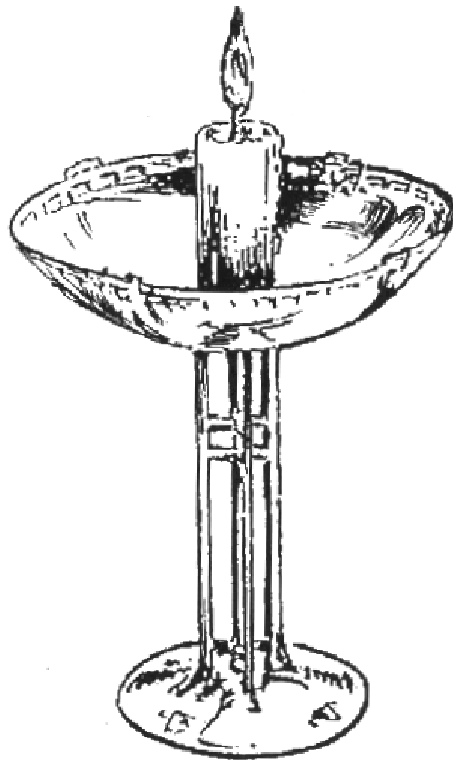


Kensington Unitarians



Annual Report 2006

Essex Church
112 Palace Gardens Terrace
London W8 4RT

info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2006

Name of Charity

Essex Unitarian Chapel and Minister's House and Other Charities, as shown, known locally as Kensington Unitarians, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London W8 4RT.

Charitable Registration

The church is registered as Charity number 230789. The original governing instrument is a conveyance dated 7 January 1783 and modified by schemes dated 9 December 1884, 15 January 1973 and 18 April 1986, which last incorporated the remaining eight charities.

Trustees

Howard Hague (Chairperson), Juliet Edwards, Harold Lorenzelli,
Roy Parnell, Patricia Walker-Hesson, Stephanie Saville (*to February 2006*).

The Custodian Trustee is the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporate.

Management Committee

Caroline Blair, Jane Blackall (*from May 2006*), Doris Campbell, David Francis Darling,
Juliet Edwards (*from May 2006*), Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague (*from May 2006*),
Harold Lorenzelli (*from May 2006*), Patricia Walker-Hesson (*from May 2006*), Christine Joshi (*to March 2006*).

Minister

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Manse Flat, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

Treasurer

Juliet Edwards
6a Essex Road, Acton, London W3 9JA

Wardens

Jenny Moy and David Berridge (*from July 2006*)
Warden's Flat, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

Secretary

Jane Blackall
20 Manchester Grove, London E14 3BG

Auditors and Accountants

Lindeyer Francis Ferguson
North House, 198 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1BE

Investment Advisers

Morgan Stanley Quilter
4th Floor, The Pinnacle, 73 King Street, Manchester, M2 4NG

Bankers

CAF
King's Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA

Restriction on Funds

All Funds/Trusts under the control of the Trustees are for the benefit of the Church other than the Carlisle Fund (income may be expended at the sole discretion of the Minister) and Stock Bequest (income must be used for Church music).

Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2006

The Charity's Purpose and Objectives

Charitable Purpose and Policies

We are here to worship, to share our experiences, to learn from each other, to explore our diverse faiths, to welcome spiritual seekers and to offer companionship on life's journey.

There have been no material changes in the policies since the last report.

Organisation

The running of the church is under the control of the management committee with the trustees having overall responsibility for finance and staff employment. Trustees are appointed by invitation with a maximum of 9 trustees to serve. They manage the charity by means of monthly meetings. The management committee is elected at the AGM with casual vacancies filled during the year.

Trustees

The trustees who have served during the year are listed, with other key personnel, on page 1.

Review of Activities

Details are given in the reports that follow.

Risks

The trustees have reviewed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and systems have been established to mitigate those risks. The major risk is generating enough income to finance the charity's occupation of the building.

Policy on Reserves

The trustees are now satisfied that they have achieved a reserve of three months running costs. We have completed the first year of the five year programme of repair and renovation that our thirty year old building requires. In the past year we have made improvements to the Warden's flat. The trustees are mindful of the need to continue to build further reserves through a variety of fund raising initiatives.

Investment Performance

The value of invested funds have increased a little in line with the markets generally. The trustees are holding funds for the long term and are optimistic that the values will improve further.

Approval

On behalf of the Trustees

Howard Hague, Chair of Trustees

Date: 9th April 2007

Treasurer's Report

It seems to me that when looking at our financial situation we have constantly to be aware of balancing things out. During the last 18 months the congregation felt that it was time to support a charity once more. We reinstated the idea of donating the cash collection from the last Sunday of each month. Our charity from January to June was Water Aid and from July to December was the Camphill Village Trust. We became particularly keen to support Water Aid and took the opportunity to raise further money by holding an exhibition of photographs of water and selling greetings cards a calendar and framed photographs. Thus our fundraising contributed to our congregational life. We also made donations from our congregation for General Assembly Sunday (October 15th) and the Unitarian Lent Appeal. We are a generous congregation and we feel the urge to give to good causes. When the Committee/Trustees meet they are constantly aware also of the needs of our own community and how best to meet those needs.

This year we saved money because we were without a Caretaker/Warden from February until July. In order to make the flat comfortable for our new Wardens, David Berridge and Jenny Moy, we had to spend around £10,000 in bringing it up to standard (having the kitchen units and the boiler replaced the electricity re wired and the whole of the flat painted). Jenny and David each work part time and replace our full time Warden. They have already served us well in organising the lettings, invoicing and collection of rentals and beginning to review our charges.

