



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

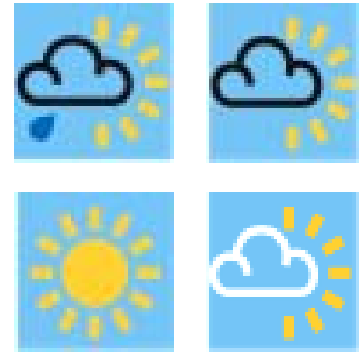
August/September 2007

What's On at Essex Church

- Sunday 5th August, 11.00am
"Learning More About Islam"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 5th August, 12.45pm
Adult RE: "A Sharing Circle"
- Thursday 9th August, 7.00-9.00pm
Creativity Engagement Group
"Soul Dolls" (part 2)
- Sunday 12th August, 11.00am
"Disagreeing for the Spiritually Aware!"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 12th August, 3.30-5.00pm
"Songs and Silence for the Soul"
- Sunday 19th August, 11.00am
Service led by David Francis Darling
- Sunday 26th August, 11.00am
"Soul Food"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 2nd September, 11.00am
"In Our Hands: Shared Ministry"
Service led by the Congregation
- Thursday 6th September, 7.00-9.00pm
"The Whole World in Our Hands"
A Healing Evening with Sarah Tinker
- Saturday 8th September, 10.30am
Outing to RHS Garden at Wisley
- Sunday 9th September, 11.00am
"The Waters Joined"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 9th September, 3.30-5.00pm
"Songs and Silence for the Soul"
- Tuesday 11th September, 7.00-9.00pm
Science & Religion Engagement Group
"Medical Ethics" with Sarah Tinker
- Thursday 13th September, 7.00-9.00pm
Creativity Engagement Group
"Collage Consequences"
- Sunday 16th September, 11.00am
"A Place in the Choir"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Monday 17th September, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (1/10)
- Thursday 20th September, 7.00-9.00pm
"Conversations with the Bible (1/6)"
Adult RE led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 23rd September, 11.00am
"Our Unitarian Tradition"
Led by Will Lyons & Sarah Tinker
- Sunday 23rd September, 1.00pm
Adult RE: "Transitions Workshop"
- Monday 24th September, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (2/10)
- Thursday 27th September, 7.00-9.00pm
Reading Engagement Group:
"His Dark Materials" Trilogy
- Sunday 30th September, 11.00am
"Fasting & Other Spiritual Disciplines"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A Message from Our Minister...

Changing Seasons: Marking the Days



This has been a thoroughly confusing year for weather, bringing a whole new level to the classic British topic of conversation. Friends up north talk of heroic rescue efforts and a quite desperate need for help for those who were uninsured and now face the loss of

their possessions. People in Gloucester dealt with a week or more without water and electricity. For most of us the floods in July meant that we got very wet or couldn't go out or that our gardens are not blooming quite as cheerily as usual. As soon as the sun came out comics were mentioning that hose pipe bans will soon be required.

Below the humour I hear concern. Arriving at the same time as increasingly loud and clear messages about climate change and humanity's need to take action now, this extreme weather is a troubling, tangible example of what might be in store for us in the not so distant future. Many of us feel powerless in the face of such enormous issues. Is it worth reducing my gas consumption, why should I bother when other people seem so careless, how can we in this country attempt to make a difference when other developing economies are increasing their use of carbon-emitting fossil fuels at such a rate?

I keep returning to the work of pioneers like Joanna Macy, who has led groups in work known as 'despair and empowerment' for so many years. Her message is clear. We need to express our feelings of despair and powerlessness and then move into positive actions, however small they may be. Here at Essex Church we are reviewing our energy use and aiming to 'reduce, re-use, recycle' whenever we can. We are also exploring ways in which our spirituality can help us express our fears and our hopes for this planet earth, our home. In the midst of confusion about which season we are actually in, I think it can be steadying to mark the days with one another and to recognise that, whatever the weather, we are part of a religious community that encourages us to reach beyond fear and passivity. We also have the advantage of our seasonal wall hangings to look at as we spend time together in worship each Sunday. Come along and see if the pictures at either end reflect in any way the weather outside! I look forward to discussing the weather with you.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this Month's Newsletter...

* *Kensington Community Singers* – "Choir-for-All" at Essex Church * "Gathering of the Waters" Service * *Reading Engagement Group*: "His Dark Materials" * *Introducing Daniel Hughes* – Our new Student Minister * *Thirty Years of our Essex Church Building*: Snippets from the Newsletter Archives * *Outing to RHS Wisley* * *Creativity Groups*: "Soul Dolls" and "Collage Consequences" * "Coming to Terms with Ageing" by Will Lyons * *Photos from our Summer Celebration Party* * *Reports of the "Eco-Spirituality" course and Solstice Ceremony* * "Conversations with the Bible" RE Course * *New "Science and Religion" Engagement Group* *...and more!!!

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

We meet for worship each Sunday at 11.00am. The format of the service varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a programme for children. Our activities also include religious education and spirituality workshops, engagement groups on a variety of themes, meeting for fellowship, a regular chanting session, and quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

Contact our minister to discuss our unique ceremonies, including child naming services, weddings, blessings, and memorials, which are available to all. Many other groups share our church building. If you are interested in hiring one of our rooms for your own organisation or event please contact our wardens by telephone or email.



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

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Gathering of the Waters

Special Service on Sunday 9th September



We will be having our "Gathering of the Waters" service on the 9th September. If you are travelling somewhere exotic – or even if you are staying at home – please collect some water and bring it with you to the service where we will hold a special ceremony to gather everyone together again after the summer holiday season.

Sunday Services in August and September

5th August

– **"Learning More About Islam"**

This will be the first of an occasional series of addresses over the next year in which I will be exploring a basic understanding of various world faiths and reflecting on their relevance to us as religious liberals.



12th August – "Disagreeing for the Spiritually Aware!"

This title deserves its exclamation mark. The topic was requested as part of our 'buy a sermon theme' scheme when I was asked to talk about how we can deal with people who refuse to hear the clear message about climate change and the need for action now. How can a spiritually aware person accept that others do not always see things from their perspective? I do not yet have the answer to this in my own life so why not come along on August 12th and check if I have found out by then.

19th August – Service led by David Francis Darling

26th August – "Soul Food"

What nourishes you and are you getting enough of it? I'll be looking at the recommendations of the wise throughout the ages on ensuring we are nourishing our souls as well as our bodies.

2nd September – "In Our Hands" led by the Congregation

9th September – "The Waters Joined"

Our annual 'Gathering of the Waters' service in which we bring back water collected from our travels and tell people where we have been. This is a chance to re-connect our community so bring along some water, and join in the ceremony, even if it is from your garden pond or kitchen tap.

16th September – "A Place in the Choir"

Marking the autumn start of our community choir the following day, this service will explore the importance of valuing ourselves and our unique talents. As Pablo Casals once wrote "You are a marvel."

22nd September – "Our Unitarian Tradition" (part 1)

An exploration of some of Unitarianism's important features and its historical roots. What attracts you to a faith with no fixed beliefs and no fixed answers to life's key questions? Co-led by Will Lyons and Sarah Tinker.

30th September

– **"Fasting and Other Spiritual Disciplines"**

In the middle of the Islamic month of Ramadan and the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur, both of which involve fasting, I will be considering the value of spiritual disciplines in life today.

Services led by Sarah Tinker unless otherwise stated.

A New "Choir-for-All" Initiative at Essex Church

Kensington Community Singers

Mondays from 17th September, 7-9.00pm



We are launching a new community choir here at Essex Church. This choir is open to all – you don't need any qualifications except enthusiasm – and we're actively striving to welcome in local people alongside members of the congregation.

Jen Hazel led us in three enjoyable "taster" sessions during the summer which were something of a trial run for an ongoing choir which we plan to launch as a regular Monday evening fixture this September.

Donations to cover the cost of running the choir are invited (£3/£6/£9 per session – a sliding scale according to your income). Contact Jen or Sarah T to find out more...

Songs and Silence for the Soul: Chanting and Singing at Essex Church



12th August, 9th September, 14th October
from 3.30 to 5.00pm

Suggested Donation: £2.00

An opportunity to sing chants from the world's faith traditions and to sit together in candlelit silence. All are welcome, no experience is necessary. A space in which to re-connect with yourself, one another and with whatever you hold to be divine.

