



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: December 2018 / January 2019

What's On...

Sunday 2nd December, 11am-noon

'Waiting and Hoping'

Led by Jeannene Powell

Wednesday 5th December, 12.30pm

'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 6th December, 6.45 for 7-8pm

'Heart & Soul: In the Beginning...'

Led by Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9th December, 11am-noon

'The World Waiting to Be'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9th December, 2.00-5.00pm

**Festive Fundraising Tea Dance
in aid of Stonewall Housing**

Wednesday 12th December, 12.30pm

'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Thursday 13th December, 6.45 for 7-9

Moving Towards Midwinter

Led by Brian, Jenny and Sarah

Sunday 16th December, 11am-noon

'Carol Service – Celebrating Birth'

Led by Sarah T & Jeannene Powell

Sunday 16th December, 12.30-1.30pm

Congregational Christmas Lunch

Sunday 16th December, 2-3pm

'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

Sunday 16th December, 7.00-9.15pm

Rumi Concert: Soveida Ensemble

Sunday 23rd December, 11am-noon

'Winter Solstice:

The Wheel Forever Turning'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Monday 24th December, 5-6pm:

'Candlelit Christmas Eve'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 30th December, 11am-noon

'Burying the Old Year,

Birthing the New'

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 30th December, 1.00-4.00pm

'The Year Compass' Workshop

Advance booking is essential!

Thursday 3rd January, 6.45 for 7-8pm

'Heart & Soul' led by Roy Clark

Sunday 6th January, 11am-noon

'Choose Your Own Adventure'

Service led by Jane Blackall

(see inside back cover for Jan events)

Birth

A Message from our Minister

As we move into the dark time of the year here in the Northern Hemisphere and journey towards both the festive time of Christmas and the end of the calendar year, it's understandable that we think of beginnings and endings. The turning seasons of the year remind us of the natural world's ability to rebirth itself in an on-going cycle of renewal. Our own lives are marked by the bookends of birth and death.



Here in our Kensington Unitarians congregation we'll be enjoying our usual Christmas traditions, each of us bringing our own meaning to the ancient tale of an innocent child born in a lowly stable, adored by both poor shepherds and well to do strangers from afar. Born to a migrant family, threatened by tyrants, Jesus' birth narrative had been foretold in Jewish Scriptures, so the early Christians believed, as the arrival of a saviour in troubled times. Yet his death had also been foretold. As have our own deaths, not in scriptures but in the inevitability with which all living creatures reach their end.

How, then, shall we live? Social psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm suggested that *'Birth is not one act; it is a process . . . to live is to be born every minute'*. Anyone who's spent time with a new-born child will know that tingling feeling of infinite possibility, of unknown potential, expressed in vulnerable yet remarkably resilient human flesh. Can we maintain some of that sense of always beginning as we travel through life? Can we resist the tendency towards monotony and repetition? Can we halt any slide into taking life for granted?

I wonder what Christmas means for you? Personally I have to make an effort not to dislike it all intensely. I'm ashamed at the frenzy of shopping and eating, fuelled by a desperate economic system that needs us all to keep on consuming. May we be saved from TV adverts that show perfect families having a perfect time, excluding the rest of us ordinary mortals. The best moments arrive unexpectedly. A funny message from someone far away; a tiny, handmade gift or card; a meal shared and songs sung; candles lit and silence welcomed; memories of times past mulled over; games played and walks arranged. All these are reminders that there's more to life than getting and spending.

So I wish you all a Happy Christmas, despite everything! Please be in touch if life's troubles are particularly with you at this dark time of year and do come and join us at some of the gatherings on offer here at Essex Church during the weeks ahead. You'll be most welcome.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* How You Can Help: Updated Guidance for Greeting, Stewarding & Coffee-Making Volunteers * Festive Afternoon Tea Dance in aid of Stonewall Housing * 'The Year Compass' Workshop * Our Treasurer Says a BIG Thank You * Hucklow Summer School: 'Theology in the Flesh' * Defibrillator Training * 'Moving Towards Midwinter' * A Letter from Veronica on Trees and Food * Poems by Brian and Eliz * Men's Group * 'Paths to Peace' 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.



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

Office Answering Machine: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

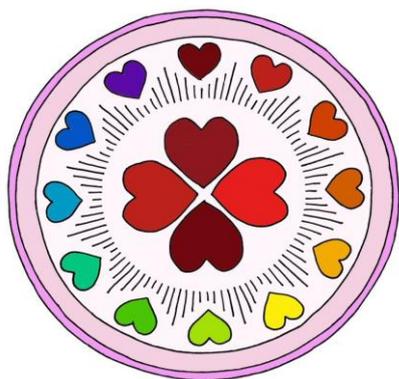
Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

'Heart and Soul'

Midweek Spiritual Gatherings

Thursdays 6th December
and 3rd January 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. In December, Sarah will be leading H&S on the theme 'In the Beginning...' and in January Roy will be leading in connection with our theme of 'Choices, and Decisions'. The contemplative hour will be followed by time for refreshments (home-made cake) and fellowship. All are welcome to join us. If you'd like to have a go at co-leading a Heart and Soul session, or doing a reading, please get in touch with Sarah to find out more.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

2 nd December:	Alice Lambert
9 th December:	Juliet Edwards
16 th December:	Juliet Edwards
23 rd December:	Michaela von Britzke
24 th Dec (5pm):	Brian Ellis
30 th December:	????????? (can you help?)
6 th January:	Alice Lambert
13 th January:	Niall Doherty
20 th January:	????????? (can you help?)
27 th January:	Juliet Edwards

Coffee:

2 nd December:	Sue Smith
9 th December:	Pat Gregory
16 th December:	Julia Alden
23 rd December:	David Talbot
24 th Dec (5pm):	Liz Tuckwell
30 th December:	Sue Smith
6 th January:	Pat Gregory
13 th January:	Liz Tuckwell
20 th January:	Sue Smith
27 th January:	Maureen Cummings

Greeting:

2 nd December:	Maureen Cummings
9 th December:	David Carter
16 th December:	Jim Blair
23 rd December:	Brian Ellis
24 th Dec (5pm):	Juliet Edwards
30 th December:	Roy Clark
6 th January:	Michaela von Britzke
13 th January:	????????? (can you help?)
20 th January:	????????? (can you help?)
27 th January:	Rebecca Hope

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 Christmas Cards for Sale – While Stocks Last!



