



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: August / September 2009

What's on this month:

Saturday 1st August, 10am
Walking Group:
Two Tree Island, Essex
Meeting at Fenchurch Street

Sunday 2nd August, 11.00am
"Walking the Talk"
Led by the Congregation

Sunday 2nd August, 12.30pm
Summer Pub Lunch Social

Tuesday 4th August, 7-9pm
Creativity Group:
'Personal Prayer Beads' led
by Patricia Walker-Hesson

Thursday 6th August, 1.00pm
World Congress of Faiths
Hiroshima Day Observance

Thursday 6th August, 2-5pm
'Freestyle Felt' Workshop

Thursday 6th August, 7-9pm
RE: 'Exploring Prayer' (4/6)

Sunday 9th August, 11am
"Spirit in Art"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9th August, 3.30-5pm
**'Songs and
Silence for the Soul'**

Thursday 13th August, 2-5pm
'Freestyle Felt' Workshop

Thursday 13th August, 7-9pm
RE: 'Exploring Prayer' (5/6)

Sunday 16th August, 11am
**"Gaia - Earth Goddess
or Avenging Angel?"**
Led by Howard Hague

Sunday 23rd August, 11am
"Looking to the Stars"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 27th August, 7-9pm
RE: 'Exploring Prayer' (6/6)

Sunday 30th August, 11am
"In a Garden"
Led by Rev. Joy Croft
and Rev. Sarah Tinker

More listings on back page...

A Message from our Minister

Surfin' Safaris...

It could be regarded as sad (in the post-modern sense of old fashioned and worthy of mockery) but I do find singing along to music in the car to be a remarkably uplifting activity. And one of my latest favourites is a very sad choice indeed – the Beach Boys' Greatest Hits. Before you mock though, consider the possibility of being transported from a London traffic jam to a sunny Californian beach, where your only concerns are the state of the waves. This one CD and its cheery harmonies can achieve this translocation effortlessly and save you from all the hassle of actually going away anywhere.



...and Holidaying at Home

You may have noticed that London is already full of tourists, so we are in good company if we stay here to enjoy the delights of an English summer and all the activities that our capital city has to offer. It's business as usual here at Essex Church, where our congregation activities continue, so there is plenty to join in with.

My only surfing experiences have been on body boards in Cornwall; quite a bracing environment one way or another. But the essentials are the same, whatever the beach's location. You need to be in the right place at the right time with the right equipment ... and then you wait for the wave. The right wave will come but it may not be on the day you are waiting for it. Some days it is just not worth bothering to get into your wetsuit. On other days you will wish you had come out to the beach hours earlier.

This is a two month edition of our Essex Church newsletter, covering both August and September, so you will be able to read of assorted new activities that are planned for the autumn. Perhaps one of these is like the wave you have been waiting for, just the right sort of activity to help you focus this autumn. Or perhaps you have other ideas of ways you would like to get more involved in the running of our community. Do get in touch if you have something to offer or suggest... or just say the word and I will let you borrow my Beach Boys CD. Happy summer.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* Report of Summer Celebration – "At Last... An Accessible Loo! A New Kitchen!" *
The 'Fabric of Diversity' Wall-Hanging Unveiled * Photos from our Lee Valley Walk
* "Gordon Returns!" * Report from Church Outing to the Ely Stained Glass Museum *
Spiritual Bookshelf: Richard Feynman chosen by Will Lyons * Autumn RE Courses
* Children's Group * "How I Came to Essex Church" by Geoffrey Olans * and more... *

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

We are here to share 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 warden by phone or email.



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Notting Hill Gate
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Essex Church Summer Pub Lunch Social

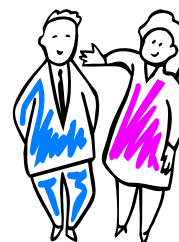
Sunday 2nd August, After the Service

Essex Church has been a busy place lately with more people coming along on Sundays, particularly younger folk! We thought it would be nice to have a trip to the pub for a lunch one Sunday (and perhaps hit a nearby park after, if the sun is beaming down that day!), for the younger folk of the congregation to have the chance to get to know each other a bit more and just to enjoy the afternoon!

Email social@kensington-unitarians.org.uk and let us know if you want to be put on the Pub Lunch e-list. You can always talk to either of us as well if you see us in church.

Angela Gasparetto and Louisa Bird

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

2 nd August:	Debra Hinton
9 th August:	Jo Ridgers
16 th August:	Susan Smith
23 rd August:	Christine Joshi
30 th August:	Natasha Drennan

6 th September:	Will Lyons
13 th September:	Geoffrey Olans
20 th September:	Christine Joshi
27 th September:	Angela Gasparetto

Coffee:

2 nd August:	Mark Tribe
9 th August:	Margaret Darling
16 th August:	John Marrow
23 rd August:	Jo Ridgers
30 th August:	Caroline Blair

6 th September:	Allan Bell
13 th September:	John Rooney
20 th September:	Julia Alden
27 th September:	Margaret Darling

Please speak to Christine Joshi in September if you are willing to help with stewarding or making coffee. Thanks!

Gathering the Waters

Service on Sunday 13th September



We will be having our traditional 'Gathering of the Waters' service in September to welcome everybody back as we re-gather after the summer holidays.

If you are travelling to far-flung places over the course of the summer please take a little container with you and bring back some water for this special ceremony. Even if you are staying at home this summer then please bring some water from your tap instead.



Walking Group: Two-Tree Island and Chesham Circle

Saturday 1st August – Two-Tree Island, Essex, meeting 10am at Fenchurch Street Station

Saturday 5th September – The Chilterns around Chesham, meeting 10am at Baker St Station

Two-Tree Island was reclaimed from the sea in the 18th century when a seawall was built around the saltmarsh. Essex Wildlife Trust now manages the island (a SSSI) as a nature reserve. The island itself consists of grassland, scrub, reedbed and lagoons and supports a wide variety of birds. We will walk from Leigh-on-Sea station, round the island, then along the seafront to Chalkwell station before returning to London. This route will be no more than 5 miles in length and the terrain is fairly flat.

The Chiltern walk ('**Tylers Hill, Ley Hill and the Chess**') is a 5 mile circular route to the east of Chesham in Buckinghamshire. It takes in a cluster of small villages in rolling countryside, passing through a large common, woodland, and a chalk stream.

Please let us know if you are planning to come along to either of these walks (by emailing walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

Forthcoming Walks:

Saturday 3rd October - Brogdale Farm, Kent **Saturday 7th November** - Epping Forest **Saturday 5th December** - Barnes

We are still looking for leaders for our autumn programme of walks ... please let us know if you might be willing to help out.

Report of July Walk – Lee Valley Country Park

Seven of us met at Liverpool Street station, bright and early, on the first Saturday in July. Six regulars from Essex Church were very pleased to welcome a new friend from Rosslyn Hill, Maggie Sinclair, who had found out about this walking group in the district newsletter. It took just twenty minutes for us to reach our destination, Cheshunt, and moments later we were in the Country Park and strolling along the canal towpath.