When we held our Advent Art and Craft Fair this year we had decided to put the profits with those raised the previous year and establish a Garden Fund to restore the front garden which took such a battering during the building of the Manse Flat. Our £2,400 is far from sufficient to pay for the work needed but we hope we may be able to encourage some additional funding.

We are setting aside £6,000 annually, in a CAF deposit account, towards reinstating our investments in 2009 (see note). Once these investments are reinstated they will begin to yield income for us. (The interest that is building up at present goes towards accruing the £33,000 that we owe). Our two restricted funds – the Stock Bequest and the Carlisle fund have yielded a little more, in line with the market, this year.

I would like to thank those of you who have been able to Gift Aid your donations to the church. The additional income is appreciated. This year we also decided to ask people to pay a membership fee and/or to pay towards the cost of the Newsletter. The response was good and this will become an annual feature.

Our financial situation has improved since 2003, immediately after building the Manse Flat when we were existing very much hand to mouth. We could now be regarded as having a reserve of three months running costs (our costs are around £8,000 per month). We are, however, embarking on the second year of a five year programme of repair and renovation for our 30 year old building there is therefore a good deal of fund raising still to do.

Juliet Edwards
Congregational Treasurer

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2006, comprising a statement of financial activities, balance sheet and accompanying notes.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for their year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 43 of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that:
 - proper accounting records are kept in accordance with section 41 of the Act; and
 - accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the requirements
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

John Francis FCA
LINDEYER FRANCIS FERGUSON
Chartered Accountants

9th April 2007
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006**

	2006 Unrestricted Funds £	2006 Endowment Funds £	2006 Restricted Funds £	2006 Total Funds £	2005 Total Funds £
Income and expenditure					
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary income					
Collections and donations	10,081	-	-	10,081	7,477
Income Tax on Gift Aid	1,266	-	-	1,266	668
Investment income					
Dividends and interest	1,929	-	4,801	6,730	6,136
Lettings	79,466	-	-	79,466	73,022
Total incoming resources	<u>92,742</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,801</u>	<u>97,543</u>	<u>87,303</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of charitable activities					
Donations and grants	1,787	-	280	2,067	992
Ministry	34,448	-	-	34,448	20,542
Church running	15,395	-	-	15,395	26,692
Premises	29,612	-	-	29,612	16,098
Fixtures depreciation	-	7,804	-	7,804	7,804
Support costs:					
Accountancy costs	1,862	-	-	1,862	1,763
	<u>83,104</u>	<u>7,804</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>91,188</u>	<u>73,891</u>
Governance costs					
Independent Examiner	1,586	-	-	1,586	1,175
Legal and Professional fees	3,913	-	-	3,913	3,350
	<u>5,499</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,499</u>	<u>4,525</u>
Total resources expended	<u>88,603</u>	<u>7,804</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>96,687</u>	<u>78,416</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	<u>4,139</u>	<u>(7,804)</u>	<u>4,521</u>	<u>856</u>	<u>8,887</u>
Transfers between funds	(6,511)	11,032	(4,521)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses	<u>(2,372)</u>	<u>3,228</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>856</u>	<u>8,887</u>
Unrealised gains on investments	-	808	13,828	14,636	13,050
Net movement in funds	<u>(2,372)</u>	<u>4,036</u>	<u>13,828</u>	<u>15,492</u>	<u>21,937</u>
Balances brought forward	33,020	1,397,856	103,659	1,534,535	1,512,598
Balances carried forward	<u><u>30,648</u></u>	<u><u>1,401,892</u></u>	<u><u>117,487</u></u>	<u><u>1,550,027</u></u>	<u><u>1,534,535</u></u>

**ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2006**

	Notes	2006 Unrestricted Funds £	2006 Endowment Funds £	2006 Restricted Funds £	2006 Total Funds £	2005 Total Funds £
Fixed assets						
Tangible assets	3	-	1,369,536	-	1,369,536	1,377,340
Listed investments	4	-	13,244	117,193	130,437	115,801
		-	1,382,780	117,193	1,499,973	1,493,141
Current assets						
Cash held for rent deposit	5	46,454	-	-	46,454	47,457
Debtors and prepayments		5,453	-	-	5,453	4,645
Due from Stockbroker		-	-	291	291	288
Cash at bank and on deposit		34,100	19,112	3	53,215	44,077
		86,007	19,112	294	105,413	96,467
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year						
Creditors and accruals		8,905	-	-	8,905	7,616
Rent deposit		46,454	-	-	46,454	47,457
		55,359	-	-	55,359	55,073
Net current assets		30,648	19,112	294	50,054	41,394
Net Assets		30,648	1,401,892	117,487	1,550,027	1,534,535
Capital and reserves						
	6					
Endowment funds		-	1,401,892	-	1,401,892	1,397,856
Restricted funds		-	-	117,487	117,487	103,659
General funds		30,648	-	-	30,648	33,020
		30,648	1,401,892	117,487	1,550,027	1,534,535

Approved by the trustees on 9th April 2007 and signed on their behalf by:

S Tinker (Minister)

H Hague (Chairman)

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

1 Accounting policies

a) Basis of preparation

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting by Charities. The accounts also comply with the requirements of the Charities Act and relevant Accounting and Reporting Standards.

b) Collections and donations

All congregational giving and donations are included on a cash received basis.

c) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Freehold property is included at the balance sheet at an historic valuation plus the cost of subsequent improvements. The trustees consider that the market value of the property is not less than the amount at which it is stated in the balance sheet. Fixtures, fittings and works of art are depreciated at 10% on cost per annum.

d) Resources expended

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis.

e) Investments

The investments are held in a variety of investment funds see note 4 and these are valued at the market value in the balance sheet. All movements in the valuations of the investments are taken to the statement of financial activities as they arise.

f) Pension costs

The charity contributes to the Ministers Pension Fund. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by the charity to the fund totalling £2,143 (2005: £358).