We have just unearthed the last stocks of this church greetings card (blank inside, but suitable for Christmas, given its wintry theme) featuring a lino-cut artwork of the church which Jane Blackall created back in 2014. If you would like to buy one or more of these cards then look out for them after the services in December on the stewarding cupboard at the back of the church. Some are packaged singly for £1 each, or you can pick up bundles of 5 cards for just £3. We will operate an honesty system so just leave your payment in the box.

New Book Group Proposal

Get Involved and Help to Shape this New Engagement Group at Essex Church



Is anyone interested in starting a book group at church? We would take it in turns to choose a book, fiction or non-fiction and meet to discuss it. The church did have one previously, which ran for a very long time but stopped a few years ago. Having talked to Jane who ran it before, I'd be happy to organise it but we'd need another co-ordinator and at least four people to commit to coming to the first few sessions.

If you are interested: How often would you want to meet? Monthly, or once every two months? The advantage of every two months is that it gives people more time to read the book. Options for meeting would be either on a Thursday evening or on a Sunday afternoon, after church. Which would people prefer? I'd be looking to start the group in the New Year. If anyone is interested, please drop me an email at liz.tuckwell01@gmail.com.

At the recent London District training on running Engagement Groups we heard that it's good to have ideas for groups come from people who'd like to be involved and help run things, so do let Jane, Sarah or me know if you have an idea for a group you'd like to be involved with here at Essex Church.

Liz Tuckwell

'Moving Towards Midwinter' Gathering

Thursday 13th December, 6.45 for 7-9pm
with Brian Ellis, Jenny Moy & Sarah Tinker



All are welcome to join us for this winter gathering. With poetry, storytelling and music, meditative movement and stillness, along with some seasonal refreshments, we'll honour our varied responses to this dark time of the year, in good company with others.

There's no charge for this event but we need you to book a place by emailing info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk, or let us know when you see us, or phone 020 7221 6514.

Thematic Ministry



At a recent meeting we planned our monthly ministry themes for 2019: Choices and Decisions (January); Story and Imagination (February); Forgiveness and Redemption (March); Great Lives (April); Relating and Relationships (May); Coping and Flourishing (June); Curiosity and Wonder (July); Hopes and Dreams (August); Moving On and Staying Put (September); Religious Life (October); Time and Transience (November); Scarcity and Abundance (December).

One of the aims of thematic ministry is to encourage people to get involved, to make the theme part of your own focus for the month. So do have a look through the themes for the year ahead and let us know if there's a particular reading or song you'd like to suggest for a Sunday morning gathering or maybe there's a piece you'd like to write for a future newsletter or an outing you'd like to suggest. Let us know.

Our ministry theme for December is 'Birth' and for January it's 'Choices and Decisions'. Here are a few suggestions of ways to engage with these two themes.

Birth: Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote: "To live is to be slowly born." We discover new parts of ourselves and new aspects of life throughout our days, if we are paying attention. What is being revealed in you at the present time? What new aspect of yourself is emerging? How best could you support the birthing process of this new you?

Choices and Decisions: Most of us have made some lousy decisions at times in our life. If you feel ready to do so, can you accept that you made a mistake, and recognise the helpful learning that was gained through a difficult experience? And as a counter balance, let's list some of the best decisions we've ever made in life and celebrate those.

Sarah, Jeannene, and Jane

Our Treasurer Says a BIG Thank You



As 2018 moves into its closing month I want to say a big thank you to everyone for their donations to the church during the year. We've seen an increase in our Sunday collections, larger collections for our monthly charities, along with an increase in the number of supportive standing orders that people have taken out as a more effective way to support the congregation on a regular basis.

All of this has helped us fund assorted building projects, increase staff pay and pensions, and ensure that some community groups can meet for free in our busy building. We've also gratefully received several more sizeable donations for specific projects and we must also always remember the incalculable benefit we gain as a church from the efforts of our many volunteers. Thank you to everybody who quietly gets jobs done and to everyone who has bought things for church and not asked to be re-imbursed. And it is OK to ask to be re-imbursed!

We'll be starting another fundraising push soon and you may find a leaflet included in your newsletter this month or handed out at a service. Please just ignore it if it doesn't apply to you and please never feel pressured to donate to Essex Church. We know only too well what pressures many people have on their limited budgets. But if some of us manage to give a little it's surprising how it soon mounts up to a goodly amount, so thank you everyone.

Juliet Edwards

Hucklow Summer School 2019 For Personal and Leadership Development

'Theology in the Flesh' How Might our Embodied Experience Shape our Answers to Life's Ultimate Questions?



17th - 24th August 2019 at the Nightingale Centre,
Great Hucklow, Derbyshire

Theme Speakers: Winnie Gordon, Eleanor Chiari,
Robin Hanford, Jen Hazel, Bob Janis-Dillon

Engagement Group Facilitators:

John Harley and Mark Stewart
Sheena Gabriel and Catherine Coyne
Sarah Tinker and Danny Crosby
Celia Cartwright and Sue Woolley

Children and Young People's Leaders:

Claire Maddocks and Jim Blair

See the website to download an application form and find out more about what's on offer or speak to Jane Blackall for more information:

www.hucklowsummerschool.co.uk

Good Cause Collection of the Month:
'Send a Child to Hucklow'
 Collection on Sunday 16th December



'Send a Child to Hucklow' arranges holidays at the Unitarian Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, for groups of disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have a holiday, having no regard to religious, political, racial and other considerations. SACH funds the accommodation, travel, some excursions, and a float for treats.