Several members of the group had not visited the Lee Valley before and were very pleasantly surprised at how unspoilt and peaceful it was.

We crossed the canal, then ambled along Hooksmarsh Ditch, admiring the many butterflies and dragonflies along the way. We stopped by Seventy Acre Lake for lunch (which caught the attention of some swans and geese) before carrying on to the Fishers Green area where we came across an ice cream van... which, as you can see, two of our number took advantage of. Further along the path there was a watchpoint, staffed by volunteer wardens, who had set up a telescope so that visitors could have a good look at the birds on the lake - of particular interest was a small breeding colony of terns on special rafts - and we all got to see close-up views of their young chicks. We stopped off at the small visitor centre for a drink (resisting the temptation to go on a tractor-drawn bus ride to visit the local milking sheds!) before heading back to the station.

Jane Blackall

Lee Valley Photos by Jane Blackall, Caroline Blair and Maggie Sinclair



Macmillan Coffee Morning

Friday 25th September 2009
11am-1pm at Essex Church



We have registered Essex Church as a venue taking part in 'The World's Biggest Coffee Morning' which is a fundraising event for Macmillan Cancer Relief.

The Macmillan website says: "Every day 822 people in the UK are told they have cancer. This is news that not only turns their world upside down but also affects their family and friends. Macmillan's ambition is to help every one of these people by providing them with the medical, emotional, practical and financial support they need. That's why we need your help more than ever. By simply getting together with friends and family over a cuppa, you will help us take a big step to reaching our ambition. Every penny you raise will fund more of our vital services and help to develop new ways to change lives. And for that, we think you should feel good."

We are looking for people to help organise the event. Please let our minister, Sarah Tinker, know if you are willing to help with the arrangements on the day.



October Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 13th September**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before this date.

Thank you!!!

New Essex Church Prayer Circle



We are hoping that a new prayer circle will develop out of the 'Exploring Prayer' course that has been running at Essex Church over the summer.

Details will not be finalised until the course finishes in late August but we have provisionally timetabled a slot from 6-7pm each Thursday downstairs in the library (from September onwards). Please listen out for further announcements about the prayer circle in our Sunday services... and hopefully there will be more definitive details in the next newsletter.

Events Organised by the World Congress of Faiths

Hiroshima Day Observance



Thursday 6th August, 1.00-1.45pm
Here at Essex Church, Kensington

This event, organised by the World Congress of Faiths, will be held at Essex Church in remembrance of the victims of the atomic attack on Hiroshima. Weather permitting, some of the participants will go to the Japanese Garden in Holland Park afterwards, to close this act of memorial. You are invited to bring origami paper cranes if you wish to. For more information email Richard Boeke: .boeke@virgin.net

'Celebrating Animals'

Golders Green Unitarian Church.
Sunday 6th September, 3.00pm

This September, there will once again be an interfaith celebration of animals held at Golders Green Unitarian Church. For more information email Feargus O'Connor: ggunirev@aol.com.

WCF website: www.worldfaiths.org

Creativity Engagement Group Personal Prayer Beads

Tuesday 4th August, 7.00-9.00pm



This evening we will make a set of prayer beads. It is a suggested structure on which you can hang your own developing prayer practice. It draws upon a number of religious traditions and seeks to put together a pattern of prayer that you can tailor to your own needs and understandings. This practice uses the image of a journey, one form of prayer moving into the next. Packs of beads will be provided for each person and the cost will be £4 per person.

Patricia Walker-Hesson

Mixed-Media Self-Portraits

Tuesday 1st September, 7.00-9.00pm



In September we will be having a go at making mixed-media self-portraits (inspired by a book of the same name).

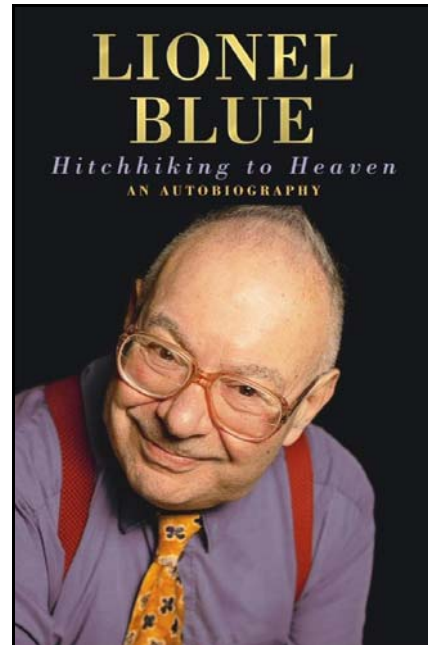
This activity will probably benefit from a bit of advance preparation – especially if you are not feeling confident about your drawing or painting ability – one starting point would be to take a photograph of yourself which we can enlarge on the photocopier (or even manipulate on the computer first) and print out at large scale for you to paint, collage, or write all over. Please speak to Jane ahead of time if you would like advice or assistance with this part of the proceedings. It would be good to sort this bit out beforehand so that we can spend the session playing!

Jane Blackall

As usual you are welcome to come along to the group even if you are not particularly interested in the activity on offer – bring along your own craftwork – or simply come along to relax and enjoy the company.

Reading Engagement Group “Hitchhiking to Heaven” by Rabbi Lionel Blue

Wednesday 16th September, 7.00-9.00pm



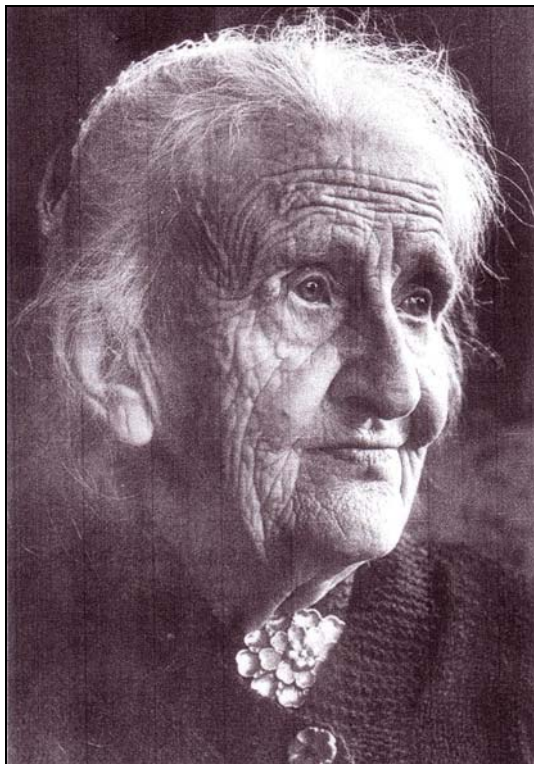
The reading engagement group's next conversation will be about “Hitchhiking to Heaven” by Rabbi Lionel Blue. This book was chosen by Jane Blackall and will be the focus of our next group on **Wednesday 16th September** (after the summer break – the book group will not be meeting in August).

