



Kensington Unitarians

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Annual Report 2008



Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2008

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 7th January 1783 and modified by schemes dated 9th December 1884, 15th January 1973 and 18th April 1986, which last incorporated the remaining eight charities.

Trustees

Howard Hague (*Chairperson*), Caroline Blair, Juliet Edwards,
Harold Lorenzelli, Roy Parnell, Patricia Walker, Heidi Ferid-Hands (*from November 2008*).

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

Management Committee

Caroline Blair (*Chairperson*), Doris Campbell, David Francis Darling,
Albert Dolan, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Howard Hague,
Harold Lorenzelli, Patricia Walker, Jane Blackall (*until June 2008*).

Minister

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

Treasurer

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

Wardens

David Berridge (*resigned October 2008*) and Jenny Moy
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

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

Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd.
25 King's Hill Avenue, 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 2008

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.

Aims and Activities of the Charity

To advance Unitarianism in West London for the benefit of the public through: the holding of open Sunday services; sharing our experience and learning from each other in religious education and social activities; celebrating multi-faith festivals and rites of passage; welcoming spiritual seekers and offering companionship on life's journey (including visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved) and producing and distributing Unitarian literature.

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

Policy on Reserves

The trustees are now satisfied that they have achieved a reserve of three months running costs. We have completed the third year of the five year programme of repair and renovation that our thirty year old building requires. This year we set about installing a disability access toilet refurbishing the adjoining toilets and refurbishing the kitchen. The trustees are mindful of the need to continue to build further reserves through a variety of fund raising initiatives.

Investment Performance

At the beginning of the year we gained a good rate of interest on our bank accounts and we still feel that we are fortunate to have invested with CAF Bank. Re the Stock bequest – at a recent investment review it was decided to sell the Norwich Union corporate bond and buy Treasury 4 ¼% stock 2027. The trustees are holding funds for the long term and it was felt that a small loss of income and capital now was better than a possible large one in the future.

Approval

On behalf of the Trustees:

Howard Hague, Chair of Trustees

Date:

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2008, 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 to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.
- (2)

John Francis FCA
LINDEYER FRANCIS FERGUSON
Chartered Accountants

8 April 2009
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008

Income and expenditure	2008 Unrestricted Funds £	2008 Endowment Funds £	2008 Restricted Funds £	2008 Total Funds £	2007 Total Funds £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary income					
Grant income	6,000	-	910	6,910	20,000
Collections and donations	15,001	-	1,590	16,591	15,695
Income Tax on Gift Aid	2,215	-	-	2,215	2,346
Investment income					
Dividends and interest	5,179	-	5,717	10,896	8,715
Lettings	105,681	-	-	105,681	90,212
Total incoming resources	134,076	-	8,217	142,293	136,968
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of charitable activities					
Donations and grants	764	-	-	764	777
Projects	49,873	-	1,971	51,844	-
Ministry	39,184	-	150	39,334	34,355
Church running	27,491	-	-	27,491	20,115
Premises	14,787	-	-	14,787	38,787
Fixtures depreciation	-	7,804	-	7,804	7,804
Support costs:					
Accountancy costs	1,778	-	-	1,778	1,751
	133,877	7,804	2,121	143,802	103,589
Governance costs					
Independent Examiner	1,715	-	-	1,715	1,586
Legal and Professional fees	1,011	-	-	1,011	316
	2,726	-	-	2,726	1,902
Total resources expended	136,603	7,804	2,121	146,528	105,491
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	(2,527)	(7,804)	6,096	(4,235)	31,477
Transfers between funds	(2,991)	8,188	(5,197)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses	(5,518)	384	899	(4,235)	31,477
Unrealised losses on investments	-	(2,937)	(31,983)	(34,920)	(9,284)
Net movement in funds	(5,518)	(2,553)	(31,084)	(39,155)	22,193
Balances brought forward	62,669	1,401,546	108,005	1,572,220	1,550,027
Balances carried forward	57,151	1,398,993	76,921	1,533,065	1,572,220

**ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	Notes	2008 Unrestricted Funds £	2008 Endowment Funds £	2008 Restricted Funds £	2008 Total Funds £	2007 Total Funds £
Fixed assets						
Tangible assets	3	-	1,353,928	-	1,353,928	1,361,732
Listed investments	4	-	10,505	75,728	86,233	121,153
		-	1,364,433	75,728	1,440,161	1,482,885
Current assets						
Cash held for rent deposit	5	26,113	-	-	26,113	26,571
Debtors and prepayments		4,365	-	-	4,365	6,027
Due from Stockbroker		-	-	287	287	296
Cash at bank and on deposit		78,240	34,560	906	113,706	92,063
		108,718	34,560	1,193	144,471	124,957
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year						
Creditors and accruals		25,454	-	-	25,454	9,051
Rent deposit		26,113	-	-	26,113	26,571
		51,567	-	-	51,567	35,622
Net current assets		57,151	34,560	1,193	92,904	89,335
Net Assets		57,151	1,398,993	76,921	1,533,065	1,572,220
Capital and reserves						
	6					
Endowment funds		-	1,398,993	-	1,398,993	1,401,546
Restricted funds		-	-	76,921	76,921	108,005
General funds		57,151	-	-	57,151	62,669
		57,151	1,398,993	76,921	1,533,065	1,572,220

Approved by the trustees on 8th April 2009 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 2008

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) Grant income

Grant income is recognised on a receivable basis.

c) Collections and donations

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

d) 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.

e) Resources expended

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

f) 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.

g) 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 £2,313 (2007: £2,225).

