



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

October 2008

What's On at Essex Church

Thursday 2nd October, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: "Death & Dying" (2/3)

Sunday 5th October, 11.00am
"Remembering"
Led by John Carter

Sunday 5th October, 12.45pm
Adult RE: "A Sharing Circle"

Sunday 5th October, 2.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Monday 6th October, 2-4.00pm
"God in Daily Life" (*closed group*)

Monday 6th October, 7-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 9th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Creativity Engagement Group:
"National Portrait Gallery Outing"

Sunday 12th October, 11.00am
"Life and Death"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 12th October, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique/Movement

Sunday 12th October, 3.30-5.00pm
"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Monday 13th October, 2-4.00pm
"God in Daily Life" (*closed group*)

Monday 13th October, 7-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Wednesday 15th October, 7-9.00pm
Committee Meeting

Thursday 16th October, 2.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 16th October, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: "Death & Dying" (3/3)

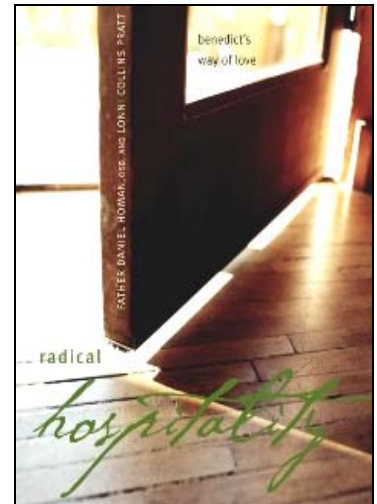
Sunday 19th October, 11.00am
Led by Rev. Jim Robinson

Sunday 19th October, 12.30pm
Gardening Sunday

*Please turn to the back page
for more events listings...*

A Message from our Minister... Radical Hospitality

In September we hosted a London District 'Growth Day' here at Essex Church, which introduced the idea of radical hospitality. As congregations we were encouraged to consider how welcoming we are. Public worship is by law in this country 'public' – meaning that our doors are open to everyone, yet often church communities put up invisible barriers that exclude people. These may be practical barriers caused by inaccessible buildings or they may be more subtle barriers, yet just as difficult to overcome.



Radical hospitality asks us to examine ourselves. How do we treat people who are different from us? What unspoken messages do we broadcast to the world about who is, or is not, welcome to join us? How do we reach beyond the comfort zones that most of us humans prefer to inhabit – comfort zones in which we mix mostly with people remarkably similar to ourselves?

Not everybody finds it easy to talk to strangers and so I am always grateful when I see congregation members chatting to newcomers over a cup of tea after our Sunday service. Apparently someone is more likely to return to a church when they have spoken to at least three different people on their first visit.

Essex Church also offers far more than worship on Sunday mornings. Our programme of activities this autumn is the most extensive listing we've ever had, with lots of different classes and events being held during the day as well as in the evenings and at weekends. My hope is that these activities will help people to get to know one another better and encourage a deeper involvement with the life of the church.

I also hope that by the time you read this newsletter we will have more than one flushing toilet here at the church, ideally with a locking door and a light. With only one loo and no running water or kitchen, we really have been quite radical in our hospitality here this summer. Thank you to congregation members, visitors and other user groups for your patience and good humour during the building works. Thanks are also due to our building team, particularly Graham and Dan, who have been a pleasure to have with us.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this Month's Newsletter...

* "Welcoming a new staff member... and saying 'au revoir'" by Rev. Sarah Tinker * Gardening Sunday * "How I came to Essex Church" by John Rooney * "Are you free, Will?" by Will Lyons * Library News * "The Fabric of Diversity" Community Arts Project * Adult RE: 'Evensong II' * Coffee/Stewarding Rotas * Engagement Groups Conference at Essex Church * General Assembly Weekend * Snippets from Swaziland * Executive Committee Elections * Poetry Book Launch and Fundraising Event * and much 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

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

5 th October:	Will Lyons
12 th October:	Julia Alden
19 th October:	Devika Joshi
26 th October:	Jo Tye

Coffee:

5 th October:	John Rooney
12 th October:	Debra Hinton
19 th October:	Christine Joshi
26 th October:	John Marrow

Please speak to Christine Joshi if you would be willing to help out with stewarding or coffee duties. This is a really easy way to get involved and help to support the life and work of our community.

Adult RE: Evensong II

Starts Thursday 6th November, 7-9.00pm

(closed group: eight fortnightly sessions)

Advance registration for the course is required



A new Evensong course starts on 6th November running for 8 sessions on alternate Thursday evenings from 7 to 9pm. This course offers participants the chance to share their life experiences, emotions, and doubts with others in an atmosphere of attentive listening and non-judgement.

We ran the first series of these gatherings back in 2007 and people found it a very helpful format in which to explore their beliefs and get to know one another better. This new series of sessions explores topics such as childhood memory, stories, prayer and spiritual practice, generosity, hospitality, beliefs and actions.

The course is a particularly good way for people who are new to the congregation to get a bit more involved and the sessions are well structured around a particular theme, with a gentle worshipful feel to them. If you would like to know more, do ask someone who attended the last Evensong gatherings for more information.

'Evensong' will be facilitated by Jane Blackall and Sarah Tinker. It is open to anyone who can commit to attending at least 5 of the 8 sessions and there will be places for up to 10 people to attend. So do check your diaries and let Jane or Sarah know if you would like a place on the course.

Buddhist meditation teacher Thich Nhat Hanh writes that, "the most precious gift we can offer others is our presence".

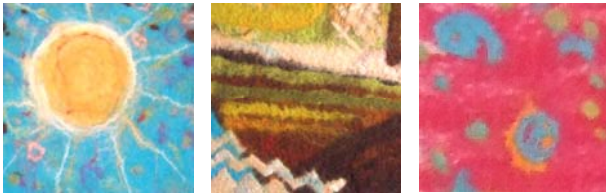
Dates for 'Evensong II':

6th and 20th November

4th and 18th December

1st, 15th and 29th January 2009

concluding on 19th February 2009



“The Fabric of Diversity”

Sharing our Stories through Fibre and Stitch

Sundays 5th October, 2nd Nov, 7th Dec, 4th Jan
and Thursdays from 16th October, 2.00-5.00pm

A New Community Arts Project at Essex Church

A new community arts project, led by Jane Blackall, will be taking place this autumn. A series of textile art workshops will be held at Essex Church starting on the 5th October. All are welcome - no prior knowledge or experience is required - and there will be a chance to get some basic instruction in feltmaking at each session. It is not essential to commit to all of the sessions. However, you will probably benefit from planning to attend at least a few, so that you have enough time to make your own contribution to the project.