Information from Amazon UK:

“Lionel Blue is one of those paradoxes: Britain's most famous Rabbi and a household name, his Jewish wit and quirky spirituality never fail to entertain. Yet he has lived a life on the fringes. A Rabbi who has remained true to his tradition, he has also found a home in Christianity. A man who has struggled with his sexuality, he has learnt slowly and painfully that spirituality and sexuality are inextricably entwined. Lionel Blue has never tried to escape the contradictions of a life lived honestly, and he has remained open to exploration and challenge. This all makes for an autobiography of immense richness.”

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. Regular members of the reading group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material. Please check the church website or pick up a flyer listing our forthcoming book choices.

From a Student Nurse...



This poem was submitted by John Hands who found it in an edition of 'The Spiritual Healer' from 2002. It was written by a young student nurse, Elizabeth Hogden, in response to an earlier poem which had been found in the locker of an elderly woman who had died in a geriatric hospital, after she died.

What do you see, you ask, what do you see?
Yes, we are thinking when looking at thee!
We may seem to be hard, when we hurry and fuss
But there's many of you, and too few of us.
We would like far more time to sit by you and talk,
To bath you and feed you, and help you to walk.
To hear of your life and the things you have done,
Your childhood, your husband, your daughter, your son.
But – time is against us, there's too much to do,
Patients too many, and nurses too few.
We grieve when we see you so sad and alone
With nobody near you, no friends of your own.
We feel all your pain, and know of your fear
That nobody cares now your end is near.
But nurses are people with feelings as well,
And when we're together, you'll often hear tell
Of the dearest old Gran, in the very end bed
And the lovely old Dad, and the things that he said.
We speak with compassion and love, and feel sad
When we think of your lives, and the joy that you've had.
When the time has arrived for you to depart,
You leave us behind with an ache in our heart.
When you sleep the long sleep, no more worry or care,
There are other old people, and we must be there.
So please understand if we hurry and fuss
There are many of you, and too few of us.

Elizabeth Hogden
Submitted by John Hands

Warden's Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...



August will be a very quiet month in the building as usual, because so many of our regular users take a summer break. However the Sufis, the Om chanters, Tse Qigung, Beit Klal, Seicho no Ie and the Eritrean Cultural group are still meeting.

September is busier and we have a new daytime booking. Dynamic Generations will be running pre-school and after-school dance-classes here on Fridays until the music exams start again in November. We may also have a new yoga class starting on Monday evenings, and possibly also a daytime post-natal class. Beit Klal, our resident synagogue will be celebrating the festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur on 18/19th and 27/28th.

Hopefully by the end of the month, the area under the entranceway will have been fenced off so it can be used as a buggy store by the Lloyd Williamson nursery. They are applying for a grant to help with the cost of this. Some other good news re the building is that our neighbours in Palace Gardens Mews have worked out a way to finish their extension without having to put scaffolding in our back garden.

Talking of the garden, I haven't had time to do much new planting out the front this summer, but the Crocosmia and Agapanthus are looking very lovely right now, and the trailing Nasturtiums in the bottom bed seem to be flourishing (though no flowers so far). Thanks to Michaela's efforts the back garden is also full of bloom. Let's hope the weather improves in August, so we can get out there and enjoy it – although the silver lining to the recent wet weather is that it's made watering much less of a problem!

Jenny Moy

I have found such joy in simple things;
A plain, clean room, a nut-brown loaf of bread
A cup of milk, a kettle as it sings,
The shelter of a roof above my head.

Grace Noll Crowell
Submitted by Will Lyons

Autumn District Quarterly Meeting

'Family Friendly Worship'



Saturday 24th October

Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead

The Autumn Quarterly Meeting, which brings together fellow Unitarians from across London and the South East, will be held at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, on Saturday 24th October.

Rev. John Harley, the General Assembly Youth Officer, will lead the worship, and Mel Prideaux of Wakefield Unitarians will give a presentation on Family Friendly Worship. Mel gave this presentation at this year's General Assembly Annual Meetings, and it was very enthusiastically received.

It would be good to gather a group from Essex Church to go along to this meeting. Watch out for more details in the next newsletter.

Kensington Unitarians' Children's Group



We recently started up a children's group here at Essex Church, led by Jennie Blair and Jordan McCrindle (pictured above), who are fully CRB checked and trained.

We're now in the process of contacting parents who've been here in the past and making a list of people who would be prepared to lead occasional sessions for children when the main leaders can't be with us.

There has been a thriving children's programme here before and with a bit of planning and effort we could make our church really welcoming to young families once again. So thanks to everyone who has already offered to help and do get in touch if you want to add your name to the list.

Sarah Tinker

A Date for Your Diary... this Autumn at Essex Church:

Congregational Potluck Lunch



Sunday 25th October, 12.30pm

Plans are already afoot for a special congregational potluck lunch on Sunday 25th October. Please put the date in your diary now and plan to be there...



In the photograph above, you can see Jennie adding the finishing touches to a T-shirt, which the children's group had decorated to send to the child (named Fortunate Qiniso Zeeman) we have sponsored in the SOS children's village in Swaziland. There will be lots more news about this project in the October newsletter as Jim Blair is due to travel to Mbabane over the summer and will be delivering the T-shirt in person and will be reporting back about it all on his return... in the meantime you can read more about Fortunate and the SOS Children's Village Association on the congregational noticeboard in the church foyer.

☸ **5th August - Raksha Bandhan - Hindu**

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

☾ **5th August - The Night of Forgiveness**

(Lailat-ul-Bara'h) - Muslim

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

✝ **6th August - The Transfiguration - Christian**

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

☸ **14th August - Janamashtami / Krishna Jayanti - Hindu**

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



✝ **16th August – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Christian**

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

☾ **22nd August – 20th September – Ramadan – Muslim**

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

☸ **23rd August - Ganesh**

Chaturthi - Hindu

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



✝ **September / October - Harvest Festival - Christian**

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

☾ **16th September - Lailat-ul-Qadr - Muslim**

The 'Night of Power' when Muslims commemorate the Prophet Muhammad receiving the first revelation of the Qur'an. Many Muslims will spend the night praying and studying the Qur'an at their local mosque. Lailat-ul-Qadr is usually celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan.

☸ **19th – 27th September - Navaratri**

/ Durga Puja / Dusserah - Hindu

This Hindu festival, known by different names, is one of the few celebrated across India. Navaratri means 'nine nights', the length of the festival - the final three days being the most important. In the north of India, particularly in Bengal, the goddess Durga is worshipped on the eighth day.

