collective pain, that life is not how people would wish it to be. In a rich nation such as ours there are too many people still struggling to survive. It feels like there is not enough to go round – not enough jobs, not enough houses, not enough places in schools or seats in a hospital waiting room. Little wonder that some people will seek to blame 'the other', the stranger in their midst, will feel their own pain and attempt to hurt others. Theologian Karen Armstrong's words have been with me this last week when she suggests that we *"Look into your own heart, discover what it is that gives you pain and then refuse, under any circumstance whatsoever, to inflict that pain on anybody else."* Karen Armstrong

Much has been written recently about post-factual politics, post-truth politics. Indeed there seems to be a wilful disregard for truth in much political campaigning, though we might argue that it has always been thus. What may be different in our modern age is the role of online media – such a speedy way to spread lies. Yet online media can also provide a way to check facts and to assert the truth.

I mentioned the sobering 100th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Somme. The battle lasted for 141 days, led to over a million deaths on all sides and many more life changing injuries affecting not only the individuals concerned but their families and communities. It was decades before the truth about the ineptitude in leadership and decision making that led to this battle and many others like it was revealed.

On Wednesday here in Britain we will finally hear the findings of the Chilcot Report into our part in the Iraq War. It'll be no surprise to any of us to hear that the decision making was flawed, that too little thought was given to post war reconstruction, that the voice of experts on Arab politics and society was ignored, that a conviction that their view was the only correct one led politicians on both sides of the Atlantic to proceed far too quickly with far too little concern for the consequences of their actions.

It will make for yet more depressing news. And yet I am going to hold on to a glimmer of hope, because the Chilcot Report for all its delays, is a small triumph for truth seekers. Its findings could have remained hidden under Official Secrets rules but instead are being published for those with stamina to wade through 12 volumes to read in full. Most of us will rely on news media to distill the report's findings for us. As we read those reports let's be ever aware that real life is complex, nuanced, rarely has clear baddies and goodies. Let's be people who try to stick with *real* life, *real* people, *real* problems and keep moving towards love, compassion and truth in our daily living, in our speaking and listening, in the way we treat others. Let us work tirelessly to create the kind of world community that represents the best we might be.

Closing Blessing:

*If here we have found truth then
let us offer it humbly onwards to the world
If here we have found love then
let us pass that warmth to another before this day is done
If here we have found inspiration then
may it flourish within us that its blessing may bring fresh insight
and possibility in the days to come. (author unknown)*

August Bank Holiday Weekend Notting Hill Carnival



We'll be meeting as usual on Sunday 28th August. Public transport is generally better than usual into Notting Hill Gate on a Sunday morning but please note that parking restrictions apply on single yellow lines. You can still park on Kensington and Chelsea residents' parking spaces.

'Finding Our Voice' Singing Workshops



**Sundays 21st August and 18th September
after the service from 12.30 to 1.15pm**

Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. She is leading monthly sessions to help us all find our voice.

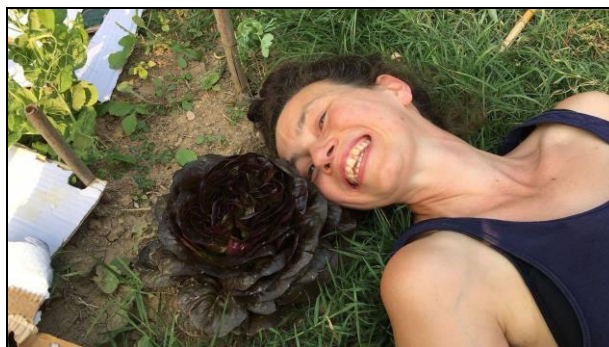
These workshops are for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound. Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential.

Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

'Seek a unity that celebrates diversity, to unite the particular with the universal, to recognize the need for roots while insisting that the point of roots is to put forth branches. No human being's identity is exhausted by his or her gender, race, ethnic origin, national loyalty, or sexual orientation. All human beings have more in common than they have in conflict, and it is precisely when what they have in conflict seems over-riding that what they have in common needs most to be affirmed.'