The intention is that we will make and decorate felt squares which represent our place in the local community and our varied connections in the wider world. At the end of the project these squares will be joined to make a large wall-hanging, which will be displayed as a public artwork, and an accompanying booklet will detail all the people who took part in its creation.

Please let us know if you are intending to come
as workshop places will be limited:

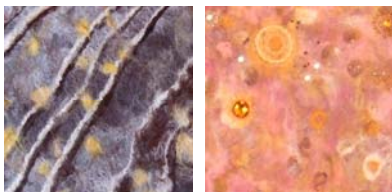
email arts@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

or leave a message with the church office: 020 7221 6514.

**There will be no charge to attend the sessions; however,
donations to help cover our costs are invited.**

*(suggested donation £3/£6/£9 per session
– a sliding scale according to your income)*

*This project has been generously supported by the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s Arts Grant Scheme.*



Engagement Groups and Small Group Ministry Conference

“Sharing our Small Group Success Stories”

1st November, 11am-1pm, at Essex Church



Lindy Latham (*Bristol*), Jim Robinson (*Hampstead*),
Patricia Walker-Hesson and Jane Blackall (*Kensington*),
and Rose Williams (*Golders Green*).

If you are interested in finding out more about Engagement Groups and Small Group Ministry then this one -day conference is for you. Perhaps you are thinking about setting up a small group in your own congregation or fellowship and would like some pointers to help you get started; perhaps you are an experienced group facilitator who would like to meet up with other enthusiasts; or perhaps you are simply curious to find out more about the ‘engagement groups’ you have heard about.

The conference will begin with a recap of key Engagement Group and Small Group Ministry principles. We will consider some of the practicalities involved in setting up and maintaining a small group and discuss what might constitute best practice in group facilitation. Printed resources will also be available.

During the day there will be presentations of a number of ‘success stories’ – representatives of six southern congregations will report and reflect on their own experience with engagement groups and small group ministry – passing on hints and tips that they have picked up along the way. This event will also provide an opportunity for group leaders to connect via the regional engagement support network.

The conference is organised by Jim Robinson and Jane Blackall. Please contact Jim to let us know that you are planning to attend:

Telephone: 020 7435 3506 or

Email: maryjimrobinson@btconnect.com

There will be no cost to attend this conference – however, places will be limited, so please register in advance. Drinks will be provided. Please bring along a packed lunch or pick up something to eat in one of the nearby shops.

**Engagement Support is a Panel of the General Assembly’s
Education and Training Commission (ETC).**

*Current members are: Joyce Ashworth, Jane Blackall,
Karen Hanley, Margaret Kirk, Lindy Latham and Jim Robinson.*

Kensington Community Singers

A Friendly Choir-for-All



Monday Evenings from 7.00-9.00pm
8th September – 8th December 2008 (*not 27th October*)

We launched a new community choir here at Essex Church in the autumn of 2007. 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.

Kensington Community Singers meet on Monday evenings from 7pm to 9pm. The new term started on 8th September. The sessions are great fun. Jen Hazel, our choir leader, has been teaching us a wide selection of songs and we are aiming towards a performance. Donations to cover the cost of running the choir are invited (£3/£6/£9 per session - a sliding scale according to income).

If you know anyone who might be interested – or can think of anywhere to pin up one of our advertisements – please do pick up a few flyers from the church foyer. Thank you.

Gardening Sunday

Sunday 19th October, 12.30pm



We will be having a gardening session after the service on Sunday 19th October. Remember to bring old clothes that day if you would like to get involved and bring along any suitable tools if possible. The plan is to have a general tidy-up and perhaps also to plant some spring bulbs. Please talk to Michaela von Britzke for more information.

General Assembly Weekend



11th - 12th October 2008

A Message from the GA President:

Fellow Unitarians,

On behalf of the General Assembly, I take this opportunity of sincerely thanking each one of you for the vital on-going contribution you make to the life of your local churches and districts, without which they could no longer continue to witness to the liberal tradition we value so much.

I am well aware that, in addition to the enthusiastic and committed local support, a large number of you are involved in the wider movement, devoting much time and energy to work on the Executive Committee, or as members of commissions, panels, societies, and other associated bodies. As a denomination we owe a huge debt of gratitude for this collective effort which helps make the functioning of our religious organisation possible.

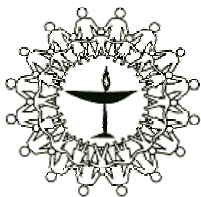
However, every organisation needs an operational hub, and for us this is the General Assembly with its small number of dedicated professional staff based at Essex Hall. They provide the necessary leadership, co-ordination, and support our churches look to and receive from. Some of the costs involved are, of course, raised by way of membership quotas paid through the churches and additional initiatives such as Associate Membership, which I would strongly urge those not already signed up to consider. Meanwhile, this specially designated weekend offers us personally the opportunity, through individual financial support, to show our recognition and appreciation of the General Assembly's role. The support of each one of us is absolutely vital if we are to maintain and strengthen our national co-ordinating body – the GA, with whom we must work for the future of our Unitarian movement.

I have every confidence that you will respond generously.

Joyce Ashworth

Sharing Circle

Sunday 5th October, 12.45-1.45pm



Come and join us after the service, on the 1st Sunday of each month, for a sharing circle facilitated by Jo Ridgers and Rita Woditsch-Ogle. Bring a sandwich to eat and something for us to enjoy together - some music, a poem, a picture, a photograph, or a beautiful object - something that you would like to tell others more about. All are welcome.

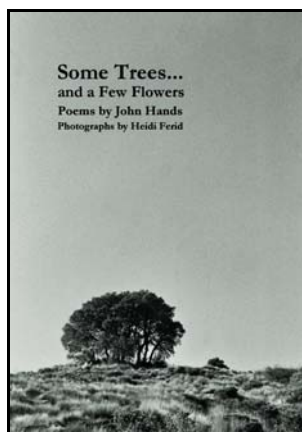
...a date for your diary: forthcoming event at Essex Church...

Poetry Book Launch and Church Fundraiser

“Some Trees... and a Few Flowers”

Poems by John Hands

Photographs by Heidi Ferid



Tuesday 28th October, 7pm at Essex Church

October will see the launch of “Some Trees... and a Few Flowers,” a new book of poems and photographs, by our very own John Hands and Heidi Ferid.