2 Employee costs

There was an average of three employees in the financial year. The significant volume of voluntary contribution to the life of the Church by members of the congregation is not quantified in these accounts.

	Ministry	Church	2006	2005
	£	Running	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Minister	17,490	-	17,490	5,753
Wardens and caretaker	-	7,685	7,685	15,448
Social security costs	1,598	250	1,848	1,883
Pension contributions	2,143	-	2,143	358
Employee costs	21,231	7,935	29,166	23,442
Locum Preachers	334	-	334	968
Total staff costs	21,565	7,935	29,500	24,410

The trustees are not remunerated. During the year one trustee was reimbursed for travelling expenses totalling £52 incurred on the business of the charity.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

3 Fixed tangible assets

	Freehold Property £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
Brought forward and carried forward	1,322,709	78,043	1,400,752
Depreciation			
Brought forward	-	23,412	23,412
Charge for the year	-	7,804	7,804
Carried forward	-	31,216	31,216
Net Book Value			
At 31st December 2006	<u>1,322,709</u>	<u>46,827</u>	<u>1,369,536</u>
At 31st December 2005	<u>1,322,709</u>	<u>54,631</u>	<u>1,377,340</u>

4 Listed investments

	Cost £	Market Value December 2005 £	Unrealised Gain £	Market Value December 2006 £
<i>Restricted fund:</i>				
The Stock Bequest	32,484	103,365	13,828	117,193
<i>Endowments:</i>				
The Carlisle Fund	4,162	8,266	388	8,654
Other endowment funds	420	4,170	420	4,590
	<u>37,066</u>	<u>115,801</u>	<u>14,636</u>	<u>130,437</u>

5 Cash held for rent deposit

This balance represents a rental deposit received from Lucy Williamson under a Rent Security Deposit Deed dated June 2004. According to the terms of the Deed, the deposit must be held in an interest bearing account in the name of the trustees. All interest earned on this account is payable to Miss Williamson on written request.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

6 Analysis of funds	Brought forward £	Income & Expenses £	Transfers £	Unrealised Gains £	Carried forward £
Endowment Funds					
Permanent Endowment	1,347,719	(7,804)	11,032	-	1,350,947
Carlisle Capital Fund	8,266	-	-	388	8,654
Theophilus Lindsey	2,378	-	-	-	2,378
Percival North	535	-	-	-	535
Harriet Pearson	1,464	-	-	-	1,464
Thomas Scott	2,162	-	-	-	2,162
Mrs M L Whyte	2,825	-	-	-	2,825
Lindsey Hall	32,507	-	-	420	32,927
Total endowment funds	1,397,856	(7,804)	11,032	808	1,401,892
Restricted Funds					
A E Stock Bequest	103,659	4,472	(4,472)	13,828	117,487
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	-	49	(49)	-	-
Total restricted funds	103,659	4,521	(4,521)	13,828	117,487
Unrestricted Funds					
General Fund					
Designated fund:	33,020	4,139	(8,911)	-	28,248
The Garden Fund	-	-	2,400	-	2,400
	33,020	4,139	(6,511)	-	30,648
Total Funds	1,534,535	856	-	14,636	1,550,027

With the permission of the Charity Commission, in 2003 the Trustees realised £33,000 of investments held in endowment funds, for expenditure on the Minister's flat. It is a condition of that permission that the Trustees set aside one sixth of that amount for each of the next six years (ending in 2009), in order to reinstate the value of the investments. The funds are held in a CAF deposit account. To date, £18,000 has been transferred into this account and the balance stands at £19,112 at 31 December 2006. The amount of funds transferred has been increased this year so that the whole of that cash balance is on record as forming part of the Endowment Fund

A "designated fund" has been set up by the trustees, using surpluses from the 2005 and 2006 Advent Fairs, for The Garden Project to improve exterior landscaping of the front of the property.

Chairperson of Trustees' Report

Until May 2006 the trustees held joint meetings with the management committee. Following the AGM in May those (four) trustees who put themselves forward for election became members of the management committee. There were a total of nine meetings/joint meetings during 2006. Stephanie Saville stepped down as a trustee at the end of February 2006, and I paid tribute to her enormous contribution to the church in my report last year. It is hoped that progress will be made during 2007 on recruiting new trustees. All trustees, when newly appointed, are given a formal induction where all details of the trust and its workings are explained. In addition, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, of which Essex Church is a member, will start in 2007 to provide training on congregational leadership, which Essex Church trustees and committee members will be invited to attend.

Our former administrator, Peter Roots, left the employment of the church on 7 February 2006. Following his departure a major refurbishment of the warden's flat was undertaken, including a new boiler, re-decoration and a new kitchen, and we are grateful to our minister for overseeing that work. Meanwhile recruitment was under way to find a new warden/caretaker. Interviews were held on 8 April, and we were very pleased to offer the post of joint wardens to Jennifer Moy and David Berridge. Jenny and David took up their posts from the beginning of July, and already they are making a major contribution to the running of the church. Their employment contracts and the service occupancy agreement (which governs their occupation of the warden's flat) were signed on 22 August 2006. As part of this process of drawing up new contracts, our solicitor updated the church disciplinary procedure and provided a separate grievance procedure. In January 2007, Caroline Blair, the Rev Sarah Tinker and I undertook a six-monthly review with Jenny and David at the end of their probationary period, as a result of which the management committee decided to confirm their appointments.