William Sloane Coffin

Warden's Report



I'm writing this to the sound of drilling overhead. Work is now well underway on the new central heating system and shiny new white radiators have popped up all over the building. During the week, the Lindsey Hall is transformed into an industrial workshop with cutting and welding equipment all over the place - but it's reassuring how neatly it can all be tidied away at the weekend to make space for our worship service. On Thursday the scaffolders arrive and soon there'll be people working on top of the building as well as in it: a busy, busy summer - but hopefully worthwhile to have a warm and watertight building as the weather gets colder.

The other thing that keeps catching my attention is the view of the sunlit garden through the office window - particularly the giant bloom of an Agapanthus. Having been granted two months sabbatical leave, I spent the whole of May and June in Spain and it's been odd to come back and see everything fast-forwarded from late spring to mid-summer. It's also nice to see all the work Brian (and Jackie, our new gardener) have been doing. It makes much more of an impression to see two months' worth of work at once than little changes week by week.

I actually did a lot of gardening while I was away (there's a photo of me - above - with my favourite lettuce ☺). It was very interesting to garden in a climate where the limiting factor is not sunshine but rain - provided you were prepared to water every day, it felt like you could grow anything - and so quickly! By the time I left we were already harvesting quantities of lettuce, chard, courgettes and cucumbers - with tomatoes, aubergines, carrots, beetroot and melon well on the way.

On the other hand, if you missed a day of watering, some things would start looking droopy immediately - so it was quite a responsibility. Also it was best done in the early morning or evening, just when the biting insects were at their hungriest. So it's a relief in some ways to be back in a land where lack of rain is seldom a major problem.

The centre of our garden was a "dancing circle" surrounded by sunflowers which will hopefully be in bloom when I go back for the end of the project in September. On 20th June we did an impromptu solstice ritual to bury a placenta in the middle (frozen since the baby's birth until they could find a good home for it). The father is an anthropologist and he said that in Tonga, when a child is sick, they stamp on the place where the placenta is buried - we thought dancing might be even more effective!

One of the nicest things about being away has been the warm welcome from so many people when I came back: thanks to everyone who's made time to greet me on Sunday over the last three weeks. After two months living in an old monastery in a tiny village, London was a bit overwhelming at first - and it was pretty disorienting to have Brexit happen while I was away (though Sarah kindly voted for me by proxy) - but wherever you wander, there's no place like home!

Jenny Moy

Services at Essex Church in August/September

Sunday 7th August, 11am
– ‘The Resistance’

Service led by Jane Blackall

Many of us feel helpless and despairing in the face of recent world events. Is there anything we can actually *do* to make things better in a meaningful way? Today we will consider what we progressive religious people are called to do to resist the world's injustices.

Sunday 14th August, 11am
– ‘Strong Foundations’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As building work continues here at Essex Church, let's examine our own foundation stones and how they help us strengthen our lives.

Sunday 21st August, 11am
– ‘Summer Pavilions’

Service led by Roy Clark and Sarah Tinker

Linking with the Serpentine Gallery pavilions in nearby Kensington Gardens we'll explore the value of spaces for contemplation in the public domain. Followed by an outing to see the pavilions.

Sunday 28th August, 11am
– ‘Spirituality on the Streets’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How can we develop an everyday kind of spirituality that helps us view the world from a different perspective?



Sunday 4th September, 11am
– ‘Singing Our Faith’

Service led by Members of the Congregation

Join us for a good sing – maybe seven hymns today! – as some members of the community choose a favourite hymn for us and reflect on how these hymns reflect our shared Unitarian values.

Sunday 11th September, 11am
– ‘Gathering the Waters’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Do bring some water from your garden or your travels to symbolize the start of our autumn together, in our congregation's annual gathering the waters ritual.

Sunday 18th September, 11am
– ‘Peace Within’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How best can we cultivate inner peace however turbulent the times in which we live? A Taoist approach to living may be helpful.

Sunday 25th September, 11am
– ‘Harvest Festival’

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Followed by a congregational lunch. Do bring some food to share and something to add to our harvest table. We'll also be marking the autumn equinox.

Gathering of the Waters

A Special Ceremony in our Service on
Sunday 11th September at 11am



We will be holding our traditional ‘Gathering of the Waters’ ceremony during our service on 11th September. Please do bring a little water from your summer travels, or your home or garden, to symbolize the gathering of our community

Harvest Festival Lunch

After the Service on Sunday 25th September



On 25th September we will be holding a congregational lunch. There will be a sign-up sheet for the lunch nearer the time so please keep an eye out and let us know what you plan to bring.