John and Heidi will read a selection of poems from the collection and the launch event will also include beautiful music from Norma Fender on the Celtic harp.

The evening's event will raise funds for the Essex Church accessible building fund. Please do put the date in your diary and plan to come along.

Welcoming a New Staff Member...

It is a pleasure to announce that we have a new staff member here at Essex Church, someone we all know well.



Jane Blackall has joined the staff as our part-time Arts and Education Outreach Officer, initially as a one year post, and will be working on projects to increase our presence in the local community.

You will be able to read elsewhere in this newsletter about the ‘Fabric of Diversity’ project, which is designed to reflect the many groups that meet in our building. We received funding from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for this exciting project and part of Jane’s work will involve seeking other sources of funding for arts and education work.

Jane has already noted that many funding bodies specifically exclude religious organisations, so we would be pleased to hear if you have any ideas of how we can attract the finance necessary to continue and expand this aspect of our work.

Saying Au Revoir...



We are saying au revoir to David Berridge who has been working as our co-warden for the last two years. David is pursuing his many arts interests but will be coming back to Essex Church from time to time when our warden Jenny needs holiday cover.

We thank David for his gentle and good-humoured presence here, for increasing our lettings income and for all that, seemingly endless, copying of the newsletter, tasks which he tackled with patience and good humour. We wish him well for the future.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



“Hospitality invites to prayer before it checks credentials, welcomes to the table before administering the entrance exam.”

Patrick Henry

GA Executive Committee Elections



We will be receiving information on candidates and ballot papers for the GA Executive Committee Elections in the near future. The GA EC elections are due to take place in November of this year.

Unfortunately, the number of votes that congregations have been allocated by the GA was determined by the number of quota-paying members they had back in early 2007. This puts us in a rather difficult position, because our membership has grown significantly since then, but the GA has left it up to the committee of each congregation to decide how to distribute those votes amongst the members that they have now. Although it is not an ideal solution, we have decided that will simply allocate the votes to those people who were on our membership list at that time, with apologies to those members who have joined more recently. Please speak to Sarah or me if you have any questions about this process.

Jane Blackall

Squatter's Rights



Listen, kitten,
Get this clear,
This is my chair.
I sit here.

Okay, kitty,
We can share;
When I'm not home,
It's your chair.

Listen cat
How about
If I use it
When you're out? (Please?)

Richard Shaw

Submitted by Will Lyons

Nia Technique



Holistic Movement Sessions:

Sessions led by **Sonya Leite**

Sunday 12th October - 2.00-3.00pm

A regular Nia class is continuing here at Essex Church, on the second Sunday of every month from 2-3pm (*usually the same day as "Songs and Silence for the Soul"*). The cost to take part will be £7.00 per session (£5.00 concessions).

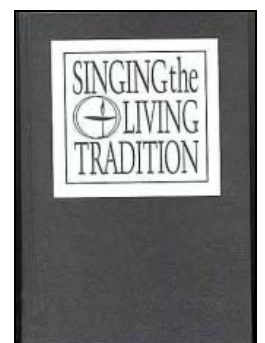
Nia is holistic movement for body and soul. It is an expressive movement practice promoting fitness, creativity and wellbeing. Fusing dance, yoga, tai chi and martial arts, Nia provides a holistic workout and leaves you feeling energised, relaxed and centred. It suits any level of fitness, age and experience, working from where you are now.

Nia's barefoot, grounded approach maximizes body efficiency and teaches you to move consciously in a gentler way. Dance movements are mixed with subtle therapeutic suggestions and visualization techniques that help you develop awareness and heighten sensation. The result is a fusion of movement styles that is incredibly free and liberating. Moving between simple choreography (form) and freedom of movement (freedance), Nia classes combine the grace and expressiveness of dance, the power and explosiveness of martial arts, and the wisdom and stillness of yoga and tai chi.

Sponsor a Hymn Book

A reminder about our "sponsor a hymn book" scheme:

For only £20, you can dedicate one of the new 'Singing the Living Tradition' hymn books to a person or cause that is dear to you. An inscribed bookplate will record your dedication. Make cheques payable to Essex Church and hand them with a note of your chosen dedication either to Sarah, our minister, or a committee member.



Backroom Bits and Pieces: News from the Management Committee



Every month the Essex Church management committee – currently nine people – meet to discuss issues regarding the running of the church. Here are some issues that have been discussed in the last month.

1. Lucy Williamson, principal of the nursery school which occupies part of our basement area, attended the first part of the meeting. The school are applying for a grant to enable them to do various improvements to their toilet and kitchen facilities, and of course need our permission for any necessary building work. In addition they would like to put in a ramp from alongside the car park down to the basement level so that parents wouldn't have to carry their prams and buggies down the very steep steps at the front of the church. The advantage of this for the congregation is that it could provide a means of wheelchair access to our lower library level. However it will all depend on the necessary finance being made available.
2. Much less positively, there has recently been a break-in to the nursery school with various items being stolen, and also a theft from church premises. As a result of this our warden Jenny and Lucy from the school will be seeking advice from the local crime prevention officer as to how we can improve our security on site.
3. The church's own building project, to create disabled access toilets and to refurbish the kitchen, is now in full swing, even if progress is a little slower than we had originally hoped. The three new toilets rooms have been built and plastered, electrical work has been carried out and the tiling is imminent. The kitchen units and appliances are on order, but it will clearly be a while before the new kitchen is up and running.
4. One of our joint wardens, David Berridge, will be leaving church employment at the end of September, to enable him to follow his other interests. At the same time, Jenny Moy will be taking on the role as our full-time warden. The committee wished to record its thanks to Jenny for all her hard work in connection with the building project.
5. Jane Blackall started work on 1 September as our new part-time Arts and Education Outreach Officer, working the equivalent of one day a week. This is a one-year post in the first instance. Part of the role will be to seek outside funding for future community arts and education activities. We all wish Jane well in this exciting new post.
6. Our minister reported that church membership has now reached 50 members. This shows a considerable increase over the last two years. Congratulations to Sarah and all those involved in achieving this.

Howard Hague

The next meeting of the Essex Church Management Committee will take place at 7pm on Wednesday 15th October.