Website: www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk

'Hope Not Hate'
 Collection on Sunday 27th January



The HOPE not hate campaign was founded in 2004 to provide a positive antidote to the politics of hate. It exists to build communities and celebrate shared identities through listening, organising, engaging and educating. It was established to offer a more positive and community-focused way of doing anti-fascism. The campaign prioritised working in communities over town centre demonstrations and they engaged and spoke to local people. They realised that the far right were tapping into a wider mood of alienation and hardship that needed addressing. Amongst other things, the campaign works with schools to train teachers and with students to challenge prejudice, work which they hope will act as a catalyst and a springboard towards a more inclusive society

Website: charity.hopenothate.org.uk/what-we-do

Recent Charity Collections:

October 28th – **Glass Door Homeless Shelter** – £287.20

November 11th – **Red Cross Emergency** – £174.24

Nov 25th – **Toilet Twinning** – £169.28 + £726 other donations

Festive Afternoon Tea Dance
 In aid of Stonewall Housing
 Sunday 9th December, 2-5pm
 with a lesson for beginners at 2.15pm



Latin, Ballroom and Line Dances for All!

We invite you to a special Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance on 9th December in aid of Stonewall Housing. There will be tea, cake, partner dancing and a few 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 festive-themed partner dance lesson led by Rachel Sparks.

Book now to come to this festive event in aid of a good cause - half of the ticket price will go 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 during the partner dances. The venue is accessible and has gender-neutral toilet facilities. Tickets are strictly limited and cost £12 in advance (£15 on the door). **Members of Kensington Unitarians get free admission.** You are invited to bring your own home-made cakes (clearly labelled), to raise money for our nominated charity and of course donations to this good cause are very welcome. If you have any questions do email Rachel on hello@rachelsparksdance.co.uk

Book online: www.rachelsparksdance.co.uk/book-online

Tickets: £12 in advance, £15 on the door
(free entry to members of Essex Church)

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

**Save the Dates: 10th February, 5th May,
 22nd September and 1st December 2019**



'The Year Compass'

Sunday 30th December 2018, 1-4pm
New Year Workshop: Booking Essential



Come and join us after the last service of 2018 for a gentle workshop which will allow us all an opportunity to reflect on the year that is now past, to look ahead to 2019, and consider what qualities we might wish to bring into the New Year. This will be a meditative session, mostly spent on our own, but with opportunities to share some of our insights with others towards the end. We'll be using the 'Year Compass' workbook to structure our private reflection. Please book your place with Sarah or Jane (jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) by Christmas Eve if you are intending to come so that we can make sure there are enough resources for everyone who wants to take part.

Children's Group: Christmas Break



Nadia, our children's leader, will be taking a well-deserved break over Christmas but we've yet to confirm the dates so please text Sarah on 07960 057567 to check if there'll be a children's group on any particular Sunday. Young people are welcome to stay in the service and there'll be activities for them to do. We'd especially welcome anyone who wants to wear Christmas outfits to join us for the Carol Service on 16th December and the Christmas Eve service on 24th December.

Thanks to Giuliano, Nadia and all the children who made these spectacular Lego bridges for our service on bridge building for peace. It was fun to find piles of Lego pieces on every table at coffee time but none of us quite managed to build a classic suspension bridge.



'Dancing Angels' by Heidi Ferid. To see more of Heidi's artworks visit her website: www.heidiferid.co.uk

Many thanks to Heidi for her generous sponsorship of this colour edition of the newsletter.

Volunteering at Essex Church: How You Can Help

Updated Guidance for Greeters, Stewards and Coffee-Makers



This congregation relies on the help of a team of volunteers to make sure things run (more-or-less!) smoothly on Sunday mornings. We are always looking out for new people to lend a hand and from time to time we revise the 'job descriptions' which give guidance to anyone taking on the tasks of greeting, stewarding, or coffee-making at church for the first time. None of these tasks are particularly onerous, but if you haven't done it before and would like some support, we can nearly always find a 'buddy' for you to shadow first time around. Please do consider signing up for one of the slots that are still to be filled in December or January (see the rotas on page 2 of this newsletter).

The Role of the Greeter (the greeter should arrive by 10.30am at the latest as visitors often arrive earlier than this):

- Unlock the door by 10.30am and stand in the foyer ready to welcome people, particularly newcomers, as they arrive.
- You might encourage new arrivals into the hall where people gather to chat before the service (explaining that the musicians rehearse in the church until at least 10.45) and introduce them by name to another person, especially someone similar to themselves if possible.
- If you identify any newcomers, it may also be helpful to point out where the toilets are, mention that there is a coat rack in the church, and so on. You could also ask them what brought them here today, where they are from or if they have any questions.
- If visitors are entirely new to Unitarianism then the greeter might offer some leaflets or a copy of our newsletter to help them get a sense of who we are. Make it clear it is fine either to take the leaflets away with them after the service or to leave them here once read.
- Try to find out a little about newcomers, remember their name and any key details, and help them to connect with other people (unless they give a strong impression that they want to be left alone – in which case leaving them alone is the most hospitable thing to do!)
- Encourage people to fill in a 'green slip' (which can be found in the foyer) if they'd like to join our mailing list for more info.
- Keep an eye out for new people during coffee time to ensure they are not ignored or left trapped in an awkward conversation. A simple 'hope to see you again next week' can also make a difference to a new person and encourage them to return.