Phone 020 7221 6514 for more information
or email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Church Outing to Wisley

Saturday 8th September, leaving at 10.30am



Book your places now for a church outing to Wisley – gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, less than an hour away from Notting Hill. We plan to take 2 cars, leaving the church at 10.30am for a day visit to Wisley. Entrance and transport will cost £7.00.

This is a lovely and extensive garden and in early September there will still be lots of colour to enjoy. As places are limited, phone 020 7221 6514 to book your place.

Michaela von Britzke

"The Whole World in Our Hands"

A Healing Evening for Our World



Thursday 6th September, 7-8.30pm

Come and sit together in a spirit of prayer and meditation as we focus with positive intent on healing for our world.

We will speak of our care for this planet home of ours and of its many aspects which delight us. We will symbolically hold our fears and concerns and offer them up for transformation and healing. This method enables people to express and then let go of despair, allowing deeper insights then to emerge. No particular experience of healing is necessary. All are welcome. There is no cost for attending the session.

Let this Be an Open Church

Let this be an open church: a place for people to meet and explore everything under the sun.

Let it be a forum for those of all faiths and none to grow in trust and solidarity.

Let it be a haven where, in a spirit of tolerance, there is space and acceptance for people of all shades of opinion; political and philosophical, as well as religious.

Let us extend this principle to those of conservative, or even a reactionary turn of mind; for in this fast-changing world, surely we cannot turn our backs on all the values which have shaped this society. In some areas of our life, 'putting the clock back' is a demonstrably good idea.

Finally, may we all come together as friends in a caring and sharing environment, with love and the quest for truth as our guides.

Anthony Silvano

...a forthcoming event organised by the Sufi group in our building...

Alternative Healing: The Sufi Way



Saturday 8th September 12:00-4:30pm

Sunday 9th September 2:00-6:30pm at Essex Church

In a rare visit to the UK, Shaykh Taner Ansari gives a comprehensive workshop on complementary Sufi healing. Spiritual head of the Qadiri-Rifai Sufi Order, he is the author of several books on Sufism including 'Alternative Healing: The Sufi Way'. Shaykh Taner stresses the complementary nature of the healing, and the workshops would be useful to healthcare professionals and healers working in other traditions.

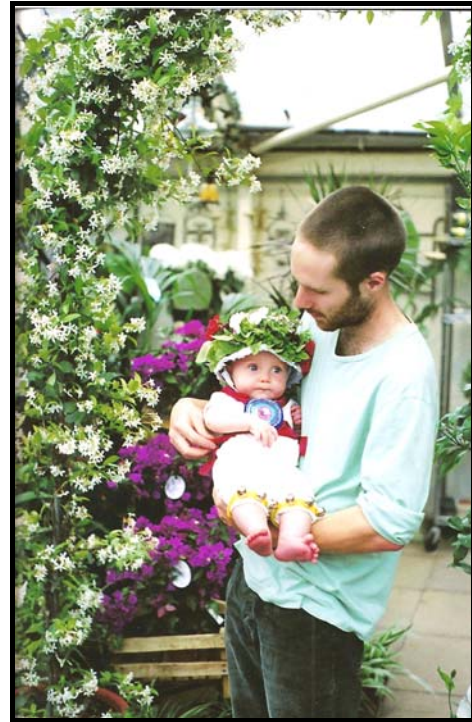
Day One: introduction to healing, causes of illnesses, diagnosis and diagnosis techniques, cleansing, and techniques of healing.

Day Two: hands-on exploration of specific treatments for cancer, diabetes, kidney problems, stress-related illnesses; using the names of Allah; spiritual geometry (taweez); and incultations (talqin). There are even delicious soup recipes for immune-system boosting!

Cost of attending the two day workshop: £150
(includes lunch and copy of 'Alternative Healing: The Sufi Way')

Contact Khaled: 07752 830940 or sufiseeker@aol.com

Congratulations!



Congratulations to Gilbert, and his parents Tess and Ben, seen here with his dad under a jasmine bower. This was a baby naming ceremony with a difference. It was held in the delightful garden centre on Fulham Palace Road where Tess and Ben first met and lucky Gilbert was dressed up in a morris dancing outfit, complete with bells. Some of the guests came from more traditional religious backgrounds than ours yet they all seemed pleased to be part of a Unitarian style ceremony.

In a service in July I talked about what our Unitarian 'unique selling point' might be. One thing that we offer which is unusual is the possibility for people to take an active part in creating ceremonies that fit their particular circumstances and viewpoints, ceremonies with heart and soul. Do get in touch if you would like to plan a special ceremony here in the church or elsewhere. (Almost) anything is possible!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

October Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 16th September**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

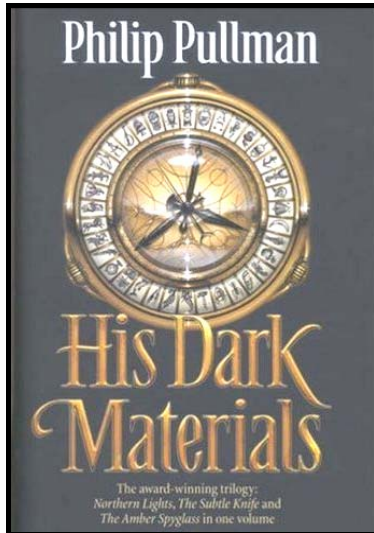
Thank you!!!

Reading Engagement Group

“His Dark Materials”

by Philip Pullman

Thursday 27th September, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group’s next topic of discussion will be the entire “His Dark Materials” trilogy by Philip Pullman. The three books are available separately under the titles “Northern Lights”, “The Subtle Knife” and “The Amber Spyglass”. This was chosen by Caroline Blair and will be the focus of our next meeting on **Thursday 27th September**.

Information from Wikipedia and Powell’s Reading Guide:

“The trilogy follows the coming of age of two main characters, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry, as they wander through a multiverse of parallel universes and a backdrop of epic events. The story begins in Northern Lights with fantasy elements such as witches and armoured bears. As the trilogy progresses, it acquires allegorical layers of meaning, introducing a broad range of ideas from fields such as physics (quantum physics), philosophy (metaphysics, philosophy of religion and, arguably, a degree of hylopathism), and theology (biblical symbolism).”

“[Northern Lights] is a complex story that turns on a simple word: ‘Dust.’ This Dust does not gather in the unswept corners of Jordan College, Lyra’s Oxford home. Rather, this Dust seems to reveal - or perhaps contain - the thing that makes each human being a unique creature. The concept of Dust provokes fear in some; others realize that mastery over Dust could be the source of great power. Although she does not quite realize it, Lyra - along with her demon Pantalaimon - finds her life inextricably entangled with the exploration of Dust.”

All are welcome to join the book group. Please do try to read the books before the meeting if you’re planning to come along. It would also aid discussion if you pick out favourite passages to share. Members of the group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material.

Happiness is Sitting Alone on a Bench



In a square, on a bench
There is a man who calls to you as you pass by
He wears a pince nez, an old grey suit
And smokes a small cigar. He is sitting there
And calls out to you as you pass by.
Or he simply gestures to you
You needn’t pay him any attention
You needn’t bother to listen to him
Just pass him by
Act as if you hadn’t noticed him at all
As if you hadn’t even heard him speak
You just have to hurry past him
He looks at you
He listens to you
He gestures towards you and no one
Prevents you from going to sit beside him.

Then he will look at you and smile
And you’ll suffer horribly
And the man will smile at you
And you’ll smile in the same way back at him
Exactly in the same way
The more you smile the more you suffer
Horribly
The more you suffer the more you smile
Irremediably.

And you stay there
Sitting rigidly
Smiling on the seat
Children play all around you
Strollers pass by
Quietly
Birds fly out of a tree
In order to settle in another tree
And you stay there
On the bench
And you know you know
That you will never more play
Like the children
You know that never again will you pass by
Quietly
Like the passers by
That you will never more fly
From one tree to another
Like the birds.

Jacques Prévert (translated by John Hands)

Thirty Years On: A Compilation Over the Years

Some Highlights from the Essex Church Newsletter – Selected by Caroline Blair



Frank Clabburn
- Self-Portrait

Newsletter snippets: "It was good to see John McCormack on leave for a year from Papua New Guinea. If anything, he looks younger... Gill and Howard Hague's wedding was an exceptionally pleasant day. The bride looked radiant. On this occasion the groom was radiant too!"