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



**Sundays 12th October, 9th November,
14th December, 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

How I Came to Essex Church

John Hands and Doris Campbell, good and old friends of mine introduced me to Essex Church and Unitarianism some four years ago now and although I have not been as regular attender as I would have liked (I live out in the “sticks” compared to most of the regulars) I have found the community welcoming, supportive and wonderfully independent of mind.

Indeed the emphasis on the individual’s search for meaning rather than the adherence to a set of prescribed dogma is something that my Roman Catholic upbringing did not exactly encourage. Indeed I was once put in school detention when I was 14 for asking why the Virgin Mary only appeared in Catholic countries. My teacher thought, correctly as it happened, that my question revealed cynicism rather than honest enquiry. Still hardly the spirit of Socratic enquiry!

Labels are always problematic but atheist is the one that most emotionally and intellectually applies to me. Which, of course, leaves me with a conundrum when I tell my non-Unitarian friends that I am off to church. They look at me in that bemused way which I read as disbelief, embarrassment or incomprehension. “But surely....” is what they are dying to say. My uncommunicated response would relate to the absence of ritual, community and opportunity for social reflection offered by secular society is rather limited yet offered in abundance in Palace Gardens Terrace.

A new Unitarian friend of mine told me she is in favour of calling our community a fellowship rather than a church and I must say I warm to the idea. Fellows on a road who respect each others rights to viewpoints but who love to debate. Part of the attraction of Unitarianism is its theme of the role of scientific knowledge in spiritual development. This does not mean of course that one needs to be a Nobel Prize winning quantum physicist to be on the road but that our worldview does not clash with evidence. It always amazes me why this minimal requirement is seen as so threatening by so many.

One of the most stimulating evenings I have spent in the Church was the discussion led by Michaela on consciousness and the nature of free will. It has led me off on a path of literature that has at times led to me to review my whole view as to the nature of reality. This nurtured me intellectually. The Quest course nurtured me emotionally.

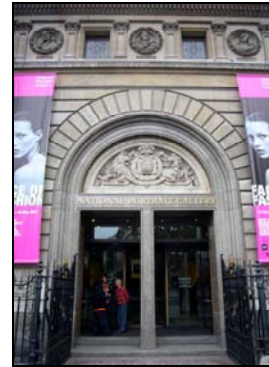
So thank you one and all and long may it be that I remain a member of Essex Church.

John Rooney

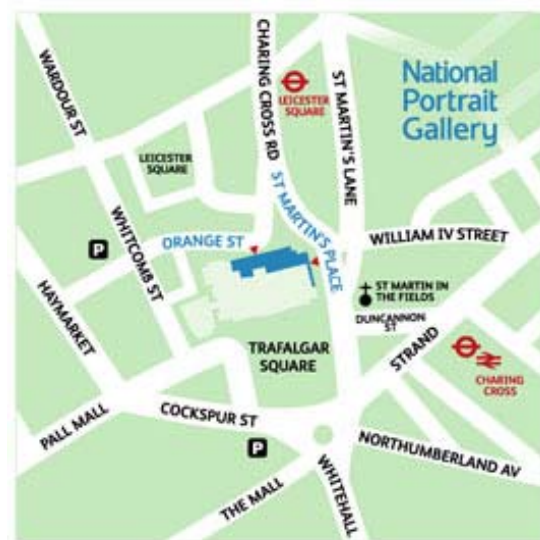
Creativity Engagement Group

National Portrait Gallery

Thursday 9th October, 7.00-9.00pm
(meeting in the NPG café at 6.30pm)



In October the creativity group will be doing something slightly different by having a Thursday evening outing to the National Portrait Gallery (just off Trafalgar Square).



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

November Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the October issue is **Sunday 12th October**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

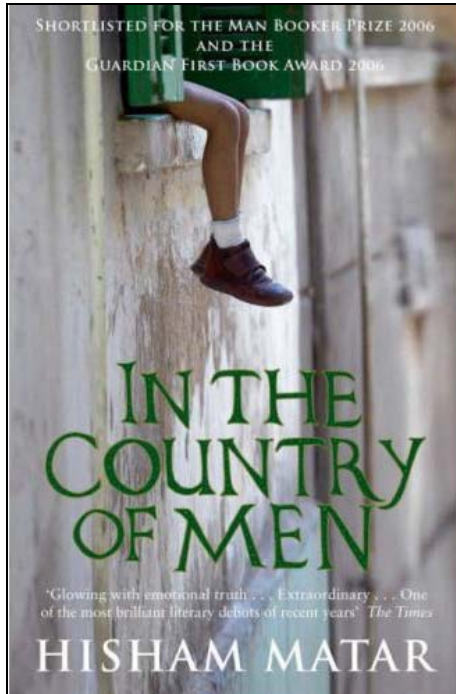
Thank you!!!

Reading Engagement Group

“In the Country of Men”

by Hisham Matar

Thursday 23rd October, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next topic of discussion will be “In the Country of Men” by Hisham Matar. This book was chosen by Betty Evans and will be the focus of our next reading group meeting on **Thursday 23rd October**.

Information from Amazon:

“On a white-hot day in Tripoli, Libya, in the summer of 1979, nine-year-old Suleiman is shopping in the market square with his mother. His father is away on business - but Suleiman is sure he has just seen him, standing across the street...From a breathtaking new talent comes an utterly gripping, emotional novel told from the point of view of a young boy growing up in a terrifying and bewildering world where his best friend's father disappears and is next seen on state television at a public execution; where a mysterious man sits outside the house all day and asks strange questions; and where it seems his father has finally disappeared for good. Soon the whispers and fears, secrets and lies will become so intense that Suleiman can bear them no longer and in his terrified efforts to save his family may end up betraying his friends, his parents and ultimately himself.”

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 book group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material.

The GA of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches presents:

Visit to the Palace of Westminster

kindly arranged by Sir Peter Soulsby
and flight on the London Eye
for Young Unitarians (12-17 year olds)



Tuesday 4th November 2008

Only 20 places available: First come, first served
(come on the Palace tour and/or trip to Eye and Aquarium).

We will have lunch in the Jubilee Café – simple sandwiches etc available. In the afternoon we will go on the London Eye and into the London Aquarium (cost £15 for both combined). Day ends at 6pm at Westminster Tube Station.

For more information please contact:
John Harley on 020 8670 9280.

...a new monthly activity at Essex Church later this summer...

Taoist Healing Sounds

Sundays 26th October and
30th November at Essex Church



Something to look forward to in the autumn: once a month after worship there'll be chance to learn a Taoist system of healing sounds with accompanying movements and self-massage techniques.