The first service in the new Essex Church took place on 24 July 1977. We hope to mark that thirtieth anniversary in some way during 2007. Inevitably a building of this age starts to show signs of wear and tear, and ours is no exception. We have a leak from the church roof during heavy rain which is proving very difficult to solve, and other plumbing, electrical and heating problems need regular attention. In February 2006, Sarah drew up a five year plan of building tasks at the church, and this will prove very useful to the trustees and committee in the years ahead. We have already made a good start with the warden's flat, but the matter of disability access including improved toilet facilities is constantly on our agenda. A meeting with the local council's Access Officer has been held and proved useful. Work on the roof and doors of the garden patio shed was completed early in the year, allowing it to be used for storage, but the lighting inside still needs attention. Relations with our main tenant the Lloyd Williamson School (who occupy much of the basement area of the church) have been good during the year. The facilities of our building continue to be used by many other groups, and this is one of the main services that the church is able to offer to our local community.

On 11 February 2006 Essex Church was delighted to be able to host a meeting of the General Assembly Council of our denomination. As it happened this was the final meeting of Council before a change in governance brought a new Executive Committee into office. Finally, I would like to thank the many people who make the work of our church community possible, in particular our dedicated minister Sarah, our new wardens Jenny and David, all the trustees and members of the management committee and others who work so tirelessly for the church.

Howard Hague
Chairperson of Trustees

Chairperson of the Congregation's Report

President Lyndon Johnson once described his ideal of a city in terms which surely apply even more to a church. "It should be a place," he wrote, "where each individual's dignity and self respect is strengthened by the respect and affection of his neighbours. It should be a place where each of us can find the satisfaction and warmth which comes from being a member of the community." Discussing the life of this church over the past year, the word which most comes to my mind is 'community'. The church proved its resilience during the long period with no minister, but there is an undeniable sense of relief in knowing that we now are being looked after by the minister that we all chose. No one could be more approachable than Sarah, and I have never heard a single bad word from anyone about the warm, empathetic style she brings to the Sunday services. In addition, only those who attend the management meetings will know how often a thorny looking problem is greeted by Sarah's calm voice saying, "don't worry, I'll take care of that." If it not too startling to use traditional Christian imagery, we are like sheep that have wandered alone a little but now have a kindly shepherd to warm the grass or whatever shepherds do. (My agricultural knowledge is a little vague on this point).

We are also hugely relieved to have two excellent new wardens in Jenny and David. They seem to greet every problem with a cheerful calm that is wonderful to hear. In addition, there are various members of the congregation whom we must thank for their hard work: Howard Hague, the Chair of the Trustees and also librarian; Juliet Edwards, for taking on the arduous job of treasurer and wading through yards of accounts without complaint; Jane Blackall for producing our truly excellent newsletter, and for all the other secretarial jobs that appear to be done with effortless brilliance; Harold Lorenzelli for organising the wonderful music every Sunday; Patricia Walker-Hesson, Heidi Ferid, Doris Campbell and David Darling for helping with the general running of the community; Christine Joshi for organising the coffee and stewarding rotas; Michaela von Britzke for transforming the garden; and everyone who has helped with contributing to the services, making the coffee, stewarding, or any of the other tasks that make the whole place work.

Our big challenge at the moment appears to be with the building. It has kept us on our toes with a series of leaks and plumbing emergencies; in addition we are well aware that disabled facilities are inadequate. For a small community such as ours, raising enough money to transform the cloakrooms, making provision for wheelchairs, is a formidable proposition. I have spoken to members of other churches and know that this is a universal challenge at the moment, as new legislation orders us to make 'reasonable' provision for disabled people. However, we know that this church has overcome challenges in the past, so we have every hope of tackling this one.

There have been many successful activities outside the Sunday services. As well as the much appreciated reading engagement group and creativity group, there have been many post-service and evening meetings. Sometimes I am amazed myself at what I have found myself doing. I seem to reach a moment in every reading engagement group when I say, "well I would never have thought of buying that book normally...", and yet all the books have been fascinating and rewarding. As someone who had done nothing creative since egg-box dinosaurs when I was a small child I am amazed to find myself painting, making fabrics, crocheting, knitting and beading in the creativity group. The photography outing and subsequent exhibition was a wonderful example of what inexperienced amateurs can achieve when they work together. The art and craft fair was of a standard that I was proud to show off to visitors to the church. I still find it hard to believe that at both functions there were people actually buying things that I had made and keeping a straight face as they did so. But the secret, as with every other positive aspect of church life, is community. Together we can achieve what alone most of us would never even try.

As a Unitarian of only four and a half years standing, I now can't think how people manage without such a community in their lives. I would like to add one final thank you: I wish to thank everyone who has attended the church over the last year for their contribution (just by attending) to this warm, supportive and inspiring community.

Caroline Blair
Chairperson of the Congregation

Minister's Report

This report marks the completion of my first full year of ministry here at Essex Church, a year in which we said goodbye to our previous administrator, Peter Roots, in February and welcomed our new wardens, Jenny and David, in July. The five months during which I looked after both the building and the lettings provided valuable insights into the ways our church premises work, the wide range of groups that meet here and the demands that such usage places upon the fabric of the building. We provide a useful resource for local groups in making reasonably priced meeting space available in central London and the congregation deserves to feel proud of making that possible.