"The Beat the February Blues party given by Donald and Patricia was a well-attended and much appreciated occasion... John Crosskey speaks on the pleasures of bee-keeping... The piano stool, bought as a memorial to Colonel Jack Kidd, has arrived... Congratulations to Juliet Edwards who has passed her driving test and is now the proud owner of a car... Ruth Kennedy paid her annual visit to London. In her nineties she is extraordinarily fit."



Art Lester

The Run-Up to the New Church:

1974: "A problem has arisen over the spire, included in the original plan for the church partly as a decorative feature and partly to mask a ventilation duct. It has now been necessary to place the duct elsewhere and considerable saving could be made if the spire were abandoned or built in fibreglass..."

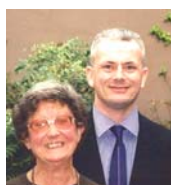
"The trustees...agreed to accept the use of the honey-coloured facing bricks recommended by the architects...It was also agreed that the spire of fibre glass is to be omitted."

1975: Review of the past year: "Sunday School: 41 members, average attendance 37; Women's Social House: membership of about 40 with a weekly attendance of about 25-30; Choir practices are being held twice a week... Minister's Stipend is £513; Caretaker £137..."

1976: "The builders of the new church have moved onto the site and are clearing the land and preparing for the actual construction work. It won't be long now before we have our new and permanent home."

"Essex Church is no longer a hole in the ground. The new building is rapidly being clothed in brick and tile..."

July 1977: "Our new Church is to be formally handed over to the Church Trustees on July 11th. So after four years when we have not had a place of our own we will soon be meeting on the old site of Essex Church."



Stephanie Saville
and Mark Shiels

More newsletter snippets: "For the past weeks the seating in the worship area has been in a circle. This has changed the whole atmosphere for the better... We have been treated to music from trombone and piano..."

*Juliet Edwards: "Each week I have gazed/ At the scarcely wavering flames;
And listened to the music/ And been together in a circle of friends"*



Jopie Boeke

The First Newsletters in the New Church Building:

Frank Clabburn: "We are seeking a new humanity, a new homeland in our Ark; storms are bound to assail us before the sunshine returns. It is up to every one of us, by being active keen occupants of this ship, and not just passive supporters, cheering from our comfortable homes and secure ways of life, to see that the Ark makes the most of every wind..."

October 1977: "By the time this newsletter appears it is sincerely hoped that the appearance of the Main Church will have changed owing to a decision to move our superb computerised Organ down onto the floor level... [more comfortable furniture for the library] will make the room more attractive as a centre for activities on a Sunday for young children who find the services upstairs not quite the Religious equivalent of Starsky and Hutch..."

"The Grand Opening, to which all sorts of bigwigs in the local community have been invited, takes place on Saturday January 28th 1978. Please supply enough cakes and goodies to feed about 90 people."

February 1978: "The meal was organised superbly well by Patricia Walker, who also did the major part of the hot food... We followed the meal with records played on our wonderful Church equipment. Lovely food was the order of the day..."

January 1978: "We are WITHOUT A TREASURER. I cannot emphasise how SERIOUS this is – without a treasurer our Church COULD GRIND TO A HALT."

"Howard Hague, our intrepid adventuring Librarian, returned to us a little while ago after a lengthy working visit to the Ganges Delta..."

The London Spirituality Network

Many people in our society recognise that something is missing from their lives. They seek meaning, depth, and community, but do not where or how to find these things. Where previous generations turned to traditional religion to meet these needs, only a small minority now associate with religious communities. Many have become disenchanted with the dogmatic teachings that characterize most religious institutions. This tendency to seek spirituality outside of traditional religion is reflected in a 2001 poll of British adults, where 24% indicated that they are '...spiritually inclined but don't really "belong" to an organised religion.'



As Unitarians, we know that religion need not be dogmatic, oppressive or dull – it can be open, liberating, and encouraging of difference. Our challenge has been letting the larger community know about our open-minded and rational way of approaching religion. Too many times, we have all heard people say something like 'I wish I had known about Unitarianism ten years ago!' upon finally discovering one of our congregations.

The London Unitarians are trying to do something about this lack of visibility! Essex Church is a member of the London Spirituality Network (LSN). This cooperative effort of eight London Unitarian congregations aims to help people to find our open-minded religious communities. Founded by five congregations, including ours, in January 2007, as the 'North London Network for Spiritual Development', the network has now grown to eight congregations – including two that are located south of the Thames. Through a web site (www.ukspirituality.org), printed leaflets, and online advertising, the LSN has begun making people aware of the various spiritually-oriented programmes offered by the subscribing congregations and this has brought newcomers to our doors.

This autumn will be eventful for the LSN and its member congregations. A successful grant application to support expanded advertising efforts has brought commitments of £7,000 from the Wood Green and Hibbert trusts. Advertising will begin in September. You may see adverts in magazines, local newspapers, and even in tube stations! After a pilot phase of four months designed to determine the most effective advertising channels, additional advertising will be launched.

The new LSN advertising campaign will let more people know about our programmes. If these efforts are to be successful, it is up to all of us to help newcomers to feel at home in what is to them an unfamiliar environment and to ensure that our programmes offer the depth that we and they seek. The direction and policies of the LSN are set by its Steering Committee, a group that includes a representative from each of the subscribing congregations. On a day-to-day basis, the LSN is managed by its Director (Andrew Pakula, student minister to the Islington and Newington Green Unitarians) and by its Treasurer/Administrator (Mrs. Eileen Wield).

The LSN is an exciting initiative that has the potential to bring new energy and enthusiasm to London area Unitarianism. As an increasingly substantial endeavour, it is in need of volunteers to help with such things as web site design and maintenance, email newsletters, event listings in newspapers and magazines, graphic design, marketing, press relations, and more. If you are interested in helping, please contact Andrew Pakula (apakula@gmail.com or 0780 9144879) or ask our minister for more information.

Thirty Years On: Essex Church Newsletter Highlights *(continued)*



Old Faithfuls...

Names prominent in the newsletters thirty years ago, and still prominent today:

Harold Lorenzelli, "our LOVELY baritone" (*sic*).

Stephanie Saville, who was the first name on the flower rota in the new church.

Patricia Walker, who seems to have cooked above and beyond what was reasonable.

Howard Hague, librarian throughout.

All four have also served as Trustees at the Church.



Article by Caroline Blair

Introducing Daniel Hughes

...Daniel will be joining us as student minister, starting in September ...

New Home

I have no doubt that there is something special at work among the members and friends of Kensington Unitarians. I'm grateful that you will be my spiritual home as I begin to train for the Unitarian ministry. I'm so pleased we will be part of one another's journey.



Philosophy of Naturalistic Spirituality

I'm passionate about learning from and expanding upon our radical religious heritage. My hope is for a Unitarian philosophy and community that offers authentic and coherent spirituality. I believe that our congregations thrive when committed to a mutual process rather than dogmatism. This process should encourage us to engage the questions in our lives rather than subscribe to comforting answers. We often spend considerable energy creating illusions about our lives that inhibit this process. Spirituality can be about deconstructing our illusions and nurturing compassion. I believe that our world – and our local community – is hungry for our “good news” of human and environmental interdependence, the open mind and heart, and social justice.

Biography

I was brought up in the industrial town of Blackburn, Lancashire by my mother and grandparents. My interest in religion and vocation to the ministry first developed seriously at the age of twelve when I began attending my local Anglican church. I then dipped into many Christian and philosophical traditions (including the Unitarians) before settling in my local Quaker Meeting. This caring group allowed me to develop and explore my burgeoning philosophy. After my A Levels, I became a resident volunteer at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham for six months. I then lived alongside the Society of Saint Francis, an Anglican religious order in Dorset, testing whether someone of my unorthodoxy could still authentically inhabit a Christian world. I could not. In an experience of the void but also ecstatic immanence, the scales of illusionary faith fell from my eyes. I now knew that the Unitarian way was for me. On arriving in York to begin my degree, I became a member of the Unitarian congregation. After a successful year, I decided to complete my Religious Studies course at King's College in London. The Unitarians of Islington and Newington Green then further encouraged my vocation. On receiving my degree, I undertook work for a year and a half in the health and social care sector caring for mostly elderly people. My study and work helped prepare me for the process of being selected as suitable for full time ministerial training. From September, I begin at Unitarian College in Manchester (two days per week) and will shortly be moving to Peckham in south-east London.