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	2008	2007
	£	Running	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Minister	19,533	-	19,533	18,287
Warden and Outreach Officer	-	18,106	18,106	12,712
Social security costs	1,811	877	2,688	2,000
Pension contributions	2,313	-	2,313	2,225
Employee costs	23,657	18,983	42,640	35,224
Locum Preachers	280	-	280	513
Total staff costs	23,937	18,983	42,920	35,737

The trustees are not remunerated. During the year, the Treasurer, who is also a trustee received £70 for officiating at a wedding ceremony and one of the trustees was reimbursed £71 for travelling expenses incurred on the business of the charity.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008

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	-	39,020	39,020
Charge for the year	-	7,804	7,804
Carried forward	-	46,824	46,824
Net Book Value			
At 31st December 2008	1,322,709	31,219	1,353,928
At 31st December 2007	1,322,709	39,023	1,361,732

4 Listed investments

	Cost £	Market Value December 2007 £	Unrealised gain/(loss) £	Market Value December 2008 £
<i>Restricted fund:</i>				
The Stock Bequest	32,484	107,711	(31,983)	75,728
<i>Endowments:</i>				
The Carlisle Fund	4,162	8,756	(1,732)	7,024
Other endowment funds	420	4,686	(1,205)	3,481
	37,066	121,153	(34,920)	86,233

5 Cash held for rent deposit

This balance represents a rental deposit received from Lucy Williamson under a revised Rent Security Deposit Deed dated August 2007. According to the revised terms of the Deed, the deposit represents half of the revised annual rent and 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 2008

6 Analysis of funds	Brought forward £	Income & expenses £	Transfers £	Unrealised gain (loss) £	Carried forward £
Endowment Funds					
Permanent Endowment	1,350,403	(7,804)	8,188	-	1,350,787
Carlisle Capital Fund	8,756	-	-	(1,732)	7,024
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	33,023	-	-	(1,205)	31,818
Total endowment funds	1,401,546	(7,804)	8,188	(2,937)	1,398,993
Restricted Funds					
A E Stock Bequest	108,005	5,346	(5,346)	(31,983)	76,022
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	-	221	(221)	-	-
Swaziland Bursary	-	(370)	370	-	-
Africa Education Project	-	460	-	-	460
Community Arts Project	-	439	-	-	439
Total restricted funds	108,005	6,096	(5,197)	(31,983)	76,921
Unrestricted Funds					
General Fund	45,535	39,756	(39,100)	-	46,191
Designated funds:					
Repairs & Building Fund	17,134	(42,283)	36,109	-	10,960
	62,669	(2,527)	(2,991)	-	57,151
Total Funds	1,572,220	(4,235)	-	(34,920)	1,533,065

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, £30,600 has been transferred into this account and the balance stands at £34,560 at 31 December 2008.

Designated funds:

During 2007 the trustees set up a 'designated fund', 'Repairs and Buildings Fund', to set aside income to cover the costs of adding a Disability Access toilet. Further funds were set aside during 2008 to meet the costs of the project. The project is progressing well and should be completed during 2009.

Restricted funds:

During the year, the Church received a number of Restricted Grants and Donations for the following projects:

Swaziland Bursary Project: a fund to receive donations in order to provide a grant towards the cost of a one off visit of a congregation member in the summer of 2008 to an orphanage and education project in Swaziland.

Africa Education Project: a fund set up in 2008 to receive donations and money raised through fund raising efforts to help support educational projects in Africa, as agreed by the management committee.

Community Arts Project: a fund set up in 2008 to support the provision of arts activities for the benefit of Unitarians and the wider community, receiving individual donations and grants from funding bodies.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008

7 Capital Commitments

	2008	2007
	£	£
At 31 December 2008 the company had capital commitments as follows:		
Contracted for but not provided in the financial statements	12,500	-

**INVESTMENTS SCHEDULE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2008**

	Cost £	Income £	Mkt Value 31.12.07 £	Purchased £	Sale Proceeds £	Gains (Losses) Unrealised £	Realised £	Mkt Value 31.12.08 £
4178 COIF Income Units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
400 COIF Income Units	420	168.00	4,686	-	-	(1,205)	-	3,481
5,633 Charifund Income Units	15,311	4,205.00	81,867	-	-	(26,399)	-	55,468
12,050 Aviva Investors UK Corp Bon	10,173	394.00	9,375	-	-	(1,377)	-	7,998
6,172.8 Shroders Charity Equity Func	7,000	747.00	16,469	-	-	(4,207)	-	12,262
1,794 Charibond Income Units	2,000	136.00	2,178	-	-	(41)	-	2,137
562 COIF Income Units	2,162	235.00	6,578	-	-	(1,691)	-	4,887
1000 Traidcraft Plc	-	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interest received	-	4,991.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total holdings for all funds	37,066	10,896.00	121,153	-	-	(34,920)	-	86,233
Allocated to:								
General Fund	-	5,011	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Restricted</i>								
The Stock Bequest	32,484	5,346	107,711	-	-	(31,983)	-	75,728
<i>Endowments:</i>								
The Carlisle Fund	4,162	371	8,756	-	-	(1,732)	-	7,024
General fund from endowment	420	168	4,686	-	-	(1,205)	-	3,481
	37,066	10,896.00	121,153	-	-	(34,920)	-	86,233

Treasurer's Report

It seems a little ironic in the current financial climate, that we are able to report that the church's income for 2008 has exceeded that of 2007. Part of the reason for this is the generosity of our congregation. At the beginning of the year folk were still carrying out the promises they had made at the skills auction to raise money for the disability access toilets and kitchen refurbishment and later in the year we were awarded two grants of £3,000 each towards the toilet project from Unitarian charities. We were also lucky that we had a good rate of interest – for much of the year – as we were accumulating our repairs and building fund. The kitchen has been usable for some time now and the toilets are almost completed. We still have to pay the architect and make a final payment to the builder and I'm pleased to say that we have sufficient funds set aside to do so.