☆ **19th September - Rosh Hashanah**

(Jewish New Year's Day 5769)

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of ten days of repentance and self-examination during which God sits in judgement on every individual. The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue as a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac.

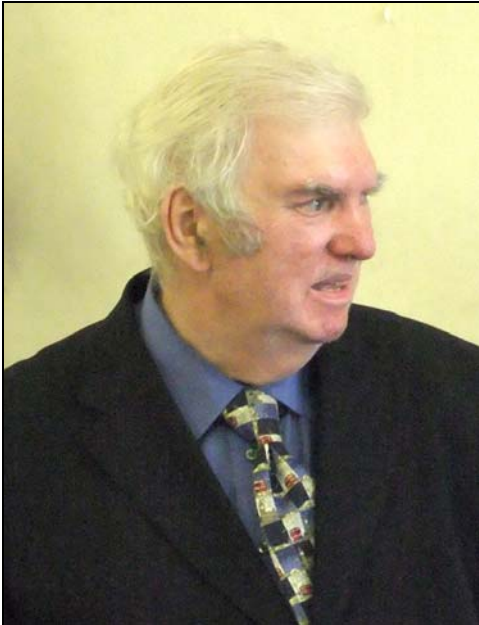
☾ **20th September- Eid-ul-Fitr - Muslim**

Eid-UI-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.

☆ **28th September - Yom Kippur**

(Day of Atonement) - Jewish

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



Gordon Returns!

It was a great delight for me to return to Essex Church on 5th July. I have told several people at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, that you all applauded when I lit a candle of joy for that Hospital having saved my life a month or two ago. Other complaints have been dealt with since. It was appreciated by everyone I told.

Gordon says: "Give us Strength to fight Myasthenia Gravis"

I'm suffering from MG - Myasthenia Gravis. It is a rare auto immune disease which is characterised by fluctuating, sometimes fatal, muscle weakness. The body's immune system, in the form of antibodies, attacks and damages the nerve signal reception areas, causing a breakdown in communication between nerve and muscle, which results in a loss of effectiveness of the muscle. Symptoms vary according to the amount of activity undertaken, the onset of an infection or stress of any kind. As a result diagnosis is extremely difficult. In my case the symptoms came on in May 2008 but I was treated as having had a mini-stroke!

It was while in St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, being treated for pneumonia that I was diagnosed as having MG. That's one of the reasons I have been in hospital for so long. In some cases a sufferer can be perfectly normal one moment and a few hours, or even minutes, later is droopy and listless. That's why it's sometimes called "the Rag Doll Illness". Activities taken for granted by most people become difficult or even impossible at times for Myasthenics. Simple things like lifting arms, laughing and, as in my case, eating food and speaking. I continue to use a gastrostomy feeding tube but hope to be able to eat and drink by mouth again eventually.

The Myasthenia Gravis Association is working throughout the country, offering support to Myasthenics and their families, increasing public and medical awareness and raising funds for research. Myasthenia Gravis can now nearly always be brought under such good control that most patients can lead a near normal life. This is the result of recent research, but there is still no cure. Indications from the MGA supported Research Centre in Oxford are that if the momentum of the research is kept up a break through will come in the not too distant future. To find out how to give Myasthenics strength and the Myasthenia Gravis Association strength to fight Myasthenia Gravis please call the MGA on 01332 290219, their Freephone Helpline in the UK is 0800 919 922, or visit www.mga-charity.org and please pray and light candles for all MG sufferers.

Once again, thank you for your prayers and candles while I have been in hospital and your warm welcome when I was able to come again in July - entering during the hymn "Enter, Rejoice and Come In". Kindest regards and best wishes,

Gordon Deaville



Gordon Deaville, Will Lyons and David Darling during Essex Church coffee hour, Sunday 5th July.



"Although I was raised an atheist, I eventually came to believe that that word ['God'] was a lovely picture, not to be taken literally but to be enjoyed as a personification for an absolutely real and very precious spirit of love and growth in our world. And I, too, have had experiences of that spirit, which I can explain in no other way that confirm the existence of this elusive reality and which I cherish to the depth of my being. Maybe you have not had such experiences. Or maybe you have, but you call them by another name. In this church that's just fine. This church is dedicated to the proposition that each person must follow their own experience and name it and follow it's promptings with all the integrity they can muster. The price of admission to this church is a respectful, hopefully curious, tolerance of what others believe and the variety of ways they celebrate what they believe. So when it comes to the 'Guy in the Sky', we hold many opinions; we remain aware that the universe and its deep doings are a mystery we can never completely fathom."

UU Minister Rev. Christine Robinson

Essex Church Summer Celebration: At last... An Accessible Loo! And a New Kitchen!!!

On Sunday 28th June we had a summer celebration to mark the completion of our building works and the unveiling of our new wall-hanging. Here, members of our community reflect on the events of the day, and the achievements we were celebrating.



Laudate Laudate Lavatorium!

Hail lovely loos, you're here at last!
Our need for you is truly vast;
As you were we couldn't get in –
In fact we could hardly step in.

But with locks on doors which really work
We now will hardly need to shirk
To carry out our natural duties
Whilst gazing at the garden's beauties.

In spite of all your builders did
To seal you off and keep you hid,
Let's acclaim at last your wide access
Which for years to come witness our success!

**'John Alfred Lord Tennyson'
(...as told to John Hands)**

"Since the first time I came to Essex Church was the day of the first service in the new church I have had the past thirty years or so to watch both the kitchen and toilets deteriorate. And although I didn't have to oversee the building work or even choose the colours, I did have some say in agreeing to all this work being done and in helping to raise funds. So by the time we came to celebrate the achievement of this great task, I was delighted to see the finished work. I especially love the colour of the kitchen – so restful. And to finally have a new floor is also very special. Since I have aged quite a bit over the past thirty years I am also very thrilled with the toilet for disabled people. It's only when you are less able that you can appreciate that aspect of a toilet!!!

One thing I would like to add is a word about the atmosphere the Sunday morning of the celebration. There was a general feeling of excitement and joy from the very beginning and it didn't wane until the last of the diners and clearer-uppers left. Well done everyone!"

Patricia Walker-Hesson



"The management committee and trustees were delighted with the end result of the work on the new toilets and the refurbished kitchen, even though it has taken rather longer than we all hoped. We are very grateful to Jenny for all her work in sourcing the kitchen units etc. and her contact with the builders, and to Sarah for keeping a close eye on the whole project. We are also grateful to the Hackney Trust and the Stamford Street Trust (local Unitarian trusts in London) for their generous grants towards the building work."