Daniel Hughes

Adult RE: A Sharing Circle

Sunday 5th August, 12.45-2.00pm



At one of our sharing circles, after a service in June, congregation member Anthony Silvano read us a favourite poem. We liked it so much we thought it would be good to print it for others to read in the newsletter. The sharing circles we hold every few months are a great way to get to know one another a bit better. Bring along anything you want to tell others about – a photo perhaps, a piece of music, a passage from a book or newspaper, an idea or an experience. Our next sharing circles are planned for August 5th and October 14th. What might you bring?

Rev. Sarah Tinker

The Very Leaves of the Acacia-Tree Are London

*The very leaves of the acacia-tree are London;
London tap-water fills out
the fuchsia buds in the back garden,
Blackbirds pull London worms out of the sour soil,
The woodlice, centipedes, eat London, the wasps even.
London air through stomata of myriad leaves
And million lungs of London breathes.
Chlorophyll and haemoglobin do what life can
To purify, to return this great explosion
To sanity of leaf and wing.
Gradual and gentle the growth of London Pride,
And sparrows are free of all the time in the world;
Less than a window-pane between.*

Kathleen Raine

“I first fell in love with this poem when I read it on the London Underground. I enjoy its rhythm and its poetic diction. I like the way it takes humdrum, everyday events and gives the reader a heightened sense of awareness. It affirms an affinity with, and a real feel for, nature. It celebrates the abundance of life in an urban setting, which is a subject close to my heart. I like the entire poem but, if I had to choose a favourite line, it is the penultimate one – ‘And sparrows are free of all the time in the world.’”

Anthony Silvano

Our Wardens' Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

August is usually a quiet month in the building as various regular groups take a summer break. Seicho-no-Ie, Beit Klal, Tse Qigong, the Sufis, the Eritreans and one of our Buddhist groups continue to meet regularly though. Wu Tao dance has started again on Friday mornings (9.30 – 10.30) after a six month break.



The Analytical Psychology Club have an evening lecture here on Thursday 16th August, and the Temenos Academy have one on Tuesday 28th August.

On Tuesday 7th Aug, Campden Hill, a housing estate on Notting Hill Gate, are holding their AGM here. The two blocks of flats opposite the church, Mall Chambers and Broadwalk Court also hold their AGMs here each year, giving us a useful contact with our neighbours.

On Saturday 4th August, the church will be full of Interfaith Ministers as they prepare for their ordination in the Christian Science building next door. This was a very joyful, and sunny, occasion last year, so we wish them good luck with the weather this time too.

The dramatic rainfall of Friday 20th July has left its mark on the building in the form of various new damp patches in the Church Worship Space – most noticeably some streaks above the altar. During the actual downpour the whole basement level outside was inches deep in water, and we had to let parents and children from the nursery in and out through the church.

On a lighter note, we have obtained funding from Kensington & Chelsea Environmental Ltd to refurbish the front garden. Hopefully, this will involve relaying some paving and repainting the metalwork and benches as well as securing the slopes and tidying up the planting. The work will be done by Groundworks Green Team, a charity that provides training as landscape gardeners for the long-term unemployed. The work should take place in October or November, a good time for bedding in new shrubs.

David Berridge and Jenny Moy

...an event organised by the Art and Spirituality Network...

“Moving and Creating from the Inner Light” Saturday 29th September, 10am – 5pm



This creative workshop will be led by Angela Schutz and John Harley and is due to be held at Forest Hill Friends' Meeting House, London. Cost: £25. Enquiries: Angela 020 8699 3494 or artandspirituality@gmail.com.

The Art and Spirituality Network aims to provide a supportive and challenging space for people to find spiritual fellowship and nourishment through making art. Workshops aim to bring spiritual refreshment and companionship as well as fostering inspiration and creativity. They are open to active artists and those of no artistic experience. We welcome people of all faiths and none, and draw on a variety of wisdom and faith traditions and the world around us.

Adult RE: Transitions Workshop



Sunday 23rd September: 1.00pm to 2.15pm

As we mark the passing of the autumn equinox, this workshop will provide an opportunity to reflect on the transitions we have made in our lives and the transitions that we are facing now. In silent contemplation, gentle conversation and a short ritual we will support one another in accepting life's inevitable changes.

Bring some lunch if you want to eat before the workshop begins. All are welcome. No cost.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

'Coming to Terms with Ageing'

or 'What Did I Come In Here For?' by Will Lyons

The adage goes that there are only two things certain in life - **death** and taxation. We all have to come to terms with the inevitability of death and face it in our own way. As I feel the passage of time and as my body gradually submits to the forces of entropy I realise that I need to analyse the problem of ageing for myself. I attended a lecture last autumn at the Institute of Physics given by Professor Tom Kirkwood on the science of ageing which set me pondering on the subject.

'So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us: but when death comes we do not exist. It does not then concern the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, for the latter they do not exist.' This quotation from Epicurus sums up my philosophy around death that we came from nothing and will go to nothing. Yet, I believe, in between there is the wonder of life to be explored and investigated through books, lectures and personal action.

When, these days, I think of death I tend to think not in terms of what's going to happen to **me** when I die as I will then be in a state of non-existence but I am deeply moved when I think of the loss of my partner, my friends and my experiencing the world. Other people might feel comforted by the prospect of an afterlife but I cannot subscribe to this idea.

'And they lived happily ever after' ends the fairy tale. There is an alternative to the standard tale ending which I prefer and which is more realistic - *'And they lived happily for many years, until they grew old and sick together, and in the end, not without pain and certainly not without fear, but smiling, they died of old age on the very same day.'*

One of the threats due to ageing which I dread is that of senility, particularly Alzheimer's disease. To have a functioning brain and not be able to communicate or retain information must indeed be terrifying for the sufferer.

*'The name of the author is the first to go
Followed obediently by the title, the plot,
The heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel
Which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of.'*

If you ask people what they would like to happen to them if they should have the misfortune to suffer from senile dementia many of them would say that they hope they will have the good luck to have a sharp attack of pneumonia and that their doctor will not do anything foolish like trying to treat it.

'I will not relinquish old age if it leaves my better parts intact. But if it begins to shake my mind, if it destroys my faculties one by one, if it leaves me not life but breath, I will depart from the putrid and tottering edifice. If I know that if I must suffer without hope of relief I will depart not through fear of pain itself but because it prevents all for which I would live.' (Seneca the Younger)

I am passionate believer in 'use it or lose it' since there is evidence that ageing people who pursue intellectual activities are less prone to dementia or, at least, if they are subject to it, the onset will be slower although there is evidence of a then more rapid decline - like falling off a cliff.

I try to do a lot to keep the neural pathways open. I am a member of the Royal Institution and attend their scientific lectures; Gresham College host a wide variety of free lectures (these are also archived on the Net in video or audio form) and there are other sources of enjoyment - many free concerts (classical and jazz) at the Royal Academy of Music and other lectures at the Royal Society. There are many lectures open to the public at the various colleges of London University.

As I age there are also regrets - the handwriting once a pride is now spidery and doesn't flow as it used and that I perhaps should have achieved more or taken a different path - but of course this line of thought is fruitless and in the end I realise that I am fortunate to be where I am now. One of my regrets is finding a humanist path so late (and Essex Church where I am accepted). Many years of my spiritual life seem to have been wasted in the mainstream churches following dogmatic rules and following set liturgies.

Mind you, ageing does have its consolations - people seem to defer to you and are generally more helpful and solicitous than I recall in earlier days. At least, I don't seem to need to fight a schoolchild for a seat on the bus or Tube more than twice a week! Perhaps I might finish with a sad little poem which epitomises one view of ageing.

Will Lyons



An Old Man

*At the back of the noisy café
bent over a table sits an old man;
a newspaper in front of him, without company.*

*And in the scorn of his miserable old age
he ponders how little he enjoyed the years
when he had strength, and the power of the word, and good looks.*

*He knows he has aged much; he feels it, he sees it.
And yet the time he was young seems
like yesterday. How short a time, how short a time.*

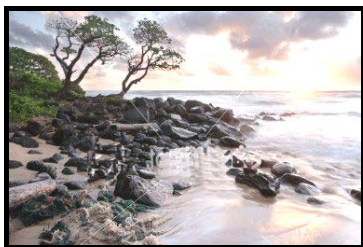
*And he ponders how Prudence deceived him;
and how he always trusted her -- what a folly! --
that liar who said: "Tomorrow. There is ample time."*

*He remembers the impulses he curbed; and how much
joy he sacrificed. Every lost chance
now mocks his senseless wisdom.*

*...But from so much thinking and remembering
the old man gets dizzy. And falls asleep
bent over the café table.*

Constantine P. Cavafy (1897)

Getting the Message...