No particular skill or fitness is needed – just the willingness to have a go at something different and to make some unusual sounds.

Sarah Tinker



Multifaith Calendar



☾ 2nd October – Eid-ul-Fitr – Muslim

Eid-Ul-Fitr marks the breaking of the fast for Muslims at the end of Ramadan. Lasting three days, it is a time for family and friends to get together, for celebrating with good food and presents for children, and giving to charity. The charity of the fast - Zakat-ul-Fitr, which is paid during Ramadan, must be paid before the Eid prayer. 'Eid Mubarak' - a happy and blessed Eid, is the traditional greeting.

☸ 7th October – Pavarana – Buddhist

The day marks the end of the Rains Retreat and is also known as Sangha Day. Monks who have completed the three month retreat invite their associates to reprove them for any failings (Pavarana means 'to invite').

★ 9th October

– 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.

★ 14th – 21st October – 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 hut 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).



★ 22nd October – Simchat Torah – Jewish

Simchat Torah marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading from the Torah. When the reading of the last Torah portion concludes, the reading proceeds immediately to the first chapter of Genesis without a break, as the Torah is a circle, and never ends. Children dance and sing as all the Torah scrolls are paraded around the synagogue, giving as many people as possible the honour of carrying a Torah scroll.

☸ 22nd-29th October – Week of Prayer for World Peace

The week is supported by members from many different religious communities. A collection of prayers drawn from the literature of several world religions is published for use during the week.

☸ 24th October – Kathina Day – Buddhist

In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, Kathina Day is celebrated by the lay community offering monks new Kathina robes at the end of their three month Rains Retreat. The date of the festival varies according to when the rainy season arrives in different countries.

☸ 28th October – Divali (Deepavali) – Hindu

Divali (Deepavali) is the Hindu New Year celebration lasting from one to five days. A festival of light, celebrated with fireworks, Divali is generally associated with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, or with the victorious return of Rama and Sita after their exile.

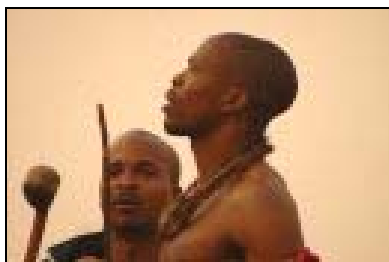
☸ 28th October – Divali (Bandi Chhor Divas) – Sikh

Sikhs also celebrate Divali, as the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, was released from prison on this day. He refused to accept release unless fifty-two imprisoned Hindu princes were also released. The Emperor set a condition that only those who could hold on to his cloak could leave prison, so the Guru had a special coat with long tassels made. Divali is a time for presents, sweets and new clothes.

Snippets from Swaziland



Iona is still working at an NCP (a centre for children too poor to afford any schooling) in Swaziland. She has also had a four-day break in Mozambique. The following extracts are from e-mails sent to Caroline Blair over a period of a couple of weeks.



Today I was at the NCP in the morning breaking up firewood, fixing a post for a garden fence, trying to teach a small group of bold characters their ABC on a blackboard leant against the wall of a church, kneeling in the dust, staring out into the hot sun (I'm swiftly changing race to a more dusky complexion- one big freckle joins across my nose.) Then I took a quite little girl with big eyes called Tembuso down to the clinic for her ear infection- me feeling really tired and dropping off between responding to her pointing to objects in a book asking their name. I suddenly felt 'Motherish' - even like you as I imagine and half remember you were - the right balance between concern and fondness for a kid and an equal desire to do my own thing, have my own thoughts, snooze, chatter sympathetically with fellow patient patients while the only nurse stood outside on her lunch-break.

Then when we tried to go home the kombi [bus] drove straight past so we walked back up the mountain base to her home. I carried her over the long precarious bridge over the river.

I've been to Mlindazwe in the mornings this week, growing more attached to the kids. Spoke to the Swazi volunteers there yesterday and there's some urgent stuff to be done - a girl who needs to go to clinic with genital warts - very suspicious - she's only 5... another girl who's school fees are about to run out mid year - there are questions as to where the money volunteers promised they'd leave for child sponsorship has gone...We need a structure to keep the rain off the pots and fire when cooking when the rainy season comes.

On the Saturday night there will be a 'house-on-fire-night' at Mandela's - a kind of beautiful party night. Then on Sunday and Monday there's the reed dance umhlanga ceremony with all the young girls marching, singing, dancing in costume....

We got back from Mozambique yesterday: drove from Maputo where we'd stopped for the night. It's a hectic city full of rubbish and drunken people and old communist remnants - Friedrich Engels drive; Mao tse Tsung Avenue - that kind of thing. Tofo [on the coast] was pristine and laid back- all that sand trudging and wind and sea battering took it out of me eventually until I did turn briefly into a bit of a vegetable sitting on the beach badgered by enterprising boys selling shell bracelets. I traded 4 for a pack of cards from London, 2 police gay pride pens which they think are rasta pens, and a rubber. Recovering from the whale-shark diving, kayaking, horse-riding, swimming, wandering...very glad to be back in good old Swaziland.

I had a good night at 'house-on-fire' - the place where the bush fire festival was - Jim got in some good African(ish) dancing. I made a friend called Fari - a rasta tour guide from Zimbabwe who speaks 9 African languages, English, and some Portuguese, plus Maori from his 6 years in New Zealand. He's been teaching some of the guys at Tofo market, especially the orphan kids - some English. He seems to know everyone and waved us through various police stops on the way put of Mozambique - apparently he used to do safari tours and took the Windsors around - Prince William was very well mannered.

On my birthday I spent a good 3 hours or so stuck on a dhow boat with no wind to move us to shore. Tempers were tested and characters revealed - some of the volunteers kept asking the guide how long it would take - how long it normally took - looking at their watches in order to pace their expectations. They were unable to see that the guide did not - as far as we knew - control the winds and we could be there for 10 minutes to 10 hours; we'd be better off praying to the god of the winds than keep looking longingly at the shore.

I'll put on my best frock in the hope the king will choose me for his 15th wife... that would a shocker for the Swazi times paper. There is a lot of King's birthday hype - his 40th birthday and 40 years since independence; he has some 40 or so Mercedes cars bought for the royal family's use for the celebrations (this while projects like ours deal with drought, AIDS and orphans...) and yet most people do love and support the king and seem to think he's the source of the country's peace and security.