The congregation has also contributed generously towards a bursary to enable Iona Blair to spend the summer working in an orphanage in Swaziland and Iona has spoken and written enthusiastically about her time there. We are now keen to build up an 'Africa Education Fund' which can be used to support, perhaps, three children through their secondary education. This is quite a big undertaking but already some of you have made generous donations. You have also given money towards restocking and enlarging our supply of hymn books.

Six years ago when we were building the minister's flat above the church, the Charity Commission gave us permission to "borrow" £33,000 from restricted funds belonging to the church. We have finally managed to save the full amount which is due to be repaid in June 2009.

We applied for and received a grant from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea towards a creativity project - Community Arts Project - led by Jane Blackall. It looks as though the almost completed work will be very exciting and we are tremendously grateful to the RBK&C for helping to make this possible. Jane Blackall is now employed by the church on one day a week. We are trying this out for a year. Jane has for a long time put more effort into the church than we can possibly repay her for.

We were sorry to see David Berridge leave his position as part-time Warden at the end of October but very pleased that Jenny Moy was able to continue working for us in an expanded role. Both these arrangements required new contracts drawing up.

Lettings are our primary source of income and they have held up very well through 2008. We have had a steady income from letting the church, hall and library and from the Lloyd Williamson School.

I would like to give my personal thanks to Jenny who is a tremendous help when she comes to work on the monthly bank spreadsheets with me and to Albert Dolan who has taken over organizing Gift Aid donations. Thank you also to William Featherstone who keeps an eye on our investments.

Juliet Edwards
Congregational Treasurer

Minister's Report

"Ministry is all that we do together"

The past year here at Essex Church has demonstrated that ministry is a shared activity in which we work together to create spiritual community. I particularly appreciated the support of others in allowing me time off to work on the Masters Degree dissertation, which marked the completion of my ministry studies. The research was dependent on the active involvement of congregation members in attending evening sessions on 'Believing and Belonging' and in completing questionnaires about their faith and about their sense of belonging here at Essex Church. You can now read the completed dissertation on our website but it represents only a fraction of the rich data people provided. It was a privilege to read all the questionnaires that were returned and I was touched by how people so valued this liberal religious community of ours.

Visitors often comment on the wide ranging activities that take place here, organised by us as Unitarians and by other groups that use our building. We need the lettings income that these groups bring us but just as important is that we share our resources with our local community and with other groups committed to spiritual and personal exploration. It is good to see literally hundreds of people coming through the church doors each week and I am grateful to our warden Jenny Moy for her efficient administration of our lettings and their associated finances. It is pleasing to know that we can offer reduced rates for groups that would not otherwise be able to afford to meet here. In the autumn of 2008 we said goodbye and thanks to David Berridge who had worked as Jenny's co-warden. Together they have helped to make Essex Church a calm, well organised and increasingly beautiful place to be. The year also saw other goodbyes and hellos. Our student minister Daniel Hughes decided in the early summer that he would not be continuing his ministry studies. He left with our appreciation for the work he did here and for his gentle presence. In the summer we enjoyed the visit of Skye Shirley, a ministry intern from the USA who brought a great willingness to help and a lovely smile for everyone.

The on-going circle of life was witnessed in rites of passage ceremonies conducted here in the church. We said farewell to Iain Henderson whose long membership of Essex Church stemmed back to the early 1960s and whose family were glad that his funeral could be conducted here. Wedding couple Kerry Godliman and Ben Abell and their friends and family were collected by an old Routemaster London bus after their wedding ceremony in the autumn. In the summer, everybody was delighted to take part in the welcome ceremony for 9 day old Lark, child of new members Denis Thompson and Kate Brown.

Raising money can sometimes seem a never-ending chore for churches but I am pleased to be able to report how pleasant and relatively effortless it was to raise the money needed for our refurbished kitchen and newly accessible toilets. Although most of our fund-raising efforts over the last year had to be focused on our Accessible Building Fund I am glad that we also raised money to support Iona Blair's visit to a children's project in Swaziland where she worked on various educational and community projects. Jim Blair's photos gave such a clear picture of the people's resilience and grace in the face of their lives' daily challenges. We are now seeking out another similar project that we can offer financial support to over the next few years. Recognising the continuing problems faced by rough sleepers in this area the church also gives a small regular donation towards the work of St Mungo's, a London wide charity which supports homeless people. A fair amount of the money we raised during 2008 came from people reaching into their pockets and giving generously and I am hugely grateful for people's willingness to give what they can afford. We continue to offer people the chance to dedicate a hymn book in return for a donation towards the cost of new books. It is lovely that we needed to increase our stock of 'Singing the Living Tradition' to fifty to ensure everybody has a copy on Sundays as attendance numbers continue to rise gently.

At the centre of all of our activities lies Sunday worship and I am grateful to all the congregation members who have taken an active part in worship or have helped with stewarding, making drinks and welcoming visitors and newcomers. As part of our District Association's congregational growth initiative we hosted a day workshop called 'Growing in Hospitality and Passion' and it was good to realise how welcoming we already are as a congregation as well as being inspired to improve how we greet the world. As always thanks go to Harold Lorenzelli for organising the high quality music that is such an intrinsic part of our services, along with much appreciated vocalist Margaret Marshall. We also enjoyed several visits from members of the Kensington Community Singers who joined us for worship, along with their dynamic choir leader Jen Hazel.

During the year Kensington Unitarians members were active both within our District Association and within our national organisation, the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches. At the General Assembly Annual Meetings, held in Hatfield in the spring, twelve of our members were to be seen. We have also co-hosted a reception for the ICUU (international Council of Unitarian Universalists) and a lunch and lecture with the Unitarian Christian Association as part of the Lindsey bicentenary celebrations. Michaela von Britzke and I have attended regular meetings of the Borough's Forum of Faiths group, which brings together people from most of the faith groups within the Kensington & Chelsea area.