Howard Hague

‘The Fabric of Diversity’ Wall-Hanging – Unveiled



Our ‘Fabric of Diversity’ wall-hanging was also unveiled at the summer celebration on Sunday 28th June. This was the fruit of a fifteen-session community arts project which ran from October 2008 to March 2009. Participants were given some basic instructions in feltmaking and then let loose with a big bag of wool... and each person was invited to make three squares: one representing themselves, one representing their connection to the local community, and one representing their connection to the wider world or cosmos. The squares were then gathered together and assembled into this wall-hanging. I am absolutely thrilled with the finished result! We also produced a small colour booklet in which each of the contributing artists wrote about the meaning of their squares. We have a limited number of copies of this booklet which can be purchased from the church for £2.50 (plus P&P) each or alternatively you can view it on the Kensington Unitarians website at www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/publications.html.

Jane Blackall

“I am proud to work with such a creative congregation and very grateful that Jane leads these community arts projects for us. It is delightful to see people’s confidence grow in a safe environment.”

Sarah Tinker

“The unveiling of the wall hanging was done in an unassuming and beautiful way – as each person walked into the tea room before or after the service, there it hung – its sheer size first caught your eye, but then the colours and different designs... one just needed to take time to gaze at it to take it all in. The church was full that week, with many people staying on for our special feast – so the room filled with chatting, sipping, eating all with the backdrop of this beautiful piece of work. At the table that I was sitting at we looked through the booklet that was made up to accompany the work – telling a little bit about the individual pieces (and their artists) that make up the piece, and then pointing at Jane to give credit to the woman who led this special project (amazing job, Jane!). It was a fantastic Sunday celebration of our community – food, friends, accessible toilets, and this beautiful piece of work that hung above it all, both framing and representing our coming together that morning.”

Angela Gasparetto

“In the course of a sometimes insanely busy life, I somehow always managed to carve out three hours a week (plus travelling) to do the community felt-making at the Church. There was something hypnotic about the quiet, slow process of making felt that acted as a much needed breathing space; there is also an element of the unpredictable that brought it alive. Every time I started a new piece of felt was a step into the unknown, never really knowing what the finished product would look like. Occasionally this meant that what I produced was relegated to the bottom of my bag in case I later invent a new use for ill-judged woollen messes; but more often there was a moment of pleased surprise, almost as if I had merely started the process off and the felt square had somehow gone on to invent itself.”

Caroline Blair



Autumn RE Course at Essex Church

'Building Your Own Theology'



Thursdays 1st October to 26th November
(excluding 29th October) from 7.15-9.00pm

Facilitated by Sarah Tinker and Howard Hague

One of the best known Unitarian religious education courses for adults is affectionately known as BYOT – Building Your Own Theology. It was designed by its author Richard S Gilbert to help individuals understand, develop and articulate their values in a supportive group setting.

Its central idea, that as religious liberals we must still work to develop our own personal beliefs and values, is as valid today as it was when the course was first published back in 1978, and with course materials that have been updated and 'anglicized', BYOT continues to provide a strong framework for personal exploration. It does not provide answers but it does ask important questions of us – how do we make ethical choices, what gives our life meaning, what do I really think about human nature, what is Ultimate Reality for me?

As places are limited you will need to book a place on this course and commit yourself to regular attendance – we hope participants will be able to make at least 5 of the 8 sessions.

Book your place now by talking to our minister.



"We need myths that will help us to identify with all our fellow-beings, not simply with those who belong to our ethnic, national or ideological tribe. We need myths that help us to realise the importance of compassion, which is not always regarded as sufficiently productive in our pragmatic, rational world. We need myths that help us to create a spiritual attitude, to see beyond our immediate requirements, and enable us to experience a transcendent value that challenges our solipsistic selfishness. We need myths that help us to venerate earth as sacred once again instead of eerily using it as a 'resource.' This is crucial, because unless there is some kind of spiritual revolution that is able to keep abreast of our technological genius, we will not save our planet..."

Karen Armstrong
Submitted by John Hands

'Putting Things in Context'



An American environmentalist, Donatella Meadows, back in 1990 coined the idea of the 'global village'.

What Meadows did was to imagine that the whole world was a village in which there were just 100 inhabitants, and then, just by looking at the statistics, reduce them to fractions of that simple 100. So, in our world with 100 villagers, 57 of those villagers will be Asians, just 21 will be Europeans, 14 will be in the Western Hemisphere - that is essentially America, North and South, and there will be just 8 Africans. 70 of the villagers are non-white and just 30 are white. Only 6 of the villagers possess 60% of the entire wealth of the village, and all those 6 are from the USA. 30 of the villagers live in sub-standard houses. Only 30 can read. Half of them are malnourished. One of them owns a computer and only one of them had a college education.

It makes you think, doesn't it!

Submitted by Will Lyons

'PULSE' eBulletin of District Events

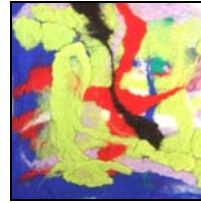


The LDPA (our Unitarian district association) has recently launched a new e-mail Bulletin. This is a monthly publication, available only by email, which contains news, information and articles relevant to Unitarians in the South East.

If you would like to receive this monthly update, simply send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to pulse.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk.

'Freestyle Felt'

Community Arts Workshops at Essex Church
Thursdays until 13th August, 2-5.00pm



A series of textile art workshops started at Essex Church on the 9th July and will continue until 13th August 2009. All are welcome – no prior knowledge or experience is required and you do not have to come to all the workshops – there will be a chance to get instruction in feltmaking at each session.

These workshops will provide an opportunity for beginners and more experienced feltmakers alike to experiment with the craft at their own pace. Participants will be able to make small felt panels, as artworks in their own right, or for use in greetings cards. More adventurous participants may wish to work towards making 3D items such as a felt hat, bag, jewellery, or even a pair of slippers.

There will be no charge to attend the sessions; however, donations to help cover the cost of materials are appreciated, and we suggest £3 / 6 / 9 per session according to your income. Please email the facilitator, Jane Blackall, on arts@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to reserve a place.

Planning for Future Community Arts Projects

We are currently considering our next move in the field of community arts. Unfortunately, our recent bid for lottery funding was unsuccessful (we feel our proposal was sound but the fund was hugely oversubscribed), so we will have to look elsewhere for the money to offer future activities along the lines of our 'Fabric of Diversity' wall-hanging project.

We were very enthusiastic about our proposal for a year-long project where participants would work in greater depth to represent stories from their own lives using textile art. We are very grateful to have received some generous contributions from members of the congregation which we will put towards the next project. We expect to make further bids for external funding in the autumn. Watch out for more announcements about our plans in the next newsletter...