The Role of the Steward (the steward should arrive by 10.30am to help set up):

- The choir/musicians will usually be rehearsing until at least 10.45am so keep the door closed and do not allow people in to the church until you get the nod from the musicians. You can prepare the service sheets, hymnbooks, and any other items that are to be handed out.
- There are some slips saying 'seat reserved for latecomers' in the stewarding folder. Put these notes on some seats near the back.
- The steward should check whether there's a glass of water on the reading desk for the person leading the service.
- Once you have opened the door, hand out hymnbooks and service sheets and offer large print hymn-sheets to those who need them.
- The steward is responsible for helping latecomers to come in quietly, and find a seat, without disrupting the service.
- If it is unexpectedly busy and there aren't many spare seats then be prepared to bring in extra chairs from the hall well before we run out.
- The steward should keep an eye on the foyer in case anyone comes in late and wanders off elsewhere in the church during the service.
- Count the number of people attending the service (including the choir and musicians; and keep a separate note of children).
- Finally, the steward hands round the offertory bags during the collection, and – *with the help of a friend* – counts the amount of cash in the collection after the service. New regulations now mean that we must ask two people to count the collection together.
- Record the amount in the collection, the number of people attending, and the service title/leader in the 'Steward's Blue Book'.
- The amount of collection money needs to be noted down on the A5 slips in the steward's folder, and the collection put in a brown envelope from that folder, and marked with the date.
- The collection money is handed to Juliet, Jenny, Sarah, or a member of the church committee to lock in the office.

The Role of the Coffee-Maker (it is a good idea to arrive by 10.30am to give yourself time to set up before the service):

- You can put the urn and kettles on to boil before the service, get the mugs out, and prepare a few plates of biscuits ready to serve.
- The church buys fairly traded tea, coffee, and biscuits, and we generally buy these in bulk to ensure there are always supplies in the bottom right-hand cupboard. However, you are welcome to bring some extra biscuits or treats, if you so wish. If you notice that supplies of something are running low please leave a note to draw it to Jenny's attention so she can re-order as needed.
- The only thing you need to bring along on a Sunday is fresh milk as we do not generally keep the fridge stocked (you can claim back).
- It is usually a good idea to slip out of church during the final hymn to put the kettle on so you're ready for the stampede.
- After coffee-time you finally need to wash up (hopefully with help from your friends) and put everything away before you go.

Sunday Conversation

Sunday 27th January from 12.45 to 2.00pm



A conversation with a difference in January as we'll be taking part in the RSPB's Big Garden BirdWatch at the same time. Bring your binoculars if you have them, your lunch and your ideas about our January theme of 'choices and decisions' and let's see how many birds we spot in the church garden.

This national project takes place between the 26th and 28th January and they are asking people to register from December 12th. You'll be sent a form on which to record how many birds you spot over the course of one hour. They use the results to assess the well-being of bird populations.



Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms

Third Sunday of the Month from

2-3pm: 16th December 2018,
20th January, 17th February,
17th March, 21st April 2019

Midweek class - Wednesdays - 12.30-1.30pm
(last class of 2018 is on 12th December;
classes resume for 2019 on 9th January)

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

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

Warden's Column



Here's Jenny our warden cheerily wearing the obligatory safety harness for our annual clearing of leaves from the church roof. You get a great view from up there.

From 25th December to 1st January, following our regular Sunday service on the 23rd and the traditional evening service on the 24th, the church will be *mostly* closed for rest and refurbishment (though of course it will be open for the regular service and congregational New Year workshop on the 30th). From 17th-22nd December we'll be having the parquet floors re-sanded and varnished but from 1st - 16th December there are interesting bookings nearly every day . . .

Sat 1st Dec - Eliza Williams Yoga Retreat
www.elisawilliamsyoga.com/one-day-yoga-retreats

Sun 2nd Dec - Saxophone Concert, Martino Scovacicchi
www.scovacricchi.net/index.php

Mon 3rd Dec - Xmas for Mystics, Miracle Network
www.miracles.org.uk/events/event_page.php?event=669

Tue 4th Dec - Lloyd Williamson School Christmas Concert

Sat 8th Dec - Voice Workshop, Alternatives
www.alternatives.org.uk/event/your-sovereign-voice-awaken-compassionate-power-your-sound

Sun 9th Dec - Festive Fundraising Tea Dance
www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/?page_id=1684

Wed 12th Dec - London Piano Circle Annual Concert
www.londonpianocircle.com/events/

Thu 13th Dec - La Leche League, Christmas Party
www.facebook.com/lllnottinghill

Fri 14th Dec - Onelight Gathering
www.onelightgathering.co.uk/dates/dec18

Sun 16th Dec - Rumi Night, Soveida Ensemble
A concert based on mystical Poetry

Jenny Moy

Toilet Twinning Sponsorship & Congregational Collection

With thanks to everyone for their generosity towards this project, we hope to be soon sending around £1,000 to this charity that builds toilets with communities where they're needed. That could be 16 toilets or we may sponsor several toilets blocks for schools. I managed the 1km swim in just 32 minutes, my fastest time yet. This was mainly because I was terrified of the proper marathon swimmers who kept passing me with scythe-like arms, so I swam as fast as possible to avoid them.

Sarah Tinker

Year's End



the quiet beauty of age
is in the silence
of autumn's dying

a year's colours fade
light lies with leaves
hushed under mist

silence speaks no answer
to our questions
from the year's birth

endure winter
confident in spring
we may ask again

Brian Ellis



Sunday Collage: Our Sunday Conversation became our Sunday Collage group in November as we made a collage to reflect our individual and collective responses to the month's theme of 'peace'. We listened to music as we worked and talked in that way you can sometimes talk over a craft project, gently and thoughtfully. We enjoyed meeting Lynda Kane from the All Souls congregation in Belfast and if you listen in to our 25th November podcast you'll hear Lynda's fascinating account of the effects of religion, politics and culture in Northern Ireland from her childhood and today, as her children grow up. It'll give you hope.