It was a pleasure to welcome Jane Blackall as a member of staff in September and we are already reaping the benefits of her increased presence as we expand the range of activities we offer and work on developing ways to ensure that Kensington Unitarians are visible in our area and throughout London. The wide ranging topics covered by our engagement groups and other small groups and religious education programmes owe much to Jane's involvement and enthusiasm.

We are fortunate at Essex Church to have three members of staff but the church still requires the efforts of many volunteers: serving on our management committee, organising rotas, running the library, and all the myriad other tasks that take time and effort and commitment, for all of which I am very grateful. One of the findings from my research was the value that members placed upon the social activities that we run here, for example the 'pot luck' lunches, the summer picnic, the gardening group, the sharing circles, the poetry book launch and the New Year's Eve party, to mention but a few. These varied activities bring people together, they allow us to share our lives with one another and find ways to support one another along the way. Essex Church is a busy place but I am glad that we also find many ways to provide a quiet and loving attention for one another. How important as well is the balance we continually seek between attending to our own needs and to the needs of others and of our wider world. It is in the exploration of all these different aspects of life that a spiritual community such as ours exists. Thank you for another successful year of shared ministry here at Essex Church.

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Minister with Kensington Unitarians

Warden's Report

The biggest change in the building this year has been the rebuilding of the upstairs toilet block to make space for a disabled access cubicle and the renewal of the kitchen. Work on this started in August 2008 and is still continuing at time of writing (April 2009). Despite the slow progress, the work is largely satisfactory and the facilities have been usable for some time.

The other big renovation was the replacement of the lobby door hinges, which had become increasingly unsatisfactory. These now close completely, sedately – and without squeaks!

The work done by 'Groundworks' on the front garden last year is now coming to fruition. We have added to the planting, particularly in terms of spring bulbs, and these have given a great deal of pleasure already and hopefully will continue to do so in years to come.

Lettings income has increased again this year, with all of our regular groups continuing to use the building, and some new ones joining us – notably the Westminster Pastoral Foundation, who hold monthly lectures in the Church on psychological topics, and the Bruno Groening healing group, who meet every third Saturday afternoon in the Hall.

More personal news is that my partner (and co-warden) David decided in March that it would be best for us to separate, and moved out in June (though he continued to do some work at the church until the end of September). Since then I have been doing the wardening on my own – with much appreciated support from Sarah, the trustees and many users of the building.

Jenny Moy
Essex Church Warden

Engagement Groups Report

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. Many such groups have a specifically religious or spiritual focus, whilst others revolve around more general topics of conversation, or communal creative activities. All of our Engagement Groups are advertised to the congregation and the general public via our website, newsletter, and flyers, and are open to everyone.

Regardless of the particular activity which takes place in any given session, the deeper purpose of all Engagement Groups is to bring people together in right relationship with themselves, with others, and with that which they hold to be divine. Another important and distinctive feature of Engagement Groups is that they are generally run on the basis of guiding principles which help group leaders to maintain best practice in small group work. Our Unitarian denomination also provides training, support and networking opportunities for people who wish to develop their skills as Engagement Group leaders. A day conference for Engagement Group Facilitators, led by the Rev. Jim Robinson of the Unitarian General Assembly's Engagement Support Panel, was held at Essex Church in November 2008. Patricia Walker-Hesson, Caroline Blair and Michaela von Britzke attended on behalf of the congregation.

'God in Daily Life' Engagement Group

"God in Daily Life" was a time-limited engagement group for theological reflection, facilitated by Jenny Moy and Jane Blackall, which took place on six consecutive Monday afternoons during the autumn of 2008. The group was based on creative listening and drew on ideas from the book 'Reflecting with God' by Abigail Johnson. Members of this group were asked to make a commitment to attend all six of the sessions and to give a 15-minute presentation at one of them on the theme "How is 'God' present in my daily life?" (interpreting the word 'God' broadly, in any way that was meaningful to them). All participants were asked to commit to offering other members of the group respectful attention and confidentiality. The group was much appreciated by the seven people who took part. We hope to run another "God in Daily Life" group in the future if there is sufficient interest.

'The Quest' Engagement Group

This ten-session group, held fortnightly from January to May 2008, was co-facilitated by Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall. The content was based on 'The Quest: Exploring a Sense of Soul', a book of spiritual exercises, first developed at Findhorn. Session themes were: "*The Heart of the Quest*", "*Telling Your Story*", "*A Growing Sense of Soul*", "*Changing Faces of Faith*", "*Encountering Direct Experience*", "*Passion and Change*", "*Dark Nights*", "*Wholeness and Connection*", "*Living in a Sacred Way*" and "*Continuing Your Quest?*". This was rather an intensive closed group, which required a great deal of commitment from participants (even doing homework between sessions!), but we received feedback to indicate that this experience was rewarding and worthwhile for all those who took part.

'Science and Religion' Engagement Group

This six-session Engagement Group concluded in March 2008 having covered the following topics: "*Medical Ethics*", "*Biodiversity and Interdependence*", "*The Nature of Consciousness*", "*The Dawkins Effect*", "*Cosmology*" and "*The Psychology of Prejudice*". Sarah Tinker organised the series and co-facilitated each monthly session alongside a different volunteer from the congregation who offered to do some research and lead the conversation on a given topic. The idea of setting up this group was, in part, to provide an activity which would appeal to a different group of people than might normally be attracted to our programme of Engagement Groups. In this regard it seemed to be very effective as we were pleased to welcome a number of new faces to the sessions.