Jane Blackall



'Sharing the Spiritual Journey through Diverse Group Activities'

24-Hour Engagement Groups Training:
16th – 17th October 2009

For Facilitators, Would-be Facilitators,
and Engagement Group Participants

Luther King House, Rusholme, Manchester, M14 5JP

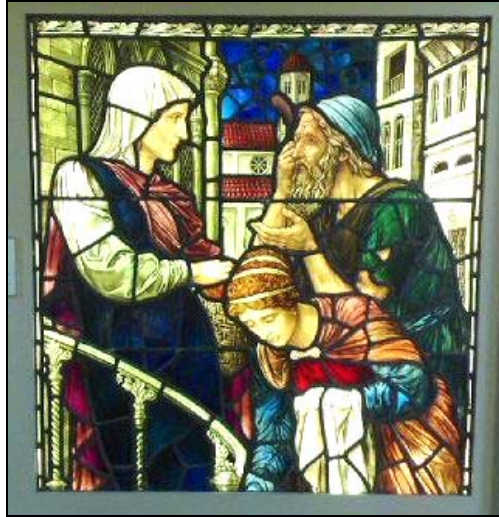
This 24-hour gathering is intended to bring together facilitators of small groups from across the country, to make connections, share experiences, and build confidence. Through practical workshop sessions and experiential activities we will consider some simple principles that everyone can learn to make a success of small group ministry. Join us to explore the wonders of small groups in which our spiritual potential can unfold.

Speak to Jane Blackall for more information.

Cost: £25 per person (cost is subsidised by the ETC)
Cost includes accommodation, meals, and conference fee.

Website: www.unitarianengagementgroups.org.uk

Ely Stained Glass Museum Visit – Saturday 18th July



Nine of us went on the church visit to the Stained Glass Museum in Ely Cathedral in July. It's a great place to visit but especially interesting for members of Essex Church because it was to this museum that the main stained glass window from the old Essex Church, demolished back in 1976, was donated. The window had been designed by the famous Henry Holiday, who had a long and highly regarded career as a designer and maker of stained glass. Although not a Unitarian, Holiday was a liberal and indeed radical thinker, so it is no wonder that his work appears in many Unitarian buildings from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. He is also famous for supporting causes such as women's suffrage and the provision of crèches for children of working women, as well as being editor of the *Journal of Healthy and Artistic Dress Union*, which helped to change popular attitudes towards more comfy clothes for women. Alleluia.

We were given a special tour of the museum by its curator Susan Matthews, MBE, who explained with great clarity the development of methods of stained glass production from medieval times. Only two pieces of the Essex Church window, which features aspects of Christ's ministry, are on permanent display so it was an extra treat to be shown some other pieces that are kept in store. When these pieces were placed on the light box we could see some interesting features of Holliday's work, such as the thick blue glass that he made himself in the workshop he established in Hampstead, his delicate glass painting and the use he made of classical buildings and motifs in the background and borders of much of his work.

Visiting museums is remarkably tiring so it was with some relief that we took a break for lunch and then some of us went back for more stained glass perusing whilst others toured the cathedral, enjoyed the peaceful grounds or helped to support the cathedral's shop.

Sarah Tinker

Photos from Juliet Edwards and Sarah Tinker

"It was a lovely day out. It was the first time I'd been on that train line and it travels through such beautiful countryside. So good to see the sun sitting amidst fluffy white clouds with blue skies beyond. As a stained glass artist myself I found the work we saw really inspiring and I have bought a book to find out more about their techniques."

Doris Campbell

"Because the Stained Glass Museum is a gallery, we were able to look at all the cathedral windows from high up. I was also arrested by a poem I found comparing the spiritual life to a train journey, with gloomy tunnels on the way to our heavenly destination!"

Juliet Edwards

"I too have worked with stained glass, when I was in Canada. Now I've learnt that they do classes at the museum in Ely, I may go back to join one of those. I bought a beautifully illustrated book about the vocabulary of architectural features as I still have much to learn about English medieval architecture. Buildings that are thousands of years old are something special to any of us who come from North America."

Natasha Drennan

"I was particularly pleased to know that the museum had some pieces designed by Evie Hone, a well known stained glass artist from Dublin. Sarah and I also managed to get to the talk the previous evening at St Ethelburga's in London about Henry Holliday's work – a most impressive lecture. We learnt so much in the museum too. For example, when next you are called upon to move a glass window, on no account carry it as if it were bringing in the afternoon tea. No. Hold it vertically while the onlookers hold their breath in fear that you'll drop it."

Stephanie Saville

Visit to Ely Stained Glass Museum (continued)



"I was very impressed by the acknowledgement given to Essex Church both in the gallery itself and in the printed museum guide. We were staggered by how busy Kings Cross Station and the trains were on a Saturday. Where is everyone going?!"

Howard Hague

"I liked seeing 'behind the scenes' at the museum where a workshop in stained glass design was also going on. I'd love to attend one."

Gill Hague

"Cathedrals were built to impress, and they do. I really enjoyed the tour of Ely Cathedral. The size of it is striking even now. It was also worth thinking of the place in its historical context. Ely was NOT big place when the Cathedral was first built. It must have dominated in ways that are almost unimaginable. It is worth remembering the less wonderful aspects. When Ely Cathedral was built it was partly designed to impress the Saxon people of the power of the Conquerors. Then later the really beautiful statues in the Lady Chapel had been wrecked, possibly on orders of a religious leader. I think it is probably worth giving the place much more time, especially all the carvings. Oh and it was really good to have gone to the Stained glass museum first, it was a powerful example of just how much skill and work went into so many aspects of the human miracle that is Ely Cathedral."

Derek Jackson



How I Came to Essex Church



Once upon a time, in a land far away, there was a spirited seed who refused to settle just anywhere. Whether by wind, water or another carrier, he was determined to travel to the four corners if necessary to find a place where he could belong.

Oddly, the more places he alighted on, the more he found wanting. It was not that he did not encounter lovely locales with unique things to offer. It was just that his list of requirements only grew longer when he did.

And of course, the farther he wandered from home, the stranger everything seemed. He had mixed feelings about the unfamiliar. On the one hand, he was delighted by the stimulation, by all the things he could learn. On the other, he felt like an outsider, like someone who didn't really fit in.

One day, battered by a storm, the seed washed up on a green island. Eventually, dripping and bedraggled, he came upon a community which gave him shelter. The community went by the name of Essex, and right from the start he found it warm and much to his liking.

After a few days of gathering his strength and spirits, the seed was in a better position to appreciate the full extent of his good luck. He was struck that Essex Church *combined* so many of the qualities he admired in the *many* places he had visited. That it was *both* different and familiar. And that, *fundamentally*, it was a community of folk just like him. All of which made his heart light.

When the storm finally broke, there were many who thought that the seed would leave. But instead he began to lay roots and sprout shoots. What they didn't realize is that the seed had finally found what he had been looking for all along – a fertile place where he could belong, a rainy place he could call home.

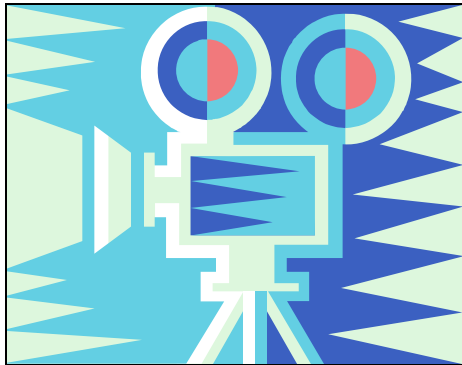
And, what of the sun? you ask. The seed had travelled enough to know that no place was perfect.