This is the isle where – however hard I try –
I can't seem to get its name right! Is it
'a' then 'u'? then another 'a' – or 'i'?
or the other way round?

But the view across the ancient burial ground
remains the same. An ironwood tree
displaying its majestic twigs, quite like a conifer;
a row of tropical almonds, and in the middle distance
more ironwoods, then the inevitable coconut palms.

But the dawn is always different; clouds
never the same; sometimes buff and woolly
sometimes puce, pink, or startling vermillion.
Unlike the sea, the dawn is never indifferent:
it seems to have something urgent to say
so keeps signalling through changing its complexion.
What could it be? Don't tell me the dawn knows about
realtors, or real-estate builders, who are threatening to dig up
the Hawaiian burial ground? Or the near
circular highway crammed with cars?
Or the multiple stores threatening to extinguish
the single shops owned by Hawaiians or Japanese.
I can't believe the dawn knows anything about any of these.
But it seems alarmed and keeps on signalling
about something it's seen, and we should know about:
hidden as we are behind sliding shutters of mosquito netting
and the roaring sea which deafens all protest.
"Kuaia" – no! – "Kauai" – got it right at last!

John Hands

...an event organised by the Sufi group which meets in our building...

“The Idiot’s Guide to Love”

Friday 7th September – 7.15pm
at St. Ethelburga’s Centre, Bishopgate

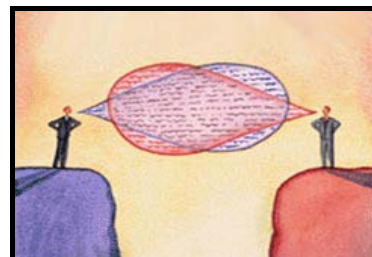
*What do men and women want from relationships? Is it the same?
Does a woman want affection and a man need sex?
Why can't I find love? How do I stay in love?*

Shaykh Taner Ansari is head of a Sufi Order, spiritual teacher,
life coach, and inspired humourist. He explores the quirks of
human love, answering mundane questions with divine
comedy. The event is framed by Turkish Sufi music and classic
Sufi stories from the Middle-East. Cost of attendance: £10

Contact Khaled: 07752 830940 or sufisecker@aol.com

Science and Religion

A New Engagement Group at Essex Church



Starts Tuesday 11th September, 7-9pm

A new engagement group starts here at Essex Church this autumn. Each month we will explore a key contemporary issue in which science and religion are actively engaged.

The sessions will be led by different facilitators who will present the issues for further exploration by the group. Through study, listening and speaking we will consider some of the challenges that science and religion bring to our society and its varied responses to the rapid developments we are living through. The autumn's sessions will be:

Tuesday 11th September:

Medical Ethics

Breeding schizophrenic mice, assisted suicide, screening embryos for specific characteristics, buying kidneys from live donors – just a few of the contentious issues we will be exploring in the first of our Science and Religion evenings.

Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 9th October:

Biodiversity and Interdependence

Led by Dr Jane Blackall

Tuesday 11th November:

The Nature of Consciousness

Led by Michaela von Britzke

Future topics could include death, cosmology, evil, creation, evolution and 'intelligent' design. Let us know if you would like to run one of these sessions. Sessions will start again in January 2008.

The evenings will run from 7.00 to 9.00pm. There will be a suggested donation of £3.00 per session which will help us to purchase some up to date books on certain related topics.

Albert Einstein: *“Science without religion is lame.
Religion without science is blind.”*

What do you think?

Thought for Today



A number of Essex Church congregation members have had very positive experiences of the Brahma Kumaris organisation which runs excellent meditation and 'healthy thinking' courses around the country at a low cost. They have a lovely meditation centre in Covent Garden and a retreat centre in Oxford. If you use the Internet you can join their 'Thought for Today' service which sends out a daily email message to inspire you.

Below we have copied one of their 'Thoughts for Today' sent out in July and at the bottom you will find the website information if you would like to become one of their daily subscribers.

Sarah Tinker

'Transform Negativity'

'The energies of life come to meet us at every moment. Most come from other people who either in the same room or on the flickering, technicolour screens with which we now share most of our homes. The vast majority of these energies are not positive. So how do we handle the 'the negatives', whether it's someone's attitude, their hurtful gestures or our daily dose of world violence and mayhem. There are three cardinal rules. First, do not absorb it - don't be an emotional sponge. Second do not reflect it back. Otherwise you begin a cycle of emotional exchanges which may last a long time. And third, do the one thing which marks us as intelligent human beings - transform it. Even if the scene is a disaster there is some benefit somewhere in it. Even if you are watching two peoples beliefs or opinions slug it out to the edge of violence, don't take sides. Instead, offer a solution, then stand well back. Even if the person hates you, accept their state of being and return the light of love. In time, with patience, it will illuminate their darkness, and return to you by the bucketful! Just wait.'

www.thoughtfortoday.org.uk

...A date for your diary: coming up at Essex Church...

Dark Spirits, Shadow Dancers

Saturday 3rd November, 11am – 4pm



Through myth, art work, movement, creative writing and sound we will explore the shadow archetype and the creativity, power and richness contained within those aspects of ourselves that we often keep hidden from others and sometimes from ourselves.

Group led by Sarah Tinker and Katharine Cable

Bring lunch to share, drinks provided.

Cost: £5 to £15, pay what you can afford

Booking essential – please phone 020 7221 6514 to book your place in good time as places will be limited.

Our Seasonal Wall-Hanging

A Project of the Creativity Engagement Group



Several people have recently asked us about the wall-hanging which is displayed at the front of the church. This artwork has been made by members of the church's creativity engagement group. Individual panels are intended to represent different phases of the year and we rotate the selection on display every few months to reflect the changing seasons. The wall-hanging currently includes panels created by Juliet Edwards, Patricia Walker-Hesson, Betty Evans, Caroline Blair, Mary Blackall, Jane Blackall and Simon John Barlow.

Jane Blackall

☸ 🌀 ✨ 🌙 ☆ ✕ **August/September Multifaith Calendar** ✕ ☆ 🌙 ✨ 🌀

✕ 6th August - The Transfiguration - Christian
The Transfiguration commemorates Jesus being transformed in the presence of three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, on a mountain top. The disciples saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased - listen to him'. The Transfiguration is a major festival for Orthodox Christians.

🌙 11th August - The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascension (Lailat-ul-Isra' Wal Mi'raj) - Muslim
In the tenth year of his prophethood, Prophet Muhammad journeyed from Makkah to Jerusalem and through the heavens to the presence of God, all in one night. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem marks the rock from which Muhammad ascended. On the journey the Prophet received the command to pray five times a day.

✕ 15th August - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Christian
The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates Mary being 'taken up', body and soul to heaven. Catholic communities often mark the festival with processions. Orthodox Christians celebrate the Dormition, Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary, meaning her death, on this day.



🌀 28th August - Raksha Bandhan - Hindu
Raksha Bandhan is about brotherly protection ('raksha' means 'protection', and 'bandhan' means to 'tie'). On this Hindu festival, traditionally, sisters tie amulets of coloured thread, symbolising protection from evil, around their brothers' wrists and give them an Indian sweet. In return brothers give their sisters gifts.

🌙 30th August - The Night of Forgiveness (Lailat-ul-Bara'h) - Muslim
The Night of Forgiveness (Lailat-ul-Bara'h) takes place two weeks before Ramadan. Muslims spend the night in prayer seeking God's guidance and forgiveness for their sins. Many Muslims believe that a person's destiny is fixed for the coming year by God, on this night. In some parts of the world Muslims visit the graves of relatives, and the giving of charity is also traditional.



✕ September / October - Harvest Festival - Christian
Special services are held around this time of year to thank God for his goodness, in providing a harvest of crops along with all the other fruits of society. Displays of produce are often made, usually distributed afterwards to those in need. Increasingly the emphasis is on a wider interpretation than just the harvest of the fields.