Reading Engagement Group

Our reading engagement group once again tackled a diverse selection of material in 2008: "*Waterlog*", "*Year of Wonders*", "*The Wrong Boy*", "*Under My Skin*", "*I Heard the Owl Call My Name*", "*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*", "*Suite Francaise*", "*The Green Knight*", "*In the Country of Men*" and "*The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*". We held a special service and a Book Swap on one Sunday in April to celebrate reaching our landmark 50th book. By the end of the year we had read our 57th title and we now maintain a full list of all our past choices on the church website and also on 'LibraryThing' (see the impressive range of covers from our group 'library' on www.librarything.com/catalog/ec_bookgroup).

Attendance at the reading group continues to be fairly steady: we have about seven regular members who take their turn to nominate books for the group to tackle and we are occasionally joined by other members of the congregation who are drawn in by a particular title or passing visitors from further afield who have found out about us through the website. Individual sessions are facilitated by whoever selected the book for that month. The group has a relaxed atmosphere and newcomers are always welcome to drop in and join at any time.

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 seven people, though we often get new visitors dropping in for sessions that are of particular interest to them. We had a number of fun one-off sessions during the year at which we tried out various different craft activities: *“Watercolour Mandalas”*, *“Building a Bower”*, *“Floppy Fun Dolls”*, *“Illustrating an Emotion”*, *“Glass Painting (two sessions)”*, *“Card Weaving”*, *“Woven Mandalas”* and *“Nuno Felting”*. We also had an outing to the National Portrait Gallery and held a “Show and Tell” of art inspirations and things we had made. We decided to take a break from holding either an art and craft fair or a photography exhibition so as to conserve our energies in 2008. This group is primarily 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 craft activities to try and would welcome any suggestions.

At the moment there are still only a few trained facilitators within our congregation who are regularly leading Engagement Groups. If you would be interested in finding out more about facilitator training, or perhaps getting involved in other aspects of our small group programme, please speak to me or Sarah for more information.

Jane Blackall
Engagement Groups Coordinator

Outreach Officer’s Report

In September 2008, I joined the Essex Church staff team, working one day a week as outreach officer, with a particular focus on arts and education projects. My main tasks are maintaining the church website, editing the monthly newsletter, producing the orders of service each week, and designing promotional leaflets and flyers. During the past year I have made a particular effort to encourage members of the congregation to write original material for the newsletter and the resulting articles seem to be appreciated by our readers all over the country.

Another major aspect of my new role is to seek funding from external sources for arts and educational projects. An application to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s Arts Grant Scheme in the summer of 2008 was successful: we were awarded £1300 towards the cost of a community arts project, ‘The Fabric of Diversity’ (we have so far received £910 and are due to receive the rest on completion of the project). We were grateful to receive a further donation of £500 towards the project from a member of the congregation. The series of fifteen art workshops commenced in October and continued into the New Year. Participants explored themes of personal significance to them and shared their stories through the medium of textile art. The project was well-received and the resulting large-scale wall-hanging, exploring themes of community and interdependence, will be unveiled at a special event in the summer of 2009. We are actively seeking follow-on funding from other sources, and we are working towards a bid for over £9000 from the Lottery ‘Awards for All’ scheme to support staff, training and equipment, with a view to making community arts activities an ongoing part of our programme of events at Essex Church.

One of our aims for next year is to further expand our programme of religious and spiritual education for adults. External sources of funding for this work are likely to be very limited: initial research has led me to conclude that most mainstream funding bodies are distinctly averse to supporting anything that could be seen as promoting a particular faith. Those organisations which do support churches are generally oriented towards the support of mainstream Christian theology. One or two Unitarian-friendly funds do exist and we plan to approach one of these organisations with an ambitious 4-year project to develop new liberal religious education courses.

Jane Blackall
Outreach Officer (Arts and Education)

Chairperson of the Congregation's Report

Over the last year there have been several occasions when I have mixed with people from a variety of different Unitarian congregations, and have picked up comments and hints, all pointing in the same direction: that Kensington Unitarians are seen as particularly favoured as a church. With our lovely, fortunately situated building, well-respected minister and motivated and growing congregation we are much luckier than many churches. My normal, polite instincts are to say something self-deprecating in case they think we are growing arrogant at our good fortune, but it is not actually all that easy to think of anything to say to our detriment. The roof sometimes leaks in wet weather...the new toilets have taken a long time to be completed...that's about it.

Perhaps a better way of warding off complacency is to reflect on where our 'luck' comes from; a high percentage of it is not really 'luck' at all, but is a tribute to the dedication, talent and sheer love for the place shown by many of the congregation. Particular thanks, as always, to Sarah for the great warmth and enthusiasm she brings to her job; I find myself carefully not mentioning places like Australia in her presence in case she thinks it might be nice to move there. Thanks also to Howard for all the behind-the-scenes work he does as Chair of Trustees and as librarian; to Juliet for nobly (and to the universal relief of the committee) continuing to work as our treasurer; to Jane for our genuinely enviable (and indeed, envied, as I know) newsletter, for all the work she does organising workshops, and for running the website (without which I would never have found this Church at all); to Harold, for maintaining the impeccable standard of the music; to Christine for valiantly chasing people up, month after month, to fill the coffee/steward rotas; to Daniel Tinker for wrestling with the furniture; to Jenny, the warden, for the determination she has shown in getting the building work started, continued and (one day we hope) completed; to Michaela and Jenny (again) for all the work they have put into the now beautiful gardens; to Gitana (whom many of you will not have met, but smile at her if you do) for all her excellent cleaning; to absent friend Jen Hazel for the enthusiasm she injected into the Community Singers (come back soon, Jen); to Albert, for sorting out the gift-aid; to everyone who has served on the management committee, or who has helped by making coffee (and washing up), as steward, or (informally) by meeting, greeting and generally being friendly to visitors; to everyone who has helped with the garden, the church lunches, or by doing readings in the services (always welcome to hear a new voice); and just to everyone who has made the life of the church such a pleasure over the past year.