Geoffrey Olans

A new series here at Essex Church in the autumn:

'Spirit on Screen'

Thursdays in September, 7.15-9.00pm



This new series of 'Spirit on Screen' evenings could become a regular event here at Essex Church. Come and join us as we try out our new data projector and see if we can make ourselves comfy down in the library. Bring your own popcorn and floor cushions if you like. And have a think what films you might like to show people. For the autumn we have concentrated on documentary films which are only an hour long but perhaps on a winter's Sunday afternoon we could perhaps show some of our favourite movies. Would anyone like to watch 'Kind Hearts and Coronets', for example: – a fine film, starring Alec Guinness in almost every part, which asks deep questions of ethics, family loyalty and identity.

Sarah Tinker

3rd September – 'The Lost World of Tibet'

This is a wonderful documentary about Tibet's recent history, with newly discovered BBC archive footage of life in Tibet in the 1930s, showing the Dalai Lama as a young child. It gives considerable insight into the medieval society that Tibet was at that time and the radical changes that have happened both within Tibet and beyond as a result of the Chinese invasion. Unmissable.

10th September – 'Baraka'

'Baraka' is a transcendent global tour that explores the sights and sounds of the human condition like nothing you've ever seen or felt before. These are the wonders of a world without words, viewed through man and nature's own prisms of symmetry, savagery, chaos and harmony.

17th September – 'The Atheist Tapes'

Jonathan Miller interviews philosopher Colin McGinn. This promises to lead into a lively debate about our own religious beliefs, or lack of them.

24th September – 'Around the World in Eighty Faiths'

In this BBC series, screened on TV earlier this year, Anglican vicar Peter Owen-Jones travelled the world on a whistlestop tour meeting people from a diverse spectrum of faith traditions. We will be watching episode four – the Middle East – where Peter meets Jews and Christians in Jerusalem, Sunni and Sufi Muslims in Syria, and visits Alevi, Yazidi, Samaritan and Baha'i communities elsewhere in the region.

Universal Spiritual Gatherings

Friday evenings 6.35 for 6.45 to 8.15pm



14th August – 'Female Face of the Divine'

11th September – 'Healing the World'

Run by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary these monthly Spiritual Gatherings are worship with a difference and this year feature guests from particular faiths. Hosted here at Essex Church, it is lovely to see our beautiful worship space put to such good use, with chanting, silence, music, prayer and inspiration.



Deborah Moran has drawn our attention to this petition which is being circulated by the Soil Association:

Over the last two years in the UK, beekeepers have reported a one in three loss of bee colonies. Neonicotinoid pesticides have been shown to kill honeybees and the Soil Association believes that these pesticides should be banned today. We're calling on the Government to protect our honeybees and ban neonicotinoid pesticides. To lend your voice to our campaign, please fill in the online form, at this address:

<http://apps.soilassociation.org/Bees/Register.aspx>

The petition says: "We, the undersigned support the Soil Association in calling on Hilary Benn, the UK's Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to ban neonicotinoid pesticides with immediate effect. These pesticides have been shown to kill honeybees and are thought to be a contributory factor in the recent dramatic increase in honeybee deaths."

Deborah Moran

Songs and Silence for the Soul

Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church



**Sundays 9th August, 13th September,
11th October, 8th November
from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

Suggested Donation: £2.00

We've been running this monthly Songs and Silence group here at Essex Church for over two years now and one of its delightful features is how the group varies from month to month, depending on who comes along.

We always meet on the second Sunday of each month from 3.30 to 5pm. We sing a wide range of chants from the world's faith traditions and sit together in candlelit silence. It's a gentle and healing, group-led space in which everyone is welcome to join. No particular singing skills are needed.

Phone Sarah via the church office on 0207 221 6514 or email sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk if you would like more information.

'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven'

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread upon my dreams.

**W.B. Yeats
Submitted by Will Lyons**

'Commitment, My Dear, Commitment'

Sarah Tinker's MA Dissertation Now Online



A Study of Believing and Belonging in a Unitarian Congregation

Our minister's MA dissertation is now online for your perusal and can be downloaded in full from the church website here:

www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/publications.html

It is a fascinating study of our own congregation, written last summer, and is based in part on detailed questionnaire responses from 45 members of the congregation.



A Fitness Fusion of 9 Movement Forms Sessions led by Sonya Leite

**Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3.00pm
(13th September, 11th October, 8th November)
PLEASE NOTE – SUMMER BREAK IN AUGUST**

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

Cost £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)
Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

Brockett Park



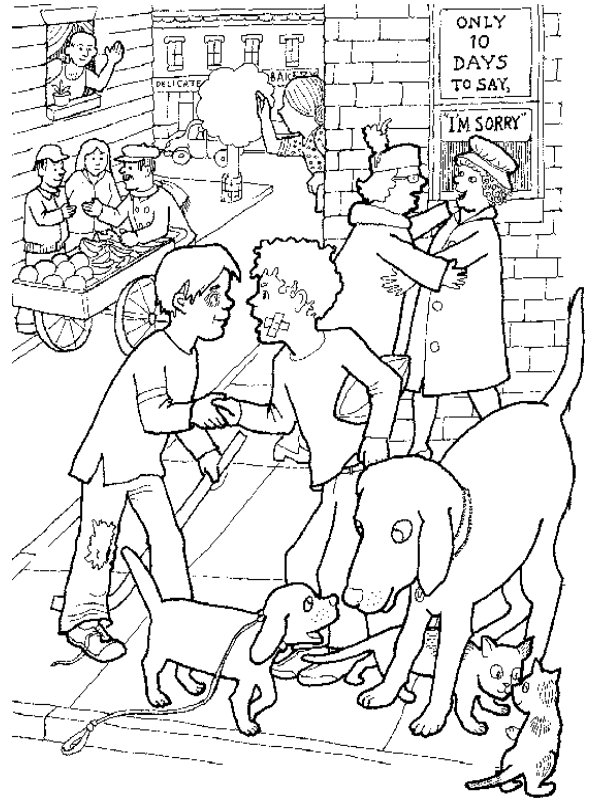
Lord

This is wonderful: a light wind blows
 The whiskered shocks of still unripened corn;
 The waving boughs of limber ash close by
 Nod as if by custom charged to ward
 Intruders off; blackbirds thread the sighing conifers
 With still-insistent cries: busily the hidden chiff-chaff
 Strikes its tiny anvil: and just above the field's serrated edge
 Dun and mellow cottage roofs appear immensely snug:
 Whilst high above white-cotton clouds drift past
 In indolent repose.