A Funerary Dirge of the Saints

Ah, the gloom of the funeral pyre
As we climb higher and higher:
Dust of ages
Falling to our faces;
Ashes grazing our fingertips:
Braced we on the ladders.

The Beasts:
Shuddering to a
Halt at our
Death's passing:
Ah, how the glittery
Bell-pull
Sounds our death-toll
Now,
Now,
Now.

Oh, when we awaken—
To look skywards
We see the Holy Patronage
Sweeping before us
En passage—
Clutch we at their shirts
For a reprieve!

Oh! Will you let
Us be Ourselves
At last,
At last,
.....at last.....

Eliz Beel

Trip to Osterley Park Saturday 19th January (details TBC)

I'm working as a volunteer at Osterley Park in North West London and wonder if you'd like to visit there either for a walk in the grounds and/or a trip to see the silverware exhibition in the house. It does cost £9 to visit the house and garden but the wider grounds are free and there is a good café for lunch. I know some people have National Trust membership which allows free entry. Let me or Sarah our minister know if you would like to join us and we'll make a plan based on those who want to attend. Sarah can offer lifts in her car.

Estelle Pataki

A letter from Veronica in Athens about Trees and Food

Greetings all. I am lucky to be here in Athens attending a Holistic Health Centre for 8 days – www.holistichealthcentre.gr – recommended by a good friend who feels that an approach through the Indian Ayurvedic tradition may be very helpful for my health situation. So here I am ... encouraged to eat well, by my Dr Nicolas Papadopoulos, and focus on earth and water; taste and smell - as I am sorely lacking in Kapha and excessive in Pitta and Vata. These are the three elemental doshas which are part of the Ayurvedic system, and which should be in balance for excellent health.

Truly these days I have been obsessing about food that I can enjoy, and noticing with deep delight all the trees around me here. So my contribution to our collective pleasure is to remind us of the lyrics by Lionel Bart from that wonderful musical OLIVER!

Food glorious food
Hot sausage and mustard
While we're in the mood
old jelly and custard
Pease pudding and saveloys
What next is the question?
Rich gentlemen have it boys
In-Di-Gestion

Food glorious food
What is there more handsome
Gulped swallowed or chewed
Still worth a king's ransom
What is it we dream about?
What brings on a sigh?
Piled peaches and cream
about six feet high

Food glorious food
We're anxious to try it
3 banquets a day
Our favourite diet
Just picture a great big steak
fried, roasted or stewed
Oh food marvellous food wonderful food
magical food fabulous food beautiful food
Glorious food



From Dr Nic's consulting room I can see a tall Cypress, and in front a Bay Laurel, and a Fig Tree to its right.

And In an effort to help me remember the names of Trees, I reconstituted the above song lyrics with the names of Trees (though I could not find a way to conclude the song as in the original... sorry!)

Trees glorious trees,
Oak, Linden and Hazel
Beech, Hawthorn and Fir
Birch, Laurel and Maple
Horse Chestnut and Juniper
Pine, Cypress and Elder
Larch, Willow and Sycamore
Plane and Gingko biloba

Yew, Rowan and Ash
Elm, Myrtle and Alder
Bay, Holly and Pear
Spruce, Hornbeam and Poplar
Bamboo and Magnolia
Olive, Chestnut and Cedar
Walnut and Camelia
Cherry and Giant Sequoia

Witch-hazel and Palm
Cork, Lilac and Guava
Tea, Aspen and Almond
Date, Fig and Oleander
Bead, Cassia and Cinnamon
Cashew, Sorrel and Carob
Balsa, Cacao and Avocado
Apple, Acacia and Baobab

Longing to walk amongst the trees in England now, and hopefully recognise and respectfully call them by their names. Anyone up for Tree Walks?

With love, Veronica

'The possibility of hope... is a spiritual and religious issue. More than just a moral issue, hope is a spiritual and even religious *choice*. Hope is not a feeling; it is a decision. And the decision for hope is based on what you believe at the deepest levels — what your most basic convictions are about the world and what the future holds — all based on your faith. You *choose* hope, not as a naive wish, but as a *choice*, with your eyes wide open to the reality of the world — just like the cynics who have not made the decision for hope.'

Jim Wallis

London Playback Theatre: 'Choices & Decisions'

Friday 18th January from 7.30pm
Here at Essex Church



Playback Theatre came to Essex Church several times in 2018 and we are delighted to welcome them back in 2019. Veronica says: 'It's been a privilege for myself and my London Playback Theatre team to come to Essex Church with these performances. We have offered several in past years too. And then my other Playback Theatre team – True Heart Theatre – came here for regular performances until I retired the team in June 2016. The original purpose of Playback Theatre is in direct service to the community.... So creating these opportunities here feels in absolute alignment with our mutual commitment to taking practical action for generating personal/social/political transformation in this troubled world we live in. We do this by inviting us all to remember our own selves – in our wholeness: our experiences in everyday life as well as our special moments never to be forgotten or even memories hidden until that time with us. And by listening deeply as a performing team, we use the power of theatre art as a way to mirror back – and honour – those stories which have been shared in the public space. So as an audience member you are not in the spotlight unless you choose to put up your hand to share something. And if you just come to watch you will anyway be engaged in the whole experience as friendly witness... and there is always the lovely tea/coffee and yum yums (biscuits and savouries tidbits) that is available after the performance to encourage everyone to stay and have on-going friendly conversations!'