🌀 4th September - Janamashtami / Krishna Jayanti - Hindu
The birthday of Krishna is widely celebrated by Hindus. Many will fast till midnight, the time of Krishna's birth, when he is welcomed with singing, dancing and sweets. In some homes and temples an image of the baby Krishna is put in a cradle and special sweets are offered and distributed.



☆ 12th – 13th September - Rosh Hashanah (New Year's Day 5767) - Jewish
Rosh Hashana marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self-examination during which God sits in judgement on every individual. The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue as a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac.

🌙 13th September – 12th October - Ramadan - Muslim
During Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. The Muslim year is a lunar year, so Ramadan moves forward by ten or eleven days each year. Fasting (sawm) is one of the five pillars of Islam, requiring self-discipline and giving everyone some experience of deprivation. Those who are not able to fast give charity to compensate for the lost days. While children may be encouraged to fast, the full fast is not compulsory until maturity. The fast is traditionally broken each evening by taking dates and water after the custom of the Prophet.

🌀 15th September - Ganesh Chaturthi - Hindu
The birthday of Ganesha (also Ganapati), the elephant-headed deity, seen as the remover of obstacles, is especially observed by Maharashtrians. Ganesha is worshipped by Hindus at the beginning of something new, for example taking exams, moving house or getting married.



☆ 22nd September - Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) - Jewish
This is the final day of the ten days of repentance, the holiest day of the year in the Jewish calendar - 'the Sabbath of Sabbaths', and is marked with a total fast for 25 hours. The evening before and most of the day is spent in prayer, asking God's forgiveness for past wrongs and resolving to improve in the future.

☆ 27th September - Sukkot - Jewish
The harvest festival commemorating the 40 years that the Jews spent in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land after escaping slavery in Egypt. A temporary but with a roof covered only with branches - called a sukkah - is used during the festival. In some warmer countries families may live in their sukkah as well as eating there. Four species of plant are used symbolically during the festival - the lulav (palm branch), the etrog (a yellow citrus fruit), the hadas (myrtle) and the aravah (willow).



"Riding paradoxes is apparently our peculiar niche as liberal religionists. Who really wants existence tidily wrapped up? Who covets convictions set in stone? Plenty of people, to be sure, but not Unitarian Universalists. We seem to pitch our tents between mysticism and humanism, theism and naturalism, belief and doubt, devotion and scepticism. We are a reasonable religion with mystical sensibilities. My colleague Frances West puts it sagely: 'The humanist and the theist live in me, each sometimes puzzled by the presence of the other, but willing to keep talking. So may it continue.'"

Tom Owen-Towle

A Summer Celebration – 30 Years of our Essex Church Building



Did anyone else enjoy the TV series *Shameless* which featured the notorious Gallagher family living on the infamous Chatsworth Estate in Manchester? It started with the line “*they know how to throw a party...*” and I did think that applied to us all here at Essex Church recently – a different sort of party but a lot of fun nevertheless.

We were celebrating the 30th anniversary of the opening of Essex Church’s new building and especial thanks go to Caroline Blair for her organisational skills – particularly her delving into the church archives and mounting a display of photos, old newsletters and other fascinating memorabilia. She had even found the architect’s drawing of the re-development scheme from the 1970s that in the end was not built. There was general agreement that we were lucky to avoid a church that was tucked into a corner of a big block of concrete flats and to instead have our much loved, quirky, peaceful and attractive building.

We enjoyed delicious food provided by many different people, over forty guests ranging in age from eight to eighty, including friends from congregations in Godalming, Newington Green and Hampstead and Unitarian College Manchester, John Marrow’s excellent DJing skills, cunningly playing tracks with suitably spiritual themes, great conversations with friends old and new, bartenders encouraging consumption of Pimms and other summer beverages. All in all, it was a great evening and thank you to everybody for all you did to make it such a success.

As well as being a 30th anniversary celebration, the party formed part of our fund raising project to pay for accessible toilets. It is thanks to everybody’s generosity that we raised around £600 in one evening. There will be more information in the next newsletter about our progress so far and further suggestions for fund-raising. If you have any ideas or would like to take on a particular money making scheme, do get in touch.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



National Moth Night

Saturday 11th August 2007



National Moth Night (NMN) is Britain's celebration of moths and moth recording. Public events take place around the country, which can be a great introduction to the world of moths, and there are a number of moth events going on in the south-east this year (including Minet Country Park, Southall; Lee Valley, Enfield; Harmondsworth, Heathrow).

For more information: www.nationalmothnight.info

...event promoted by the (Unitarian) London Spirituality Network...

“Touching Wholeness”



A weekend retreat with space for
creativity, silence, and inner healing

12th-14th October at Braziers Park, Oxfordshire

Retreat participants will have the opportunity to explore their personal journeys toward wholeness through a variety of spiritual practices, including use of art and music, body awareness and movement, and meditation. As well, there will be time for solitary reflection, exploring the beautiful grounds of the centre. People of all faiths and of none welcome - no experience is necessary.

Led by John Harley, Linda Hart, and Andrew Pakula.

The retreat begins at 6.00 pm on Friday evening and ends at 4.00 pm on Sunday afternoon. Twin and single rooms are available (the registration rate includes two nights and all meals and resources) at a cost of £120/£150.

Braziers Park is a beautiful old house set in gardens and woods in the heart of the Oxfordshire countryside. It is run by a small non-religious community who provide a welcoming, restful atmosphere and vegetarian food.

More information (including a downloadable registration form) is available on the web at: www.ukspirituality.org

Call Andy Pakula on 078 09144879 for more information or email admin@ukspirituality.org

...a new adult RE course starting at Essex Church...

“Conversations with the Bible”



A Fortnightly Six-Session Adult RE Group
Starting on Thursday 20th September at 7.00pm

Other Dates: 4th and 18th Oct, 1st, 15th and 29th Nov

This course will be an introduction to an interactive method of Bible study and is based on a course designed by Stephen Washburn. “Conversations with the Bible” provides an opportunity to explore Hebrew and Christian scriptures from a liberal religious perspective. Participants will read selected texts and explore biblical scripture through discussion, dialogue, guided meditation, small-group work, and creative exercises.

This course is ideal for those who have had negative or limiting experiences with the Bible, as well as those who wish to enhance their knowledge of biblical scripture in the context of a supportive group. No particular beliefs are needed, just an open mind and an enthusiasm for exploring with others in a small group. It would help if people joining this group could commit themselves to attending as many of the sessions as possible.

Please phone Sarah Tinker on 020 7221 6514 to book your place. There is no cost for attending this course.

Seed Swap

I am wondering about the possibility of us holding a “seed swap” event at Essex Church next spring. I have seen a few TV shows this year about such events but have no first-hand experience of taking part in one...



The basic idea is that gardeners save seed from plants in their garden and bring along any excess to a “seed swap”, so that they can give it away and get interesting new seeds (maybe also cuttings or small plants) in return, for free. Participants would, of course, have to start thinking about saving seeds from their garden at the end of summer. Please contact me if you are interested in giving it a try...

Jane Blackall

“Help is At Hand”

Launch of a new Handbook by the GA's
Support for Organisational Leadership Panel

Saturday 22nd September, 11am-4.30pm, Essex Hall



This book, compiled by the Support for Organisational Leadership Panel, includes useful up-to-date advice and information for chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers and trustees of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Members of the SOL Panel: Joyce Ashworth, Dawn Buckle, Lis Dyson-Jones, Ken Johnson, Barbara Smith will take you through the document highlighting key points and issues. Each congregation will receive a free copy of the loose-leaf handbook which is freely copyable.

Please bring your own lunch (drinks provided).

Telling Lies to the Young Is Wrong



Telling lies to the young is wrong.
Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.
Telling them that God's in his heaven
and all's well with the world is wrong.
The young know what you mean.
The young are people.
Tell them the difficulties can't be counted
and let them see not only what will be
but see with clarity these present times.
Say obstacles exist they must encounter
sorrow happens, hardship happens.
The hell with it. Who never knew
the price of happiness will not be happy.
Forgive no error you recognize.
It will repeat itself, increase,
and afterwards our pupils
will not forgive in us what we forgave.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko

Trans. by Robin Milner-Gulland and Peter Levi, S.J.