Our regular Sunday worship is a key part of the community here at Essex Church and I have so enjoyed the freedom to lead worship in a creative way, helped greatly by our beautiful worship space. The professional quality of our musical provision is regularly praised by visitors and does much to enhance the spiritual experience of our services. The six session worship engagement group explored different aspects of these services and will develop into an on-going group which will support even more congregation members to be involved in the planning and delivery of our services. During the year worship was led by a variety of visiting preachers as well as by congregational members and we particularly enjoyed a visit from David Dawson, President of our Unitarian General Assembly. 'Songs and Silence for the Soul' is an open session held on the second Sunday afternoon of the month, which offers a different form of worship with chanting, movement, silence and sharing, gathered around candles. 'Songs and Silence' has been running for over a year now and has attracted a small but loyal group of regulars who appreciate its less formal structure.

The congregation here at Essex Church has always been committed to providing for children and their parents and we are grateful to Salah Hajjaj, our Sunday School leader, for being with us on Sundays when he can and for continuing to provide liberal, religious and fun activities for young people. We are seeking more ways to let young families know of our existence and to ensure that when they do visit us they have a positive experience and want to come back.

Provision of religious education activities for adults continued throughout the year and the courses we ran in 2006 show a good balance of themes and activities, designed to appeal to different groups within the congregation as well as being a way of attracting newcomers. Groups are run mainly on occasional Sundays, straight after the service, and on alternate Thursday evenings. Highlights this year included a six session 'Introduction to Meditation', an evening exploring 'Easter for Unitarians', our occasional 'Sharing Circles', and a New Year ritual in which we let go of the past year and planted seeds of possibility for the year ahead. We ran a series of groups throughout the year in which we explored our vision for our community and ways we can nurture its growth and further develop its potential. This is a vital and on-going matter for us to work on together in the years ahead.

The advantage of a small congregation is that most people know one another and we can keep in touch quite easily. I am grateful to all the people who have invited me round for a chat and a cup of tea during the year and would take this opportunity to remind everyone that pastoral care is part of the minister's role so do keep in touch and arrange to talk to me if there is anything you would like to discuss. I am also grateful to all the people who take the trouble to care for one another through cards and phone calls and visits and who give me news of members we haven't seen for a while. It helps to create the sense of a caring network that enfolds our community.

I was involved in our wider denomination in two main ways in 2006, firstly by continuing to work as our child protection co-ordinator nationally and secondly by starting to teach religious education at Channing School for two mornings a week. Channing School was established in the Victorian era by Unitarians who were committed to educating girls and the school is delighted to have found a Unitarian woman minister to be involved with it. Our congregation is well represented in various denominational activities, particularly those involving education, training and engagement groups. In the inter-faith field Essex Church continued to send a representative to the Borough's Forum of Faiths meetings when possible and took part in a World Congress of Faiths (WCF) conference on forgiveness and hosted a WCF meeting.

One area that we can rightly feel proud of is the high quality of our various communications with the world, not least of which our new notice board, our website, our new leaflet with its events insert and our newsletter. Thanks for the professional standards we reach in these different media are entirely due to our secretary Jane Blackall who quietly but tenaciously keeps us all on task and who encourages us to find new ways to reach out to the community in which we work. It is interesting to note how many visitors to the church now find us through the Internet.

2006 was not an easy year for me personally as our family dealt with the deaths of my sister and father. A difficult time was made more bearable by the kindness of everyone here at Essex Church and by the practical support people offered. Thank you all. Thank you as well to everyone in our community who helps out in any way to make this a friendly and efficient congregation; the church could literally not exist without its members and its volunteers, who take on so many jobs and projects and complete them so well.

In 2007 we will be creating new targets for our community and making progress with our key projects. There will be many ways in which people can get more involved with our church and as always there is lots to do. But in the midst of the busyness let's remember that spiritual communities have love as their core and as their aim; everything that we do can have love as its underlying purpose and with love everything is possible. I look forward to working with you all in the year ahead and to enjoying the priceless resource that we have here in our Essex church community.

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Minister with Kensington Unitarians

Secretary's Report

We have worked on a number of communication and publicity projects over the past year. Over the summer, I worked with Sarah Tinker to revise our glossy promotional leaflet, removing details of the programme of events so that the stock of leaflets has a longer shelf-life. The new version was launched at the Art and Craft Fair in late 2006. We now produce a simple insert for the leaflet, containing details of forthcoming events at Essex Church, which is updated every four months.

One of our wardens, Jenny Moy, has initiated a project to produce a companion leaflet for the church which will contain information about other events which take place in our building and other groups who meet here. It is our intention that it will also contain promotional information about hiring rooms at the church. Jenny is in the process of gathering photographs for this leaflet and confirming contact information for all of the groups, which takes some time because so many different organisations are involved, but we hope that the leaflet will be ready for distribution in the summer of 2007.

In the summer of 2006 we finally updated the text on our green noticeboard. This was very out-of-date but the necessary changes had been put on hold for some time while we considered the practicalities of replacing the old lettering. Sarah and I drafted some text, which was then taken to the management committee, before ordering the new vinyl lettering. The next project for improving our on-street publicity must be to improve our other display boards. As mentioned in last year's report, we are discussing our wayside pulpit, and hopefully a mechanism for regular updates will be established very soon.