London Playback Theatre returns to Essex Church in January, March, May & July. They offer their performances free of charge and welcome donations. For more information see:

Web: www.londonplayback.co.uk/
Email: londonplayback@gmail.com

Christmas and New Year



Sunday 16th December, 11am-noon Christmas Carol Service and Lunch

Why not invite your friends to join us for a good sing-along of traditional Christmas carols with a Unitarian twist? The service will be followed by a bring-and-share lunch. Look out for a sign-up sheet nearer the time where you can tell us what you'll bring.

Monday 24th December, 5pm-6pm Candlelit Christmas Eve Service

We will be holding our traditional candlelit service on Christmas Eve. This will be followed by time for mince pies and fellowship.

Sunday 30th December, 1-4pm 'The Year Compass' Workshop

For the third year running we will be holding a space at the turn of the year for people to use the 'Year Compass' booklet to look back reflectively on the past year and set intentions for the year ahead. Please email Jane by Christmas to book as we need to know how many booklets to print: jane@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Inclusive Communion

Sunday 13th January, 12.30-1.00pm



Once every two months 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. January's service will be co-led by David Carter, John Newton and Sarah Tinker. All are welcome to participate. If you would like to find out more about these services then please feel free to speak to Jane Blackall.

Poem Shops

few now the shops, but,
one lingers on a corner near,
where poems can be bought
and sometimes not too dear.

'anything Homeric in this week?'
"out of stock, demand's not there,
short's the trend they all seek,
they're not worn long this year."

'something wordily romantic,
but quiet, in magnolia or beige?'
"sorry, only gaudy modern,
don't really suit your age."

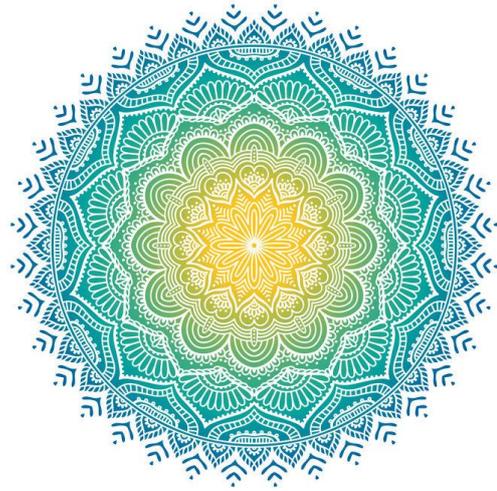
'smartly cut, new and blank?'
"not your style, interest's
pushing up the prices,
might well break your bank."

"try the box of ends of ranges,
or the ones marked 'job lot'."
I did; I rummaged through,
and this is what I got.

Brian Ellis

OneLight Gathering

Fridays 14th December and 11th January
6.45 for 7pm-8.30pm at Essex Church



Led by Interfaith Ministers Rev Alison Trower and Rev Amy Firth this service will include music, prayer, reflection, silence, community connection and the beautiful Threshold Choir. Suggested donation: £5. You are welcome to arrive from 6:45pm and the gathering will be completed by 8:30pm with tea and treats. For more information see the OneLight website which helpfully includes all the resources they use in their gatherings:

www.onelightgathering.co.uk



international association for

religious freedom
belief with integrity

It was a delight to hear the Rev Chris Hudson giving the International Association for Religious Freedom's first annual lecture at our Unitarian Headquarters, Essex Hall. Entitled 'Unusual Conversations' the talk highlighted the work Chris has done over many years to bring opposing groups in Northern Ireland into dialogue with one another, work for which he received an MBE in 1999. I'd never heard of one of the campaigns with which he was involved, the Peace Train, which campaigners ran between Dublin and Belfast during The Troubles, as a way to counter the economic terrorism that sought to halt trade between the two. His peace work has led Chris into conversation, and even friendship, with terrorists as well as many others whose views are not his own. He told us of a dinner where he found himself, a liberal Christian minister, who strongly supports the LGBT community, sitting next to the renowned Rev Dr Ian Paisley, from another end of the religious spectrum. Dr Paisley inquired about Chris' religious origins, 'I understand you've not always been a Unitarian' and Chris replied that he'd been raised as a Catholic in the Irish Republic. 'Ah' said Paisley, 'I've never had much time for Unitarians but I'd say that was a good move.'

Sarah and Redwood

'Finding Our Voice'

Monthly Singing Workshops

Sundays 20th January and 17th February
from 12.30pm to 1.15pm at Essex Church
(please note there is no class in December)



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

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

FUSE

FESTIVAL of UNITARIANS in the SOUTHEAST

15th-17th February 2019 by the Seaside
Chatsworth Hotel, 17-23 The Steyne, Worthing, BN11 3DU

find time for your soul – experience inspiring worship
explore, discuss, create – meet lots of new people
enjoy some good food and relax by the sea



The Theme Speaker is Quaker author Jennifer Kavanagh: who will be sharing thoughts on 'Sustaining the Beloved Community'. Basic cost per adult is £275 (single occupancy full board). There are some bursaries available and reduced rates for double occupancy. Children under 12 cost just £64 in a shared room. It is possible to come as a day delegate. **To register see: www.fusefest.org.uk (deadline 31st January).**

Men's Group: Next Meeting on Tuesday 4th December



The topic for November's Men's Group was 'Man's Battle with His Ego'. We started the discussion by playing a scene from the 2004 Guy Ritchie movie 'Revolver' where the main protagonist found himself constantly at war with his ego (the voice in his head), which prioritised how he wanted the world to perceive him over what he needed to do to outwit his greatest adversary.