Iona Blair

...a London lecture that you might be interested in...

“What on earth happened?”

The complete story of the planet, life and people from the Big Bang to the present day.



Tuesday 7th October, 7.00pm

The Royal Institution, Albemarle Street, W1S 4BS

When did life on earth begin? Who was mankind's oldest ancestor? Are humans really superior to other living things? The complete story of the planet, life and people from the Big Bang to the present day.

Lecture given by Christopher Lloyd.

Tickets cost £8 standard, £6 concessions.

For more information and to book, visit www.rigb.org

...a London lecture that you might be interested in...

Rupert Sheldrake and Andrew Cohen in Dialogue



Friday 17th October, 7.30pm

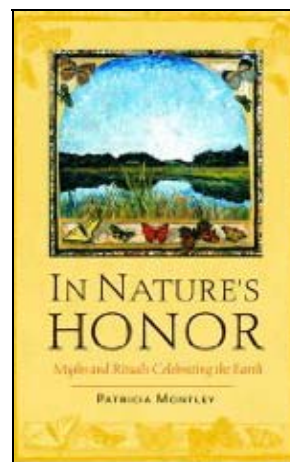
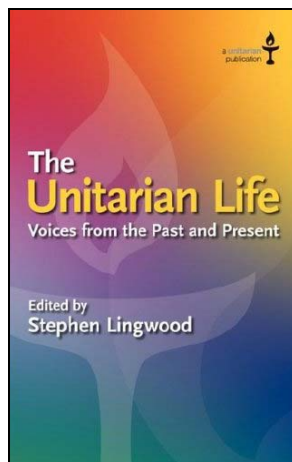
EnlightenNext, Windsor Street, Islington N1 8QG

British biologist and pioneer in consciousness studies Rupert Sheldrake, and spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen, hold their second “science and spirituality” dialogue.

These two deeply inspired philosophers will probe into the nature of life, exploring the question: Is the driving force of evolution a biological process or an inherently spiritual compulsion? Tickets £18.

For more info: www.EnlightenNext.org/london

Congregational Library



The following books have been added to stock in recent weeks:

ALLARDYCE, Alex

The village that changed the world: a history of Newington Green, London N16. Newington Green Action Group, 2008. 57 pp. (*includes a lot about Dissent in the Newington Green area, the Unitarian Chapel, Richard Price, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs Barbauld amongst others*)

HAGUE, Judy ed.

A century of the Unitarian Women's League 1908 – 2008: a selection from the League Newsletter. Women's League, 2008. 196 pp. (*arranged by themes, e.g. people, meetings, women and ministry; includes a picture of a very young Howard Hague, aged 5*)

HYTCH, Frank

The Unitarian: a journey 1903 - , a history of the magazine and its editors, with extracts from each era. Manchester District Association, 2008. 94 pp. (*contributors include Alan Ruston, Peter Godfrey, Eric Wild and Alan Curren*)

LINGWOOD, Stephen

The Unitarian life: voices from the past and present. Lindsey Press, 2008. 209 pp. (*a selection of readings about Unitarianism: what it is, what it should be, or what it might be; likely to become a key text*)

MONTLEY, Patricia

In nature's honor: myths and rituals celebrating the earth. Boston (USA), Skinner House Books, 2005. 379 pp. (*presents an earth and nature-centred approach to religion and spirituality*)

The latest books are displayed on a bookcase in the church – please enter details in the library loans book if you would like to borrow an item. The usual loan period is one month.

Howard Hague

ICUU Reception

International Council of Unitarians
and Unitarian Universalists

Thursday 23rd October



Want to meet interesting liberal religious people from around the world? On October 23rd we will be hosting a reception for members of the ICUU (International Council of Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists) who are visiting London this week.

The ICUU has member congregations in over 20 countries and there will be representatives from many of these groups attending this reception.

We are looking for Essex Church members who would like to welcome guests on this evening and help serve drinks and nibbles. Do let our minister know if you are able to help out.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

LDPA Autumn Quarterly

Saturday 18th October, 1.00-4.00pm

'U-Tube'



Croydon Unitarian Church
1 The Flyover, Croydon, CR0 1ER

The district website is being radically overhauled, and will soon include short video clips of Unitarians talking about what their faith means to them. Come to this Quarterly Meeting, and you can be one of them.

With worship led collegially by the ministers and lay leaders of the District.

Email: dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk

Nash Point



This lighthouse, white and phallic – pure rising towards
The uterus clouds is an expressive symbol of human desires.
No, it is a lighthouse.

This lonely beacon gleaming over spiky waves
Is a symbol of salvation, warning us away from the
Precipice of yesterdays.
No, it is a lighthouse.

This white hope, gravely erect, indifferent to despair
Superior to animosity, silent when storms rage,
Buttress to a sphere invisible to our eyes embodies
The all that we are and struggle to be.
No, it is a lighthouse

O tall White Spirit, I wish to survive, I wish to rise
High above the disparagement of my detractors,
I wish to be indomitable and brave, saluting
The distant passage of ships, the distracting emblems
Of innumerable nations; resolute against the assaults
Of meteorites and centuries – then be, simply be
A lighthouse.

John Hands
Drawing by Heidi Ferid

‘Are you free, Will?’ – some questions raised by a chance encounter



A couple of Fridays ago, I was passing by a neighbour's house (who is a Jehovah's Witness) and she was at the garden gate welcoming in other people. We passed the time of day and she introduced me to her father. I realised that they were gathering for a house service and that Friday must be their Sabbath. She introduced me telling him that I was Unitarian and we fell into discussion as he was curious about Unitarianism. After he (half-heartedly) tried to convince me that the Bible was absolute and that Jesus Christ was about to return with all the answers, I explained that as a Church we were non-dogmatic and non-creedal. He then floored me by saying “Oh, so you can do what you like then!”

I pointed out that we did have some scruples and wished him goodbye thinking only that if he relied on biblical retribution for being a good member of society then he was not drawing on his own resources and must be in permanent fear. Since that encounter matters of morals and free will have been buzzing round my brain.

This is such a big subject that I can't present all the arguments here but will only pose a couple of questions and offer some quotes.

Do we have free will? Free will is a concept in traditional philosophy used to refer to the belief that human behaviour is not absolutely determined by external causes, but is the result of choices made by an act of will by the individual. The idea that God gave humans free will as a way to account for evil in the world while maintaining the position of an all powerful and benevolent God is an argument or viewpoint based on the assumption that one believes in such a deity. It falls down if you do not believe – then other approaches have to be made to the question. It may be a function of mental processes and socialization. Steven Pinker, the Harvard Professor of Linguistics believes we do have free will and it resides in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain.