In the autumn of 2006, following up on discussions about updating the church membership process at last year's AGM, Sarah and I drafted a new church membership leaflet. This was taken to the management committee, and then the "Nurturing Growth" Engagement Group for further refinement, before being sent out at the end of the year. Inevitably, as soon as the leaflet was released, it became apparent that a few things in the leaflet were not as clear as we would have hoped! However, we will take this experience on board, and make the appropriate changes when revising the leaflet for next year.

Our newsletter and website continue to be well-received. As ever, I am keen to improve the content of both, and would like to encourage members to send me articles on any themes which might be of interest to our community.

Jane Blackall
Congregational Secretary

Church Music Report

The policy of a quartet a month seems to be working with solos or duets at other times. We continue to rely on the services of two pianists to play for Sunday worship, again a solution which works well. Much of the music has been themed to the service and this ensures as much as possible an efficient use of our musical resources. Occasionally it has been possible to introduce an instrumental offering during the special music and we hope to be able to continue this practice. A special after service meeting to rehearse some new hymns was successful and means we can introduce a more varied fare into the scheme of worship. Music continues to play an important part in the weekly worship at Essex Church.

Harold Lorenzelli
Church Music Coordinator

Engagement Groups: Facilitator's Report

It might be said that the deepest intention of Engagement Groups is to provide a space where we can be in right relationship with ourselves, each other, and the Universe (or "that which each of us calls God or the Divine"). Engagement Groups have a lot in common with other religious education groups and spirituality workshops that are on offer in our own and other churches. However, one important and distinctive feature of Engagement Groups is that they provide a structure to help enable our facilitators to carry out the very best practice in small group work. In the UK, there is a scheme (backed by the Unitarian denomination's Education and Training Commission) for group leaders from different congregations to meet regularly on a regional basis, to receive training and share support. Over the past year, Jane Blackall, Patricia Walker-Hesson, Caroline Blair and Sarah Tinker have been attending these bi-monthly meetings on behalf of our congregation.

Creativity Engagement Group

Our creativity engagement group has been running once a month since 2002. Attendance at this group seems to be fairly steady with attendance averaging at around eight people. In 2006 the group took on three major projects. During the spring, we took photographs on the theme of "*Water*", and put together an exhibition of the resulting pictures which raised about £200 for the charity "Water Aid". The group also enjoyed a Sunday afternoon outing in April, taking our cameras to Stocker's Lake in Rickmansworth, to launch this project. Over the summer months, group members worked independently on textile panels representing the seasons of the year, and in the autumn a selection of these pieces were put together to form a wall-hanging for the worship space in the church. The intention is that we will continue to add to this artwork and the panels will be gradually changed through the year to reflect the changing seasons. The wall-hanging seems to have been appreciated by the congregation and the other groups who share our building. We rounded off 2006 with our second Annual Advent Art and Craft Fair, which built on the success of the previous year's event, as we had a most enjoyable day and raised a splendid £1400 for our church garden fund. We also had a number of fun one-off sessions during the year at which we tried out various different craft activities: "*Dreamcatchers*", "*Symbolic Beads*", "*Friendly Plastic*", "*Silk Papemaking*", "*Customised Journals*" and "*Worship in a Bag*". This group is co-facilitated by Jane Blackall and Patricia Walker-Hesson, however, all members take turns to lead sessions as they are able. We are always on the lookout for new art and crafts to try so please do let us know if you have any bright ideas or special expertise which you might be able to share with the group.

Reading Engagement Group

Our reading engagement group tackled a great variety of material in 2006, branching out into new avenues, of non-fiction and poetry: "*Theo's Odyssey*", "*Journal of a Solitude*", "*An Evil Cradling*", "*Gen Squash Tokoloshe*", "*The World's Wife*", "*The Secret Life of Bees*", "*Larry's Party*", "*Mardi*", "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*" and "*The Shadow of the Wind*". Attendance seems to have increased slightly over the last year or so: we now have about eight regular members who take their turn to nominate books for the group to tackle and we are often joined by visitors who have found out about us through the website or the newsletter. This group is co-facilitated by Patricia Walker-Hesson and Jane Blackall though individual sessions are usually led by whoever chose the book for that month. The group has a relaxed atmosphere and newcomers are always welcome.

Conversation Engagement Group

Our conversation group, "Turning to One Another" was brought to a close in the summer, after running intermittently since late 2004. Conversations were sometimes on spiritual or poetic themes ("*Gratitude*", "*Being an Individual*", "*Water*") and sometimes on issues concerning the congregation or wider denomination ("*Congregational Growth*", "*GA Executive Elections*"). Sessions were held in a Sunday afternoon slot and the numbers of people in attendance were highly variable. On several occasions the group had to be cancelled at the last-minute as there were not enough people staying behind after the service for the planned activities to be viable. However, some very enjoyable and productive "Turning to One Another" sessions took place over the two years, and it may prove worthwhile to run another group along these lines again in the future. This group was co-facilitated by Caroline Blair and Jane Blackall. Caroline Blair and Sarah Tinker co-facilitated the final session.

"Nurturing Growth" Development Group

As a follow-up to two "Congregational Vision" workshops which were held in the summer of 2006, we ran a short five-session Engagement Group in the autumn, which was facilitated by Sarah Tinker with help from Jane Blackall. The aim of this group was to build on the enthusiasm for congregational growth and development projects, and take practical steps to go forward with some of these, whilst providing support and encouragement for the people who were putting in the effort to make things happen. It was also our intention to celebrate the things that we were already doing well as a community. The main project we worked on as a group was the new church membership leaflet, but the group also helped us to identify areas where we might be able to make improvements in the way we do things, and appreciate what we had achieved in recent years. An article detailing some of our activities went into the newsletter after the group ended in December 2006.