The group was then invited to open up about their personal battles with their ego. As a Sports Coach, mentoring young athletes to prioritise their purpose over maintaining their idea of self is (in my experience) the toughest challenge. I call it 'getting out of your own way', as it is often this unnecessary distraction, not our opponents, that causes us to underachieve. What I found most poignant from this discussion was that we identified a pattern where this personal battle is the narrative behind many great stories - if not all religious ones. Although intense, this discussion was fun and thoroughly enlightening.

The next men's group is scheduled for Tuesday 4th December. If you wish to attend please email me at jayci75@yahoo.co.uk to confirm.

Jonathan Crawford

'When it comes to a moral dilemma, any moral dilemma, we always face three steps. The first is the most important: We must recognize it as moral issue, not just an investment decision, or a clinical issue, or a political choice. The second step is to find an answer to the question: What should I do? Then comes the third, and probably hardest step: to summon the courage to do it. A well-cultivated imagination can inform all these steps. It helps us recognize the moral issues wrapped in all kinds of choices. It helps clarify what the right choice is, and it motivates us to take the action that choice calls for. But how do we acquire and nurture such an imagination?'

Harvey Cox

'Paths to Peace'

Some Thoughts by Rev. Sarah Tinker
From the service on 25th November 2018

I've spent a fair bit of time this month reading about peace – our monthly ministry theme for November. And it's left me with a profound respect for anyone who actually rolls up their sleeves and does something about making human life here on earth a more peaceful experience than it often tends to be. I'm left wondering about our combative natures, about the struggles that go on within most of us on a daily basis; I don't know the truth of Steven Pinker's assertion that despite all the troubles we hear of around the world we human beings are actually living more peacefully together than we ever have before. (*You can read more for and against this viewpoint by searching online for Steven Pinker 'The Better Angels of our Nature'.*)

I've read lots about peace processes this month and about people who work towards peace in active and innovative ways. Here in London I commend to you the work of St Ethelberga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace. This Anglican church building in the City of London was almost completely destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1993. The building could just have been demolished but a few people with vision campaigned to open it once again – but as a centre that would welcome all people to engage in dialogue with one another. In their yard is a round tent – its shape emphasising the equality of all voices – and their programmes bring people together from all over the world to hear one another's stories and points of view.

It was at a course at St Ethelberga's that I heard about one process that helped people damaged by the genocide in Rwanda to come to terms with what had happened to them and to their communities. After that terrible ethnic slaughter in Rwanda some years ago, many people ended up in refugee camps. Those people who survived were terribly traumatised by what they had witnessed and the aid workers wondered if the people, mostly women, would ever recover. They would sit and stare all day, unable even to cry. Then one woman had an idea – she started to sit beneath a large tree at the edge of the camp and invited people to come and tell their stories of the atrocities they had been caught up in. The tree became known as the story tree, as a safe space for people to speak of the unspeakable, and bit by bit, through the telling of stories and the hearing of them, the refugees started to heal from the traumas they had experienced.

It seems to me that paths to peace often involve the telling of one's story, and of being heard, truly heard. These real life stories need to be heard. They need to be heard by those who love and care for us. But another step on paths of peace can come when stories are told to the 'other' – sometimes even to the ones who caused the trouble, the trauma. Peace processes are helped by conversation.

Some years ago here at Essex Church we were visited by storytellers from the School of Storytelling and one of the stories they told us was a true one of taking their methods of working with story to Israel – and bringing Arab and Jewish young people together to hear of one another's lives. They had been brought up by people who hated and feared the opposing side. They had never thought of them as human beings with hopes and dreams similar to their own until they heard them speak.



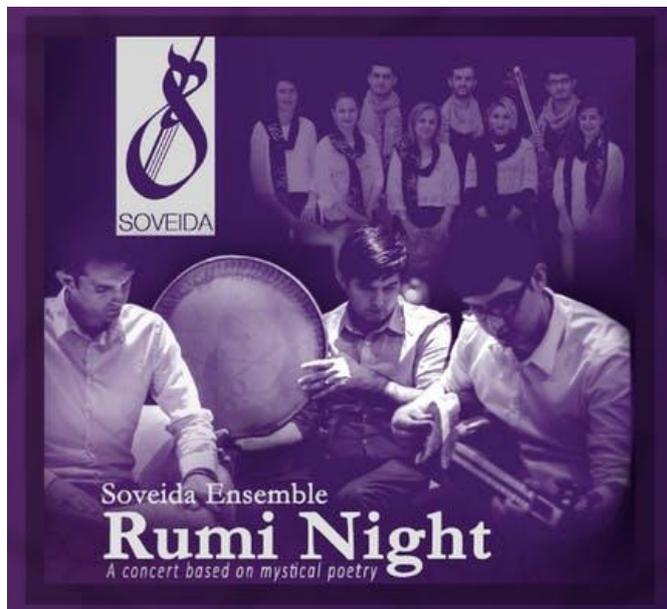
It reminded me of the work I'd read about from South Africa of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that focused more on the respectful hearing of people's truths than on the punishment of perpetrators. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who along with Nelson Mandela played such a vital role in finding a relatively peaceful way to end apartheid, writes that *'If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.'*

I've been impressed by the quiet work of restorative justice teams in this country who work to bring those hurt by crime together with those who committed the criminal act. If this interests you, the Forgiveness Project website has some inspiring accounts of what happens when people meet in this way, held by a safe facilitation process, telling their version of a shared story and having it heard by the 'other'. None of this is easy. And no-one has the right, in my view at least, to tell another person what steps they should take towards peace – these are paths that may take a lifetime to achieve and resolution may never be reached. It is for an individual and a community to decide what is right for them.