I would also like to express appreciation to everyone who has conducted services at the church over the year – these include The Rev Ann McClelland, The Rev David Usher, The Rev Joy Croft, John Carter, The Rev Jeff Gould, the Rev John Harley, and Patricia Walker Hesson, Charles Miller and David Darling from our own congregation. We also enjoyed the presence of a student minister in Daniel Hughes (now moved on to new pastures with our good wishes). Special mention to long-time friend of the church The Rev Simon John Barlow, who will be very much missed by all who knew him.

Looking ahead, we have been involved in a lot of discussions about how we can be most welcoming to visitors and newcomers, without frightening them away with excessive enthusiasm. This involves everything from easy physical access (another excuse to boast about our new toilets) to a generally friendly demeanour by existing members of the congregation. We feel that a healthy, positive congregation should feel like a welcoming place; however, we do ask people to particularly look out for visitors and newcomers, and make sure they are not being left out. I do appreciate that some members of the congregation are already outstandingly good at doing this, and I would like to thank them. We also need to remember to offer current literature (flyers, a newsletter perhaps) to visitors who show interest. I am happy to say that I have never seen anyone at this church bring private feuds or grievances to a coffee-time conversation (I hope this is because there are none, naturally!) but I have heard people from other congregations mention that this can happen. Any suggestions or ideas about how to enhance the feeling of warmth and welcome at the church will always be gratefully received.

Finally, I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Congregation for another year. For the benefit of those not on the committee, this is a virtually honorary role because of the commitment of other members of the committee, and effectively involves nothing more arduous than saying complex sentences like, "Any other business? Anyone like a biscuit?" at the monthly meetings.

Caroline Blair
Chairperson of the Congregation

Chairperson of Trustees' Report

The management committee (which now includes six trustees as members) met nine times during 2008. The trustees held their separate annual meeting on 25 November 2008, at which Heidi Ferid was elected as a new trustee, bringing our number to seven. It was very pleasing that Roy Parnell was able to attend this meeting. In the life of the church the trustees are especially responsible for staffing, the fabric of the building, finance and any legal matters. As is usual, there were a number of staffing issues that required attention during the year. In May discussions started about the possibility of employing Jane Blackall as our part-time Outreach Officer (Arts and Education) for a one-year trial period from the autumn. A contract was drawn up by our solicitors, Charles Russell & Co., and this covers the period 1 September 2008 until 31 August 2009. Jane's employment duly started, and her contract was signed on 18 September 2008. Her project will need to be reviewed during the summer of 2009.

In June the committee was advised that one of our joint wardens, David Berridge, wished to resign his position, and after working out a three-month period of notice his employment with the church ceased at the end of September. We are very grateful for the contribution that David made during his time with us (since 1 July 2006). We were delighted that our other joint warden, Jenny Moy, indicated that she would like to take on the job of full-time warden, and this was agreed. A new contract (and service occupancy agreement for the warden's flat) was drawn up to take effect from 1 October 2008. The contract and the revised service occupancy agreement were signed on 13 January 2009. It is very reassuring to the committee and trustees to know that we have such a good team consisting of Jenny, Jane and our minister Sarah working on our behalf at the church. We are extremely grateful for all they do.

As will be reported elsewhere, one of the major decisions taken early in the year was to proceed with the plans for installing an accessible toilet and a new church kitchen, starting in the summer. This work was to dominate our lives for the second half of the year, and indeed continues to do so. Although we are all rather disappointed by the length of time it has taken, nevertheless it was the right decision to proceed, and will benefit the church in the future. In September Lucy Williamson, the principal of our main tenant, the Lloyd Williamson School, attended a meeting of the committee to request permission for various works to the school's interior, and to say that she would like to seek funds to erect a ramp at the south side of the church building (exterior) to improve access for parents' prams etc. The advantage of this for the church is that it would give wheelchair access to our basement level, something we have been considering for a while. However there is no progress with this idea at present.

In my report last year, I noted that 2008 would mark the bicentenary of the death in 1808 of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey, the founder of the original Essex Street Chapel in Central London in 1774. The General Assembly's Worship Panel approached the church to see whether we could prepare a 'Lindsey Worship Pack' for the use of the wider denomination. This we duly did, and I am grateful to Sarah, Daniel Hughes and Will Lyons for joining me in this exercise. It was a lot of work, but very worthwhile (it is available for download on the church website – see www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/publications.html). We also helped to organise a 'Lindsey pilgrimage' to his tomb in the Bunhill Fields Dissenters' Cemetery on 15 November, and hosted the Unitarian Christian Association's Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture on the subject of Lindsey on 16 November at the church. This was given by Professor Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent. Both events were well attended and most enjoyable. On 23 October we hosted a reception for the ICUU (International Council of Unitarians and Universalists). Finally, congratulations to our minister, firstly on achieving full ministerial status with the General Assembly, and secondly for her excellent MA dissertation. As ever I am so grateful for all that she and other colleagues and members do for the church.

Howard Hague
Chairperson of Trustees

Church Music Report

The Church continues to provide a wide variety of music to accompany the morning services. The arrangement of using a pool of singers and pianists seems to work well and complements morning worship. The welcome addition of the Kensington Community Singers and some of their members during the service ensures that our choice of hymns remains dynamic and healthy.