Submitted by Will Lyons

“Come, come, whoever you are, ours is not a caravan of despair”

“Voice of the Heart – Rumi” Sufi Events at Essex Church in September



Duncan Mackintosh and Ashley Ramsden invite you to join them in celebrating through his poetry and stories the 800th Anniversary of Jelaluddin Rumi's birth. This Sufi mystic's vision and insight, transcending time and creed, make him one of the most beloved, inspiring, and relevant voices for our emerging global culture.

Though rooted in 13th Century Islamic culture, Rumi's universality of spirit transcends creeds, lands, and even time, and is a profound voice of inspiration to our true humanity. His passionate, wise, and beautiful words still have a remarkable ability to touch contemporary audiences - firing the imagination and nourishing the heart.

Accomplished storytellers and widely known for their passionate, sensitive, and playful performances of his poems and stories, Ashley and Duncan have brought Rumi's words alive for audiences across the western world.

Performances (£15/£10 conc.):

Thursday 27th and Friday 28th September at 7.30pm

Birthday Celebration & Performance (£15/£10 conc.):

*(With special Guests including Helen Chadwick,
Muriel Maufroy, Melanie Reinhart and others)*

Sunday 30th September from 6pm - 9pm

Workshop: Heart of Rumi (£25/£20 conc.):

Sunday 30th September from 2.15pm for 2.30pm - 5pm

Deepening experience of Rumi's words.

*“My words are milk from the nipple of the soul,
they won't flow unless you suck!”*

Tickets at the door or for reservations call 07847 280826.

For more information: www.rumitour.co.uk

Stewarding/Coffee Rotas



Stewarding:

5 th August:	Will Lyons
12 th August:	Angela Gasparetto
19 th August:	Will Lyons
26 th August:	Heidi Ferid
2 nd September:	Christine Joshi
9 th September:	???
16 th September:	Howard Hague
23 rd September:	Will Lyons
30 th September:	Jo Tye

Coffee:

5 th August:	Caroline Blair
12 th August:	Howard Hague
19 th August:	Juliet Edwards
26 th August:	John Hands
2 nd September:	???
9 th September:	Jane Blackall
16 th September:	???
23 rd September:	???
30 th September:	John Marrow

Please speak to Christine Joshi in September if you would be willing to help out with stewarding or coffee duties at Essex Church – it's really not that hard – and as you can see we still have a few slots to fill so please do volunteer! Your help is much appreciated...

Backroom Bits and Pieces

News from the Church Trustees and Committee



Every month about 9 of the church trustees and management committee meet to discuss issues regarding the running of the church. Here are some of the issues that have been discussed in the last month.

1. We have made some progress in getting funding to landscape the front gardens.
2. We have had a spot check by the Fire Brigade. Their main concern was that many of the fire doors were wedged open. Please make sure that the fire doors are closed when you are not actually using them.
3. The wardens have nearly completed a year in the job. The meeting wished to express gratitude for this good year's work.
4. Any fund-raising ideas for our disabled toilets would be gratefully received. Caroline and Sarah would be happy for suggestions.
5. In the meantime, the roof is still leaking in heavy rain! This seems to have been going on for years and years, but we battle on against the leaks.

Caroline Blair

Accommodation Request



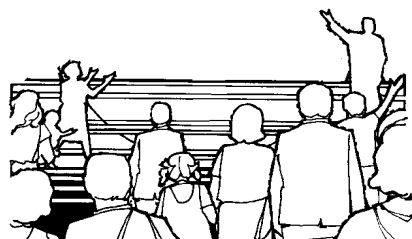
Michelle DenBeste is a professor of Russian History in California and a Unitarian Universalist who will be working in London from January to April 2008.

She is looking for reasonably priced accommodation for her and her 14 year old son. They will be happy to look after pets, plants etc.

You can contact her by email mdenbest@csufresno.edu or pass a message on via our minister.

...A Date for Your Diary – Forthcoming Regional Unitarian Event...

LDPA Autumn Quarterly Meeting Saturday 20th October, Essex Hall



Details of the next London District Quarterly Meeting are yet to be finalised but do put the date in your diary now as this will be an opportunity to welcome the new district minister, Rev. David Usher, as he takes up his post.

Plan Your Funeral



Anyone who has had the task of arranging a loved one's funeral will know how stressful it can be. In the midst of shock and sadness we have to reach practical decisions and find information, some of which might have been lost with the person who has died.

Bill Darlison, the minister at the Unitarian church in St Stephen's Green in Dublin, has passed on to us a very useful form which he suggested that people in his congregation might like to fill out. It encourages people to clarify their wishes about their funeral arrangements and so makes things easier for the bereaved. This is something worth doing at any stage of life as it can always be reviewed.

If you would like to fill out this form do ask our minister for a copy or get in touch if you would like help in filling out the form, either individually or as part of a small group in the autumn.

Given the Chinese saying that the only two things we can be certain of in life are death and taxes, making some plans for our funerals might be a sensible thing to do. And if you want to avoid paying tax do ask about making bequests to Essex Church. It's a way to help us raise funds for our accessible toilets and keep your hard-earned cash well away from the Inland Revenue.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Piano Recital and Poetry Reading Saturday 15th September, 3pm at Essex Church



There will be a piano recital and poetry reading with Dennis Evans and other members of our Golders Green Unitarian congregation here at Essex Church on 15th September. Look out for leaflets about this special event later in the year.

“Earth is Community”



A Celebration of the Vision and Path of Thomas Berry

Saturday 15th September, St. Mary's Church, W1

Several people have sent us information about an event that may be of interest to those of us who have been involved in the eco-spirituality course run here at Essex Church this summer - Sarah

Leading speakers from around the world will join together, to celebrate the theme “Earth is Community”, and mark the contribution that Thomas Berry is making to assist humans to face up to this most challenging moment in our history. Talks include:

"Reinventing Spirituality" - Matthew Fox

Matthew Fox is author of 28 books including "Original Blessing". He "might well be the most creative, the most comprehensive, surely the most challenging religious-spiritual teacher in America". (Thomas Berry)

"The Transformation of Economics" - Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva is one of the world's most dynamic and provocative thinkers. A physicist, ecologist and activist, she directs the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in New Delhi.

“The Importance of Great Work” - Satish Kumar

Satish Kumar has been the editor of Resurgence Magazine since 1973. He was also one of the co-founders of Schumacher College and is now its Programme Director.

The event will be held at St Mary's Venue (inside St Mary's Church), York Street, London W1 from 9:45am to 5:30pm.

Tickets are £39 and there is also an optional lunch for £6 (options are vegetarian, vegetarian/wheat/gluten free or vegan). To buy your ticket online go to: www.earth-is-community.org.uk or send a cheque payable to "The Gaia Foundation" along with your details to: Earth is Community, The Gaia Foundation, 6 Heathgate Place, Agincourt Road, London. NW3 2NU.

This event is being run by GreenSpirit and the Gaia Foundation and is supported by Resurgence, Be the Change and the Schumacher Society, GreenSpirit Books, the School of Economic Science, Greenpeace and the Environmental Law Foundation.

Eco-Spirituality at Essex Church

The four session course on eco-spirituality we ran in the early summer had many highlights. I am very glad so many people turned up to watch Al Gore's informative and inspiring documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* with which we began the course. If anyone missed that evening and would like to borrow the DVD to watch at home, the church now has a copy to lend out.

We spent an evening measuring our ecological footprints – a tool to heighten awareness of the effect our lifestyle choices have on our planet. Another evening was spent wandering mindfully in Kensington Gardens and then returning to the church to tell one another about a place in nature that is special to us. This is a lovely exercise to do at any time and is guaranteed to make you feel better. Just imagine that you are in a favourite spot in nature and then describe it to someone as though you are both there.



For example, "We are standing on a windswept hilltop in Derbyshire at sunset looking down at the moorlands spreading out below us. You can see for miles. The air is sweet and fresh and blowing gently in our hair. There are huge granite boulders all around us, like building blocks knocked aside by a giant. It feels so good to be alive." Where would you choose as your favourite spot?

The photos (below) are of the ceremony we created to celebrate the Summer Solstice. I had never created a ceremony with a group in quite this way before – with no forward planning, involving everybody, weaving the different elements we suggested into a flowing experience. It was moving, beautiful and fun to celebrate the turning of the year together. Someone said at the end, "I never thought I'd be doing something like this in a church!" That reminded me how lucky we are to have our building and our community, both of which allow us such flexibility in how we express what is important to us in life.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



Summer Solstice Celebration

It was such a treat for me to be able to spend this lovely celebration with other like-minded people. I always celebrate but not always with others so it was extra special this year. If I do the celebration it's usually me who plans and runs it so it was really nice to plan it with other people. We all have such great ideas it could have gone on for a lot longer!!