And for most of us the paths to peace are going to be internal pathways – in our own thinking and feeling. The small steps we might take – of examining our own thoughts and feelings – of being gently curious about ourselves and others – of slowing down our reactive, self-protective tendencies – that old lizard brain part of us that rushes to protect us at the slightest hint of a perceived threat to our cherished ideas of right and wrong. Whenever we find ourselves thinking of someone as 'other' and setting ourselves and our ideas up in opposition let's give a wry smile and try and think another thought that knows that the other could indeed be us. These are only small steps towards greater peace yet they may significantly improve our lives and the lives of those around us. May that be so, amen.

Closing Blessing:

Vietnamese meditation teacher Thich Nhat Hanh wrote that 'peace is every step'. And so in the week ahead let us choose a path of peace – in our thinking, in our speaking, in the ways we treat those we love, in the ways we respond to those we find difficult. And let us be brave in seeking to hear of life from other points of view and tireless in finding better ways to communicate one with another, for this is what our world needs now - amen, go well and blessed be.



A Concert Based on Mystical Poetry

Sunday 16th December, 7-9.00pm, Here at Essex Church

'In the house of lovers, the music never stops, the walls are made of songs & the floor dances' - Jalaluddin Rumi, 13th Century Mystic & Poet

The Soveida Ensemble returns to Essex Church this December for another night of mystical music. Allow the rhythms to transport you, while the love filled words of Rumi, and other spiritual masters, fill the air. The concert begins at 7pm and ends at 9pm, with a 20 minute refreshment break in the middle. Tickets are on a donation basis on the night, all profit goes to charity.

Book your (free) tickets here: icconcert.eventbrite.co.uk

Defibrillator Training



The long awaited defibrillator should be arriving before Christmas but at the time of writing it's still not certain whether it will be sited on an outside wall or in the church foyer. On an outside wall it has to be unlocked in order to be part of the London Ambulance accreditation scheme but there is a risk of theft and it needs to be wired into an electricity supply because the pads must be kept warm. On an inside wall it's harder for our neighbours to get instant access. Once that decision is made we'll arrange a training session for up to 12 people so let us know if this is something you want to be involved with. We'll be inviting some of the neighbours to be involved too so that as many people as possible have access to this potentially life-saving piece of equipment.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the purchase of this defibrillator.

What's On *(continued)*

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

Sunday 13th January, 11am-noon
'The Unfolding Path'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th January, 12.30-1.30pm
Inclusive Communion
Led by David Carter, John Newton & Sarah

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

Thursday 17th January, 7.00-9.00pm
Management Committee Meeting

Friday 18th January, 7.30-9.00pm
Playback Theatre:
'Choices and Decisions'

Saturday 19th January (time TBC)
Trip to Osterley Park with Estelle
Please book in advance with Sarah/Estelle.

Sunday 20th January, 11am-noon
'The Right to Choose'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th January, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice'
Singing workshop with Margaret

Sunday 20th January, 2-3pm
'Nia Dance' with Sonya Leite

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

Sunday 27th January, 11am-noon
'Our Moral Compass'
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th January, 12.45-2.00pm
Sunday Conversation and RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

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

Dates for your Diary:

Sunday 10th February, 2-5pm
Sunday Afternoon Tea Dance

Weekend of 15th-17th February in Worthing:
Festival of Unitarians in the South East (FUSE) – Book now for a Weekend Away
Book online ASAP: www.fusefest.org.uk

16th-18th April in Birmingham Hilton Metropole
General Assembly Annual Meetings (GA)
Book online: www.unitarianmeetings2019.com

Services at Essex Church in December and January



Sunday 2nd December, 11am 'Waiting and Hoping'

Service led by Jeannene Powell

As we move into the season of Advent, in this service we will consider the times of waiting for those things we hope for.

Sunday 9th December, 11am 'The World is Waiting to Be'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Where do ideas come from and what best nourishes our creative processes? We'll be honouring the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in this service.

Sunday 16th December, 11am 'Carol Service – Celebrating Birth'

Service led by Sarah Tinker and Jeannene Powell

Our annual Carol Service is a great opportunity to invite your friends and join us in a cheering feast of carols and readings, with festive music from our choir and a shared lunch to follow.

Sunday 23rd December, 11am 'Winter Solstice: The Wheel Forever Turning'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

We'll be honouring the cycles of the year and of our lives, the eternal cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth.

Monday 24th December, 4.45 for 5pm 'Candlelit Christmas Eve'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for our traditional, candle-lit Christmas Eve service. There'll be mince pies and mulled wine afterwards.

Sunday 30th December, 11am 'Burying the Old Year, Birthing the New'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

With a simple ritual to mark the end of one year and the start of the new. With clarinet music from Benjie del Rosario.

Sunday 6th January, 11am 'Choose Your Own Adventure'

Service led by Jane Blackall

In this service we'll consider the possibility of bringing a lightness and playful spirit to our everyday decision-making. Why not?

Sunday 13th January, 11am 'The Unfolding Path'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How our choices shape the paths of our lives.

Sunday 20th January, 11am 'The Right to Choose'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What principles guide our attitudes towards ethics of the body?

Sunday 27th January, 11am 'Our Moral Compass'

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

How do we decide what's right and wrong in life?



Essex Church Membership and Contact Forms

It's that time again! Each year we ask members to re-affirm their membership and confirm their contact details by filling in a form (this year it will be golden yellow – please look out for it at church on Sundays – it's easy to fill in and hand back during coffee hour). Membership does not depend on you making a financial contribution to the work of the church, though of course we are very grateful for your regular donations, which make possible the ongoing work of the congregation. Membership is instead about affirming your personal commitment to this community and to the Unitarian ethos. Each member is a vital and valued part of this church and its work in the world. If you are new to the congregation, we ask you to attend for three months before applying to join, so that you can get a feel for what the church is about. If you have any questions about membership do have a chat with Sarah, Jane, or a member of the church committee to find out more.