Harold Lorenzelli
Church Music Coordinator

Essex Church Congregational Library: Librarian's Report

The congregational library is available to all members of the congregation, and to others by arrangement with the minister. Please make full use of it. The more recent books are displayed in the bookcase at the back of the church, with the main collection in the library downstairs. If you would like to borrow a title please fill in your details in the loans book provided upstairs. Books added to stock during 2008 included the following:

ALLARDYCE, Alex	The village that changed the world: a history of Newington Green, London N16. Newington Green Action Group, 2008.
BELSHAM, Thomas	Memoir of the late Rev Theophilus Lindsey, including a brief analysis of his work. Williams & Norgate, 1873.
BLATCH, Mervyn	A guide to London's churches. Constable & Co., 1978.
CHURCH, Forrest	Lifecraft: the art of meaning in the everyday. Beacon Press, 2000.
DAWKINS, Richard	The God delusion. Bantam Press, 2006. (Hardback).
DITCHFIELD, Grayson	The letters of Theophilus Lindsey Vol. 1 1747-1788. Boydell Press, 2007. (Very kindly donated by the author).
FRAYN, Michael	The human touch: our part in the creation of a universe. Faber & Faber, 2006.
HAGUE, Judy	A century of the Unitarian Women's League 1908-2008: a selection from the League Newsletter. The League, 2008.
HOLLOWAY, Richard	Looking in the distance: the human search for meaning. Canongate Books, 2004. [On human spirituality].
HYTCH, Frank	The Unitarian: a journey 1903 - : a history of the magazine and its editors. Manchester District Association, 2008.
LINGWOOD, Stephen	The Unitarian life: voices from the past and present. Lindsey Press, 2008. [Including a section 'How to live Unitarianly'].
MONTLEY, Patricia	In nature's honor: myths and ritual celebrating the earth. Skinner House Books, 2005.
RAMSDEN, Pamela	Mother God and our creation. Decision Stream Ltd., 2002.

A number of the above titles have been donated, often anonymously. We are very grateful. A list of recent acquisitions was included in the church newsletter for October 2008. We continue to receive occasional enquiries about the history of the church. In November we were approached for any information about the 'Boy Monument' (a statue commemorating the origins of Sunday Schools), which used to stand outside the old church prior to its demolition in 1973. It turned out that the enquirer's great grandfather was the model for the statue. Sadly it no longer exists but we are grateful that Stephanie Saville was able to find a photograph and some additional information about the statue, to pass on to the enquirer.

Howard Hague
Honorary Librarian

Minutes of the AGM Held at Essex Church on Sunday 18th May 2008

Present: Julia Alden, Victor Anderson, Louisa Bird, Jane Blackall (*minutes*), Kate Brown, Doris Campbell, David Darling, Juliet Edwards, Betty Evans, Heidi Ferid, Angela Gasparetto, John Hands, Daniel Hughes (*missed the early part of the meeting*), Christine Joshi, Will Lyons, John Marrow, Jo Ridgers, Stephanie Saville, Sarah Tinker (*minister*), Mark Trive, Jo Tye, Michaela von Britzke, Patricia Walker-Hesson (*chair*), Diana Ward.

1. **Opening:** Opening words were spoken by Rev. Sarah Tinker, Doris Campbell, David Darling and Louisa Bird.
2. **Welcome and Apologies:** Patricia Walker-Hesson welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that Caroline Blair, chair of the congregation, and Howard Hague, chair of the trustees were both unable to attend and so she was standing in to chair the AGM in their absence. Apologies had been received from: Caroline Blair, Jim Blair, Cassandra Britton, Jo Darling, Margaret Darling, Albert Dolan, Gill Hague, Howard Hague, Jill Inskip.
3. **Review of 2006 AGM Minutes:** The minutes were accepted as a correct record and signed by Patricia.
4. **Review of Reports:**
 - a. **Treasurer:**

Patricia expressed thanks to our treasurer, Juliet Edwards, for all her hard work throughout the year. Juliet took the opportunity to thank everybody, and also to ask people to consider increasing their regular donations to the church, emphasising that an increase of just £1 per week could make a difference. Patricia commented that an increase of £5 per week would be preferable! Sarah underlined this and stated that the levels of “live giving” (regular donations) are considered a measure of the health of a congregation. She also informed the meeting that we had received several very generous one-off donations towards the building project. John Marrow expressed thanks to all those members of the congregation who have worked so hard in fundraising. Sarah informed the meeting that we have now got a total of £41,000 in the accessible building fund. Patricia explained that this means the committee now feel confident to go ahead with the building project this summer.
 - b. **Chair of Trustees:**

In Howard’s absence there was nothing to add to this report. Sarah took the opportunity to mention that we will be involved in a number of events in the autumn of 2008 to mark the bicentenary of Theophilus Lindsey’s death.
 - c. **Minister:**

Sarah highlighted a number of “to-do” items for this year which were mentioned in her report: building works, improving the Sunday school, outreach, and improving the on-street noticeboards. Stephanie Saville suggested that Sarah’s services could be put onto the internet as podcasts, noting that the Dublin congregation have done so successfully over the last few years, as a form of outreach. Jane stated that we have experimented with recording some services and that it was something that needed some more thought. Julia asked whether there was a list of things that the church needs. Sarah said that such a list does exist.
 - d. **Chair of Congregation:**

In Caroline’s absence there was nothing to add to this report.
 - e. **Engagement Groups and Secretary:**

Jane commented that we had experimented with running a number of new short-term engagement groups in 2007 and pointed out that, at present, the factor which limits the number of groups we can offer is the availability of people who are willing and able to facilitate them. Patricia added that

suggestions are always welcome for activities that the creativity group could try out. Jane went on to say that, as secretary, she would like to see the committee look at updating the church constitution and bring that back to the AGM in 2009.

f. Wardens:

Patricia commented that our wardens, Jenny Moy and David Berridge, have made a hugely positive impact on the lettings and the church as a whole. Sarah mentioned that several people had queried why the wardens do not set out the chairs on Sunday morning. She explained that Sunday was the best day for them to take off because the church is so busy with other user groups that they need to attend to during the rest of the week. Juliet expressed particular gratitude to Jenny for her help with the spreadsheets and with developing church budgets.

g. Music:

Patricia commented that the church music is enjoyed by everybody and makes a big difference to our services. She also noted the contribution of the Kensington Community Singers who performed, very impressively, in a Sunday service for the first time in December 2007 when they had only been running for a few months.