Is religion necessary for morality? “We don't have free will, but we do have free won't” says the scientist Richard Gregory at Bristol University. In the religious realm, free will may imply that an omnipotent divinity does not assert its power over individual will and choices. In the Christian tradition, which has framed the issues surrounding free will, the belief hinges on a metaphysical belief in non-physical reality. The will is seen as a faculty of the soul or mind, which is understood as standing outside of the physical world and its governing laws. For many, a belief in materialism or lack of belief in a deity is taken to imply a denial of free will.

Will Lyons



“There are many kinds of violence and nonviolence, but one cannot distinguish them by external factors alone. If one's motivation is negative, the action it produces is, in the deepest sense, violent, even though it may appear to be smooth and gentle. Conversely, if one's motivation is sincere and positive but the circumstances require harsh behaviour, essentially one is practicing nonviolence. No matter what the case may be, I feel that compassionate concern for the benefit of others — not simply for oneself — is the sole justification for the use of force.

The genuine practice of nonviolence is still somewhat experimental on our planet, but its pursuit, based on love and understanding, is sacred. If this experiment succeeds, it can open the way to a far more peaceful world.

I have heard the occasional Westerner maintain that long-term Gandhian struggles employing nonviolent passive resistance do not suit everybody, and that such courses of action are more natural in the East. Because Westerners are active, they tend to seek immediate results in all situations, even at the cost of their lives. This approach, I believe, is not always beneficial. But surely the practice of nonviolence suits us all. It simply calls for determination. Even though the freedom movements of Eastern Europe reached their goals quickly, nonviolent protest by its very nature usually requires patience.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

...an event organised by the art and spirituality network...

“Inner Landscapes” Connecting to your Soul



Saturday 25th October, 10am-4pm
Kingston Quaker Meeting House,
Eden Street, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey

Led by Tomo Williams and Marika Cohen

*Do you feel connected to your true self?
Join us for a quiet journey to your inner landscape
through tactile art making and reflection with others.*

In many spiritual traditions, “self-acceptance” is considered as one of the most important elements which lead one to healing and to grow spiritually. This is a day to gently observe and explore the flow of your unique inner world, going wherever your creativity carries you.

The aesthetics of artwork are not important and skill or prior experiences in art are not necessary. All materials are provided and there will be opportunities to work privately and to share with others if you would like to. Please let us know in advance if you have special needs that might affect your participation.

Please bring simple vegetarian food to share (*If you have a special diet you are welcome to bring your own food*).

Please wear old clothes or bring an apron to enjoy the full freedom of your creativity!

Cost: £25

Enquiries and bookings:

E-mail: tomo@lotusarts.co.uk or marikahc@hotmail.com
Tel: 07828 290 362 (Tomo) or 07739 382 889 (Marika)

Full details on the website: www.artandspirituality.net

...a continuing adult RE course at Essex Church...

Death and Dying

Thursday Evenings from 7-9pm
2nd, 16th October 2008



This adult RE course started on 18th September and is led by Michaela von Britzke and Sarah Tinker. All are welcome. You can attend one or more sessions and it is fine just to turn up although it's always helpful to have an idea of numbers so let us know if you are thinking of attending.

Thursday 2nd October, 7pm

In this second evening we will consider our legacies, what it is we bring to the world and leave here when we are no more. How can 'clearing the decks' and sorting our affairs help us to face death in peace and live life more fully now?

Thursday 16th October, 7pm

This evening we will explore the ending of life and useful preparations and decisions we can make. Living wills, care preferences, favourite readings, and hymns we never want to have sung at our funeral - just some of the issues we will explore together.

In each of these three evenings we will end with a process called 'Live Now', which encourages us to consider what we want to do with our lives now, whether we think we may have hours or decades to live.

Look out in the new year for a Saturday workshop about death and dying here at Essex Church.



“Peace is not something you wish for; It's something you make, Something you do, Something you are, And something you give away.”

Robert Fulghum

Our Warden's Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

The main thing going on in the building this month is the renovation of our toilets and kitchen. This is progressing well, and hopefully by the time you're reading this we'll have at least one functional toilet again upstairs.

The old "Gents" and "Ladies" have been replaced with two single toilets, each with a window for natural light. This has created space for a disabled toilet to make the ground floor of the building fully accessible for wheelchair users. We have also taken the opportunity to install extra mirrors, and to replace the roller towels with Dyson hand-driers. We hope the new facilities will remain practical and attractive for many years to come.

The old kitchen was original to the building, and after 30 years had come to the end of its natural life. However we were proud that it had lasted so long and anxious to replace it with something equally durable. After much research, we found a company that specialises in robust kitchen units for public spaces. The new kitchen will have integrated appliances, an eye-level oven, an induction hob and a dishwasher – though we intend to keep that for all day meetings and our own use only.

However, meanwhile, we're struggling on with the plastic cups, paper plates and bottled water. All of our users have been very understanding, and for the duration of the building work we're providing complimentary tea and coffee as a small gesture of appreciation.

As for other use of the building, in September we hosted the 'David Gest Dancers' for two weeks of rehearsals. We also accommodated script readthroughs for SHINE and Touchstone TV.

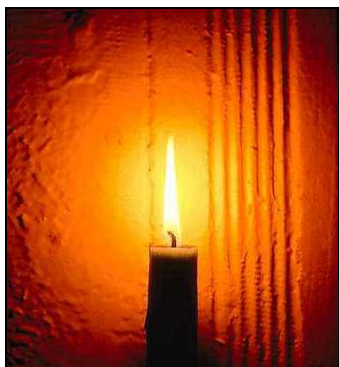
After several months without a regular booking on Tuesday evenings, we've recently had three enquiries – one from a tango teacher, one for voice workshops and one for yoga – so watch this space.

This is a busy time of year for Jewish festivals, following Rosh Hashanah at the end of last month, we have Yom Kippur on the 8th & 9th and Simchat Torah on the 21st.

On Friday 31st October, some local children will be using the church for a Halloween party before going trick or treating. The same group came last year, decorated the space beautifully and cleaned up very well – so we're happy to have them back.