The table looked lovely both at the beginning and at the end of the evening...so nice to have things... chocolate!!, cherries (big fat ones), nuts, and apricots... to share to eat as well as to give us spiritual nurture. The candles were especially good to light us into the next phase of our year.



Words and Pictures by Jo Ridgers



Your Carbon Footprint: Facts and Figures, Hints and Tips

Following Up on the Eco-Spirituality Course – Information Supplied by Caroline Blair

Every digital set-top box in the country uses about 16 watts of electricity. Each box consumes about 140kWh a year, at a cost today of about £14. Does anybody protest? No – the price is low enough for nobody to be worried. But a single Sky box puts 60kg of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere a year, more than the total emissions of somebody living in one of the poorest countries in the world.

Almost 5 billion aluminium drinks cans a year are not re-cycled in the UK, at a total carbon dioxide cost of about 0.75 million tonnes.



The average insulation levels of UK homes have been slowly improving; but this benefit has been balanced by an equal and opposite increase in the average temperature inside the home. In 1970 winter temperatures in British homes averaged 13 degrees Celsius. The figure rose and is now 19 degrees Celsius. As we get more prosperous, we may insulate our homes better; but then we take all the benefit in the form of more heat, not lower bills or reduced emissions.



It has been calculated that by releasing methane as they break down, biodegradable bags contribute as much or more to global warming as conventional plastic bags. The answer is to re-use the bags that we have.

Where does our food come from? It comes increasingly from afar. For example, all European Heinz sauces come from a single factory in Holland. Air freight is growing at over 5 per cent a year. The cost in greater carbon dioxide is hidden and disregarded.



The modern economy seems to require ever-greater centralization of services, increasing our need to travel. Doctors are being grouped into larger practices, post offices are centralized on a few high-street sites and shops



are moving to the edges of towns. The important consequence is that people are less and less able to do without a car. The average distance travelled by bus has fallen by 20 per cent since the mid 1980's and the slow decline appears to be continuing.

It has been estimated that food packaging in the UK contributes 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. 9.3 million tonnes of food packaging are buried in landfill sites every year. In addition, British supermarkets use far more energy than the European average because the proportion of chilled and frozen food we buy is higher.



Conventional economics struggles with any suggestion that restricting consumption could be a good thing. Putting a price on biodiversity, for example is tricky. Does it matter if our great grandchildren live in a world with no polar bears, for example? After all, our generation doesn't miss the dodo very much.



The fact that tens of millions of Bangladeshis are going to have to move in the next 50 years is clearly a bad thing. However, economics has yet to devise a good mechanism for compensating these individuals by taxing today those people in the

West who are causing the sea levels to rise by their unconstrained consumption of fossil fuels. Bangladesh has carbon dioxide emission levels of about 0.25 tonnes per head – only 2 per cent of the UK figure – so it cannot itself be blamed.

Experience shows that people start to feel bad about unethical social practices when the take-up rate of ethical practices rises to 40 per cent. In order for this to happen two things must happen. First, the practices or items must become fashionable: newspapers must write glowingly about the celebrities following these practices and the benefits they feel. Second, the first few 'early adopters' of the practices must recommend them to their friends.

One of the greatest struggles will be trying to persuade people not to fly as regularly. The idea of avoiding winter holidays in the sun, which are such an effective badge of membership of the high-earning professional classes, is not going to be easy to sell. However, we can certainly hope that the rich will buy carbon offsets to make good part of the damage from air travel. The medieval elite were prepared to buy indulgences from the Pope's agents for their peccadilloes, and carbon offsets can fill a similar niche.



Caroline Blair

Creativity Engagement Group: Projects for the Next Two Months at Essex Church...

Soul Dolls: Textile Figures

Thursday 9th August, 7.00-9.00pm



In July, we started a project on “soul dolls”, inspired by books by Noreen Crone-Findlay and Patti Culea. These eccentric dolls may be made using all manner of scraps of paper, card, and fabric and are intended to “open doors to creativity, healing, and wholeness” as the dolls “express your feelings, desires, and ideas”.

It would be very helpful if you could bring along suitable bits of fabric, yarn, card etc. to the session with which to start constructing your soul doll figures. We will bring along books with some patterns (for fabric and card dolls) you can work from but do feel free to make up your own designs to come up with something more unusual and personalised.

As usual, if either of these particular crafts don't take your fancy, you are most welcome to bring your own craftwork along, and simply sit with us in good company for the evening. There are usually biscuits to be eaten...

If you would like to know more about the creativity engagement group please do talk to Jane Blackall or Patricia Walker-Hesson. Photographs of work from several of the projects we've worked on over the last few years can be found on our website: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/creativity.html

“Collage Consequences”

Thursday 13th September, 7.00-9.00pm



In September, we will be having a one-off fun session, where everyone will have the opportunity to take part in creating a series of collaborative multimedia artworks (at high speed!) so that each of us will go home with a finished picture at the end of the evening.

Please bring along any art materials that could be used to make a multimedia collage: pictures cut from magazines or newspapers, coloured paper, glue sticks, tape, oil pastels, and any other bits and pieces that you might like to include. It might be sensible to avoid using anything too “wet” (paint, PVA glue) on this occasion as we will not have time to let layers of the collage dry in the relatively short session.

“Spirit and Life” Exhibition

Masterpieces of Islamic Art from the Aga Khan Museum Collection
at the Ismaili Centre, Cromwell Gardens, SW7 - until 31st August '07



This exhibition of rare Islamic art and manuscripts at The Ismaili Centre in South Kensington, London presents treasures from the collection of the Aga Khan which will eventually be displayed at the new Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada in 2010. It includes over 165 objects from the collection showing the diversity of artistic traditions in the Muslim world. The exhibition covers a geographical area stretching from India in the east to Spain and Morocco in the West, and spans over a thousand years, from the ninth to the 19th century.

This exhibition was described as “well worth a visit” by our own Betty Evans. Admission is free. It is open from Tuesday – Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm, and the nearest station is South Kensington.

More Hints for a Greener Lifestyle... from Caroline Blair



How to Reduce Average Household Greenhouse Emissions by 50%

1. Improve insulation. Reduce winter temperature slightly.
2. Have (non-power) showers instead of baths.
3. Cook with a microwave or pressure cooker.
4. Replace all light bulbs with low-energy bulbs.
5. Change to an efficient fridge.
6. Don't tumble-dry clothes; air-dry them.
7. Switch off all appliances instead of using stand-by.
8. Switch to a smaller car; walk or cycle more.
9. Don't fly; go on holiday by train, bus, ferry etc.



Cancelling out Indirect Emissions

1. Buy locally produced food or grow your own. Avoid manufactured meals. Buy simple, room-temperature ingredients rather than frozen and chilled food.
2. Eat organic food where possible. Non-organic food uses fossil-fuel based fertilizer.
3. Eat less meat. Farm animals, particularly cows, produce large quantities of methane. Don't compensate for less meat by increasing the amount of dairy products.
4. Buy electricity from a green supply.
5. Buy less – change cars, furniture, clothes etc less often.
6. Avoid buying anything that includes large quantities of fossil-fuel derived materials (*plastics*).
7. Invest savings in an ethical company that supports renewable energy.
8. Minimise travelling; see if you can do some or all of your work from home.



"Religion is a sense of vital, meaningful relationship between the self and the universe, the outreach of man to something beyond himself... the essential core of religious experience is the seeking after and

finding man's relations to the unities and the universals... There must be political, social and scientific universalism in the modern world."

Clarence Skinner

"We do not view science as an enemy of religion; indeed, we find spirituality in nature as well as the scientific study of nature, and believe in what I call an 'earthen theology' with what we call the 'interdependent web of life.' We often come knowing more about what we no longer believe, than what we do believe, knowing, sometimes, simply, that we want to be with people whom we can love and who can love us, and with whom we may live for years, decades, maybe, and what service we might give to this beloved community. Do not take this faith lightly, for it may, indeed it should, change our lives to living more lovingly, to working for social justice, for deciding to make a difference in the world with our lives, rather than those lives of quiet desperation."

Uncredited – From Sermon at Boulder Valley UU (June 2007)



A tiny colouring picture for the festival of Sukkot (27th September).