Juliet returned to the subject later to emphasise that Harold Lorenzelli organises all our Sunday morning music. The church used to employ a director of music, but Harold has done all the organisation for some years now on a voluntary basis, and it was felt that we should acknowledge all the work that he has taken on in this role. Louisa added that the quality and variety of the music in our services is one of the special features of Essex Church.

h. Librarian:

Patricia highlighted the list of new books in the annual report and paid tribute to Howard's work in keeping an eye on interesting new publications and obtaining copies for the church library.

5. Acceptance of 2007 Report and Accounts:

Heidi proposed, and David seconded, the acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts, and this was agreed.

6. Election of Management Committee

Jane stated that all ten of the present members of the management committee had been put forward for re-election:

Jane Blackall, Caroline Blair, Doris Campbell,
David Francis Darling, Albert Dolan, Juliet Edwards,
Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli, Patricia Walker.

Stephanie proposed, and Michaela seconded, that all these names should be re-elected en bloc and this was agreed.

Michaela expressed thanks to the members of the management committee for all that they do. Doris stated that the committee are looking for additional members to join and Sarah echoed this. Patricia followed this up by stating that people are always needed to help with other jobs – where the burden repeatedly falls on the same few people – and encouraged people to volunteer to make coffee on Sundays as this is a role where you get to meet and talk to people. Stephanie commented that it can be difficult for people to put themselves forward and that it is a good strategy to ask people directly if they will help with specific tasks.

7. Any Other Business:

a) Sarah informed the meeting that she would like the church to apply for Fairtrade status. This would mean buying only Fairtrade tea/coffee for the kitchen and also Fairtrade biscuits wherever possible. It would help us to encourage all our visitors and user groups to do the same and thereby spread the word about Fairtrade more effectively. Sarah praised the efforts of Christine in this regard as she has been

regularly buying Fairtrade products already. Sarah informed us that this would probably cost us a little more but that some items could be obtained by ordering in bulk from a company called Suma. Mark queried whether this would mean we were not allowed to have those products (such as Green Tea) where a Fairtrade version might not be very easy to come by. It was felt that we would need to show evidence that we were buying Fairtrade products wherever possible to the Fairtrade Foundation to get official status. Mark noted that there is a Fairtrade Fortnight which we would probably need to promote in church if we did take this on. Juliet informed the meeting that the church bought £1000 worth of shares in Traidcraft some years ago to support the cause.

Doris proposed, and Julia seconded, that Essex Church should apply for Fairtrade status and this was agreed.

b) John Marrow took the opportunity to let everybody know about a forthcoming event organised by "WalkTalk". This organisation was founded by Gill Hicks, who lost her legs in the 7th July London bombings in 2005, and the event will consist of a peace walk from Leeds to London. The main purpose is to encourage community dialogue between all groups of people and to promote civic values. John is volunteering to help with the event and there will be an article on this in the newsletter. There will also be a feature on the BBC 1 Sunday morning programme on 1st June 2008.

8. Votes of Thanks: Were given by Rev. Sarah Tinker, who said:

"We decided last year that we would not name individuals in our votes of thanks but there often need to be exceptions to such decisions. In the minutes of last year's AGM it is clearly stated that Juliet Edwards would be standing down as treasurer. A year on and Juliet is well and truly still in charge of our finances and we are truly grateful. Being treasurer is a demanding role in any voluntary organisation and Juliet deserves a great vote of thanks for all her efforts to get our finances back on an even keel. Juliet please accept this small gift in recognition of your large contribution to our community here at Essex Church.

I also want to thank our ministry student Daniel Hughes who is bringing new ideas and fresh perspectives and is a pleasure to have with us and who is taking over the reins when I have a month off to complete my studies in July and August.

Thank you also to our wardens Jenny Moy and David Berridge, who are a pleasure to work with, and who have helped to make this building a calm, peaceful and attractive resource for so many different communities.

And now I want to pay tribute to everybody else who is part of our community here at Essex Church. At the centre of our work here is our Sunday worship and I think everybody who attends and makes our worship a shared experience – our members, our visitors and our friends. Thank you to all those who take part in our worship, in its planning and delivery, and for the consistently high quality of our musical offerings. Thank you to everyone who helps with stewarding and coffee making, and for the rotas that tell us who is doing what and when, and for all the hidden tasks that get done quietly and efficiently. Thank you for the high standard of our publicity material and to every single person who has written something for our newsletter. Thank you to everyone who runs groups and organises events and outings and activities.

Thank you to everyone who has made financial contributions over the past year, contributions which have not only maintained our financial stability but helped us to raise extra money for our garden improvements and now for our accessible building fund. People have been so generous both financially and with their time and effort. Voluntary organisations need volunteers to serve as committee members, officers and trustees. These are vital roles and we are all grateful to the people who give up their valuable time to serve in these ways.

Thank you to everyone for helping to make Essex Church such a happy and healthy place to belong."

Patricia added a vote of thanks to Sarah – particularly noting her hard work “beyond the call of duty”, her huge enthusiasm, her caring ways, and her “lightness of touch” – and concluded that “we’re lucky to have her!”

9. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1.20pm. The closing words were read by Sarah.

Minutes taken by Jane Blackall