Some sad news is that at the end of August, both the Lloyd Williamson nursery and the church suffered break-ins. A cupboard in the church hall was broken into and a laptop belonging to a user group was stolen. The nursery lost a camera. We are expecting a visit from the Crime Prevention Officer to talk about how we can further improve security.

Jenny Moy



"Of all the great religious traditions that have tried to understand the reality of sin, I've found Islam offers a description most true to my experience of it. In the Koran, the Muslim Holy Book, the word for sin means, literally, "forgetting." To sin is to forget. But forget what? you ask. Well, in the beginning, the Koran says, God created the world and human beings. Because God was good, so was everything God created. The tragedy of human beings, though, is that we forget this primordial goodness.

We forget our interconnected selves, and instead live as individualists. We forget the generous compassionate love we're capable of and instead live stingy, tight-fisted. We forget the exhilaration of losing ourselves in something greater than us and instead retreat behind high walls. We forget who made us and what for. "We have forgotten who we are."

To me, it rings true to think on sin as "forgetting." It explains how, after I've done something wrong, I almost always know it immediately. I kick myself and say, "I should've known better." That place within me that "knew better" is the place I forgot."

Robert Hardies

...some forthcoming events – dates for your diary this autumn...

A London Weekend of Theophilus Lindsey Commemorations



REV. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

In November this year we will be marking the bicentenary of the death in 1808 of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey, the founder of the original Essex Street Chapel (from which the present-day Essex Church congregation is in part derived, and from which it takes its name). There are two special events:

Visit to Lindsey's Grave – Saturday 15 November

This could be described as a 'pilgrimage' to Lindsey's tomb in the fascinating Bunhill Fields Dissenters' Cemetery in the heart of London, where John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake are also buried. We will meet at the City Road eastern entrance to Bunhill Fields (London EC1) at 1pm, opposite Wesley's Chapel and Museum, the nearest tube station being Old Street, with Moorgate not too far away). From there Unitarian historian Alan Ruston will lead us through the cemetery, pointing out various dissenting graves of interest, including that of the Rev Richard Price, minister at our Newington Green church for many years, and the Rev Dr Daniel Williams, (of Dr Williams's Library in Gordon Square, one of the leading libraries of Protestant nonconformity). When we reach Lindsey's tomb in the north-western corner of the cemetery, our minister the Rev Sarah Tinker will lead us in a short ceremony to mark Lindsey's life and work. It is expected that the visit will finish about 3pm. If you are not familiar with Bunhill Fields, it is worth visiting this oasis of calm in the midst of the busy city. Let us hope for good weather!

Lecture on Lindsey at Essex Church – Sunday 16 November

On Sunday 16th November the Unitarian Christian Association is holding its annual Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture on Lindsey at Essex Unitarian Church, Kensington. It will be given by the leading Lindsey scholar, Professor Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent (who is also a trustee of Dr Williams's Library in London)*. The title will be: 'From Prayer Book to Personal Piety: the contribution of Theophilus Lindsey to the emergence of a Unitarian Identity.' The Lecture is advertised as a 2 for 2.30 pm start, and Kensington Unitarians are offering lunch beforehand for those attending. The morning service will focus on Lindsey too, as other Unitarian services throughout Britain are likely to do during November. Our minister Rev Sarah Tinker will be assisted in the service by Rev Jeff Gould, a visiting member of the UCA.

The General Assembly's Worship Panel has recently issued a Lindsey Worship Pack (the contents of which were in fact compiled by several members of Essex Church), and this has now been mounted as a PDF file on our website: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/publications.html - do take a look!

(* Professor Ditchfield has been working for some years on an edition of the letters of Theophilus Lindsey; the first volume was published last November in the Church of England Record Society series.)

Howard Hague

Getting Involved With Worship – 'Worship Associates'



If you would like to get more involved with worship here at Essex Church we'll be having a meeting after worship on November 23rd to talk about a new scheme called 'Worship Associates'. This is a scheme where people take on some responsibility for our Sunday services, greeting visiting worship leaders, perhaps doing a reading or prayer, checking candle supplies, making suggestions for future worship themes - anything is possible. If you can't make this brief meeting at 12.30 on Sunday, do let Sarah know if you would like to know more about this scheme.



What's On at Essex Church

(...continued from front page...)

Monday 20th October, 2-4.00pm
"God in Daily Life" (*closed group*)

Monday 20th October, 7-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 23rd October, 2.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 23rd October, 7-9.00pm
Reading Engagement Group:
"In the Country of Men"

Sunday 26th October, 11.00am
"Liberal Faith around the World"
*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Rev. Gordon Oliver*

Sunday 26th October, 12.30pm
"Taoist Healing Sounds"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Tuesday 28th October, 7.00pm
"Some Trees... and a Few Flowers"
John and Heidi's Book Launch
and Church Fundraising Event

Thursday 30th October, 2-4.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Dates for your Diary...

Saturday 1st November, 11am-4pm
Engagement Groups Conference:
"Sharing Small Group Success Stories"

Thursday 6th November, 7.00-9.00pm
Adult RE: Evensong II (session 1/8)
Please book your place in advance...

Saturday 15th November, noon
Theophilus Lindsey Pilgrimage
Bunhill Fields Cemetery, City Road

Sunday 16th November, 2.00pm
UCA Theophilus Lindsey Lecture
Given by Prof. Grayson Ditchfield

Sunday Services at Essex Church

5th October – "Remembering"
– Service led by Rev. John Carter

12th October – "Life and Death"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As one of life's few certainties, death is still little spoken of. This service will reflect on some of the issues we have been exploring on Thursday evenings in our 'Death and Dying' course and will consider the ways in which the world's religions perhaps help or hinder us in coming terms with our mortality.

19th October – Service led by Rev. Jim Robinson

Rev Jim Robinson from Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead will be visiting us for the first time today, when he and our minister 'swap pulpits'.

26th October – "Liberal Faith around the World"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Rev. Gordon Oliver

As the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) Committee visits London we are pleased to welcome Gordon Oliver, past ICUU president and minister from Cape Town in South Africa, who will be telling us more about liberal religious groups.

*The Youth Programme of the General Assembly
of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches invites you to:*

The cool thing for teenagers in the South...

UNITEENS: Youth Group for 12-17 year olds



On the following Sundays:

5th October, 2 November
and 7th December at 5-7.30pm

At Unity Church, 279 Upper St, Islington, London N1

Time to make friends, be creative, enter into brilliant debates and have fun.

For more information contact John Harley
at jharley@unitarian.org.uk or 07985 900935