Worship Engagement Group

This six-session Engagement Group was launched by Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall in September 2006. We met once a month to consider various aspects of worship: *“Structure of the Service”*, *“Music and Hymns”*, *“Readings and Delivery”*, *“Prayer and Meditation”*, *“Children and Storytelling”* and *“The Sermon/Address”*. Attendance fluctuated from month to month with an astounding high point of 17 people coming along to the session on music! Each session combined a sharing of likes and dislikes regarding the various aspects of the service, and an introduction to various worship resources, with an opportunity to try out some of the practical skills required for putting a service together. The intention was that this group would encourage more people to get involved in worship at Essex Church and we are aiming to hold a congregation-led service about once a quarter from now on. We have already had a number of spin-off events, such as a practice hymn-singing session where we tried out new and more adventurous hymns, and a session on using the pulpit microphone for readings.

At the moment there are only a few facilitators within our congregation who are regularly leading groups and, of course, this limits the quantity and diversity of groups that we are able to offer as part of our programme here at Essex Church. It might be worthwhile to offer daytime groups in the future, as this might appeal to different people, but this depends on having trained facilitators who are available to volunteer during working hours. If you would be interested in finding out more about facilitator training, or perhaps getting involved in other aspects of our engagement group programme, please speak to Jane Blackall or Sarah Tinker for more information.

Jane Blackall
Engagement Groups Facilitator

Wardens’ Report

After the previous warden Peter Roots left in February there was a gap during which Sarah managed the building and arranged for the refurbishment of the wardens flat, including redecoration throughout and a new kitchen, making it a much more attractive place to live.

David Berridge and Jenny Moy were appointed as co-wardens in April and took up our posts at the beginning of July. At the end of the year, having successfully completed a three month probationary period, we were confirmed in the post on a permanent basis.

Our work has been divided between caring for the building, managing lettings and running the office. As well as regular meetings by groups such as Temenos Academy and the Guild of Pastoral Psychologists, who have used the building for many years, we have had several new bookings, including the Kensington & Chelsea Mental Health Team and a Qi Gong Centre. It is particularly interesting to have so many different faiths and cultural groups using the building – different Buddhist groups, Sufis, the Eritrean Cultural Group, and Beit Klal, a liberal Jewish synagogue. We are planning a “What’s On” leaflet to make it easier for the congregation and others to find out about the different lectures and activities. We are generally fully booked now in the evenings, and are seeking more weekday daytime use.

Of course, the age of the building means a number of things go wrong: plumbers have been called out to unblock pipes and fix leaks, and there have been ongoing problems with the lights in the hall and the heaters in the church – which it may become necessary to replace. Over Christmas, while the building was quieter, we took the opportunity to re-decorate the Library. We have also made a start on the entrance foyer, de-cluttering and providing comfortable seating. The office has been reorganised and the phone and computer upgraded.

We have had occasional problems with rough sleepers and callers at the church, and have been developing a policy to help us deal with this safely but sensitively.

Although there is still a great deal to do to bring the building to its full potential, we feel we have made a good start, and look forward to working with Sarah next year on the 30th anniversary fundraising appeal and resulting work.

Jenny Moy and David Berridge
Essex Church Wardens

Essex Church Congregational Library: Librarian's Report

The library is available to all members of the congregation, so please make full use of it. The most recent books added to stock are normally displayed on the table at the back of the church, with the main collection in the library downstairs. Recently our wardens have tidied up the shelves of the library, and have managed to bring together those titles relating to particular religions e.g. Unitarianism, Buddhism etc. It is hoped that this will make the books easier to use. We will also try and label the shelves.

Books added to stock during 2006 are as follows:

- ANDERSON, Kaaren Glad to be human (UUA Meditation Manual). Boston, 2000.
- CARMODY, Denise Christian feminist theology. Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- FOSTER, Lawrence Religion and sexuality: three American communal experiments of the nineteenth century. New York, OUP, 1981.
- GIBRAN, Kahlil Jesus: the son of man: his words and deeds as told and recorded by those who knew him. Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 1993.
- HAMPSON, Daphne Theology and feminism. Oxford, Blackwell Publications, 1990.
- HINTON, Michael The 100 minute Bible. Canterbury, The 100 Minute Press, 2005. (The Bible in 50 short chapters).
- JONES, J. Eric Gardens of faith: Unitarian heritage sites in Wales. Unitarian Welsh Department, 2006. (Lists former chapels in Wales).
- LEACH, Robert The church treasurer's handbook: a comprehensive companion and guide. Norwich, The Canterbury Press, 2005.
- MURFIN, Patrick We build temples in the heart (UUA Meditation Manual). Boston, Skinner House Books, 2004.
- O'DONOHUE, John Anam cara: spiritual wisdom from the Celtic world. London, Bantam Books, 1999.
- SACKS, Jonathan The dignity of difference: how to avoid the clash of civilizations. London, Continuum, 2002.
- SHAW, David The Unitarian cosmic kids book. GA REYD, 2002. (A book of games and puzzles for children aged 7-11).
- SMITH, Leonard The Unitarians: a short history. Lensden Publishing, 2006. (A major new history of Unitarianism in Europe and the USA).
- SMITH, Matthew ed. Being together: Unitarians celebrate congregational life. London, The Lindsey Press, 2006. (With 22 contributions).
- THICH NHAT HANH The miracle of mindfulness: an introduction to the practice of meditation. Boston, Beacon Press, 1987.
- UNDERHILL, Evelyn The life of the spirit and the life of today. London, Mowbray, 1994. (First published in 1922).
- WILLIAMS, Betsy Hill ed. UU and me: collected stories. Boston, Skinner House Books, 2003. (Includes 26 stories).

We are grateful to Will Lyons and Betty Evans for the donation of several of the titles listed above. During the year we received a request from Dr Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent for permission to make brief quotations from the archives of Essex Street Chapel (Lindsey's Chapel). Dr Ditchfield is working on an edition of Theophilus Lindsey's letters which is due for publication shortly. The trustees and committee were pleased to give this permission. The archives were formerly held at Essex Hall (Unitarian Headquarters) and are now held at Dr Williams's Library.

**Howard Hague
Honorary Librarian**

Minutes of the AGM Held at Essex Church on Sunday 7th May 2006

Present: Jane Blackall (Secretary), Doris Campbell (Chair of Congregation), David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards (Treasurer), Heidi Ferid, Gill Hague, Howard Hague (Chair of Trustees and minutes), Jill Inskip, Christine Joshi, Will Lyons, Dr Stephanie Saville, Rev Sarah Tinker (Minister), Michaela von Britzke, Patricia Walker-Hesson

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Greetings:** Doris welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies/greetings had been received from: Caroline Blair, Jim Blair, Rev Steve Dick (on behalf of the LDPA), Betty Evans, Carole Grace, Harold Lorenzelli, John Marrow, Roy Parnell, Jo Tye. The opening words were given by the Rev Sarah Tinker, David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards and Patricia Walker-Hesson.
2. **Review of 2005 AGM Minutes:** these were accepted as a correct record and signed by Doris as Chair. Matters arising: the matter of disabled access toilets was still ongoing; four new tables had been bought; there were still problems with leaks from the roof; Juliet thanked Caroline for the rubber stamp.
3. **Review of Reports:**
 - a. **Chair of Trustees:** Howard referred to the ongoing matter of the toilets.
 - b. **Chair of Congregation:** Doris said that it had been a very challenging year for the church, and she thanked Sarah especially for all her hard work.
 - c. **Minister:** Sarah said that she was enjoying her role as minister at Essex Church and that it was a treat to work with us all.
 - d. **Treasurer:** Juliet said the church still had a lot of financial commitments, including the refurbishment of the warden's flat, but she felt that the finances were healthier than they had been two years ago. It had been a better year for investments, but lettings income was down in 2005. Sarah said that we had to be realistic about what the building could stand. Stephanie noted that Sarah had been doing a lot on the caretaking side, and she commented on the amount of time put in by the trustees and management committee members. Officers should claim their expenses. Stephanie suggested that the details of legal costs incurred should be included in future. Juliet commented that the figures given in the report are what is required by the Charity Commission.
 - e. **Secretary:** Jane said she was trying to re-design the green notice-board outside the church, and a new colour leaflet would be produced later in the year. Sarah said she was proud of our publicity efforts, and thanked Jane.
 - f. **Worship Committee:** there was nothing further to add to the report.
 - g. **Church Music:** Harold manages to juggle the number of singers on a Sunday.
 - h. **Sunday School:** It was unclear whether Salah would be remaining after the end of June. Christine wondered whether we needed two co-teachers. Sarah said she was committed to providing high quality religious education.
 - i. **Engagement Groups:** Jane, Patricia and Caroline attend the regional engagement support meetings. New ideas were always welcome. Michaela wondered about a monthly gardening group. Heidi suggested an exhibition of photographs for Water Aid, and 9 July was a possibility. It was hoped there would be another Art and Craft Fair later in the year.
 - j. **Church Library:** there was nothing further to add to the report.

Patricia proposed, and Jane seconded, the acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts, and this was agreed. A copy would be sent to the Rev Steve Dick for the District and to the GA. It was not clear whether a copy was also sent to the Charity Commission.

4. **Discussion of Church Membership:** there was a wide discussion. Definitions had been vague over the years. A membership form had been sent out earlier in the year (£25 full membership, £12 associates), but the wording was not ideal, and Jane said she would work on it. Juliet said it had brought in about £500, a very good response. In future the form should specify what it covers: newsletter production (about £1 per issue), minister's salary, cleaning the building etc. We should be open about the costs of running the building. Heidi noted that Hampstead charged about £100. Stephanie proposed a subscription. Howard suggested a pledge rather than a subscription. David said we needed some flexibility in how people pay. Jane suggested options for payment. The sums of £35 for full membership and £15 for associates in future were proposed by Doris, and were agreed in principle by the meeting.

5. **Election of Management Committee members:** Jane Blackall, Caroline Blair, Doris Campbell, David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli and Patricia Walker-Hesson were proposed en bloc by Christine Joshi and seconded by Michaela von Britzke, and this was agreed.
6. **Votes of Thanks:** these were given by Heidi. She gave plants to Sarah, Stephanie, Juliet, Howard, Jane and Patricia for all their work for the church. Stephanie had stood down as a trustee in February 2006. It was thought she had been a trustee since 1963. Stephanie referred to the rose bowl given in memory of Miss Jessie Elsley, who was known as the angel of Notting Hill (died 1967), and which was brought out on special occasions. Heidi also thanked Harold, Doris, Christine, David, Caroline and Michaela for all their work for the church. In turn Juliet thanked Heidi for her contribution.
7. **Any Other Business:** there was none.
8. **Adjournment:** the meeting was adjourned at 1.45pm. The closing words were read by Sarah.

Minutes taken by Howard Hague