Lord, so much

So much is June: and as sure a glimpse of your perfection
 As this world can afford. Felt, though unseen
 All creatures doze snugly in
 Their hidden lairs. True in the distance
 Dogs are heard, but do not offer chase. This
 Held for a while, like water in a thirsty walker's hands
 In raptured contemplation gives
 Sense and meaning to the quality of heaven.

**John Hands
 Welwyn, Herts**



"During the Days of Awe in Judaism, individuals reflect on their own actions, their sins if you will, that they have committed in the past year. None of us are perfect, we all make mistakes, and the Days of Awe are an opportunity to be real about that. There is something very authentic about acknowledging human error. The most sacred holidays of Judaism are devoted to acknowledging that all of the stuff we talk about during the year doesn't work out the way we hoped it would. It is a refreshingly honest statement.

Morality is what you do when no one else is looking. But in Judaism, as in many other monotheistic religions, God is always looking. There is the belief that even if you think you got away with something, you are wrong. God knows about it, and knows you better than you think. This can be a very anxious, guilt-producing belief. So the Days of Awe between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are an opportunity to say to God, as well as to yourself, 'I am sorry.' Remember that fudged number on the tax return? The white lie to my spouse?... I am sorry.

Repentance is good for the soul. In many ways this has a very therapeutic effect. In psychoanalysis naming the subconscious and bringing it into the conscious mind is the way one is able to heal. In confession or during the Days of Awe, one remembers that which might have been forgotten, and names it. By doing so we are released of those negative feelings of guilt and anxiety and can recommit ourselves to doing better."

UU Minister Rev. Dr. Joshua Snyder
Rosh Hashanah is on 19th September 2009

Kent Garden Party

Saturday 8th August 2009 from 3.00pm



From the London District Unitarian Newsletter... For many years, David and Maureen Embry (of Dover Unitarians) have hosted a Garden Party at their beautiful home in Kent. David is a noted artist, and Maureen breeds exotic rabbits, and there is much to see and do through the afternoon.

They invite fellow Unitarians from the South East to join them again this year from 3.00 pm onwards on Saturday 8th August. Their home is Lyndhurst Farm, High Halden, Ashford, Kent, TN26 3JP. Telephone 01233 850384 to let David and Maureen know if you are planning to attend.

The Spiritual Bookshelf

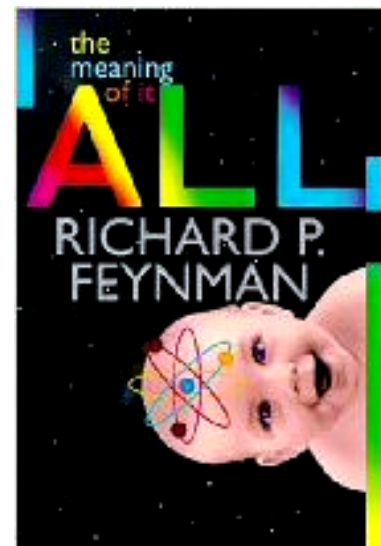
#7: 'The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen Scientist' by Richard Feynman

This is the seventh of a series of articles in the newsletter where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them. Look out for book recommendations throughout the rest of 2009.

The term spiritual used as a noun has, according to the OED, two usages:-

- 1) relating to or affecting the human spirit.
- 2) relating to religion or religious belief.

As a humanist, I regard the second definition as a non sequitur and so far as I am moved by some people and their writing and ideas, I would say that as far as the outlook and ideas of the late Richard Feynman are concerned, these evoke in me a 'spiritual' response.



Brooklyn born Richard Phillips Feynman (1918-1988) was no writer but he was a theoretical physicist, Nobel Laureate and a superb communicator. His published material consists in transcripts (both written and audio) of his many lectures at the California Institute of Technology (where he achieved almost cult status - the lectures being attended by fellow professors and students alike). Most of these lectures are highly technical but three lectures Feynman gave at the University of Washington in 1963 were compiled into a small book ('The Meaning of It All') expressing his views on topics as wide-ranging as religion, politics, morality, and social issues of the day. Their titles are: "The Uncertainty of Science", "The Uncertainty of Values" and "This Unscientific Age". 'The Uncertainty of Science', deals with the nature of the scientific method. Feynman discusses how we should apply this 'uncertainty principle' to more aspects of life if we are to find better ways to live and improve life. To understand the world, he tells us, wonderment must be accompanied by a sense of doubt. "All scientific knowledge is uncertain," he says.

In 'The Uncertainty of Values' he explores the religious history of morality and how people can accept the good aspects of religious values while rejecting the mythic elements of traditional religions. In fact, he maintains, people can have better values by not forcing their actions into any particular religious format. In these lectures he attempts to rationalise humanity's place and context in the universe. He calls humans 'atoms with minds' and this scientific viewpoint places humanity in context as inhabitants (unique as far as we know) of a tiny speck of cosmic dust in a solar system on the outer fringes of a galaxy which contains billions of stars which is itself only one of billions of such galaxies. As a humanist who has rejected the concept of a creator god, I find the human situation intriguing, mysterious, wonderful and awesome.

As Richard Dawkins has noted, the world and universe look precisely as if they reflect not a caring designer, but "blind, pitiless, indifference." Think of volcanoes, tsunami, earthquakes, plague and supernovae to give a few examples. Scientists such as Feynman and his forebears and successors seek to understand the causes of so-called 'natural disasters', and to help humanity help itself - although Feynman almost despaired of 'progress' (he was a committee member investigating the 'Challenger' shuttle rocket disaster and was extremely critical of the management of the project

The essence of this small book is encapsulated in this quotation:-

'This freedom to doubt is an important matter in the sciences and, I believe, in other fields. It was born of a struggle. It was a struggle to be permitted to doubt, to be unsure..... I feel a responsibility to proclaim the value of this freedom and to teach that doubt is not to be feared, but that it is to be welcomed as the possibility of a new potential for human beings. If you know that you are not sure, you have a chance to improve the situation. I want to demand this freedom for future generations.'

Will Lyons



"It is in our human nature to seek truth, both through our ability to reason and do science, and through our intuitive spiritual knowing. Those two sources will continue to feed the souls of humans for as long as we exist. They do not compete, but rather are interdependent. They only clash when religion becomes rigid and dogmatic, or when science forgets humility for what it does not know. As our Transcendentalists believed, we ought to be able to maintain our rational powers while also freely accepting and sharing our experiences of those transcendent moments of reverence, mysticism and unity. May we continue to learn the physics about the world we live in, about the harmonics and quantum communication; and may each new piece of knowledge increase our reverence for life."

UU Minister Rev. Peg Boyle Morgan

What's on next month:

...continued from front page

Tues 1st September, 7-9pm
Creativity Group:
'Mixed Media Self-Portraits'
led by Jane Blackall

Wed 2nd September, 7-9pm
Committee Meeting

Thurs 3rd September, 7-9pm
RE: 'Spirit on Screen' (1/4)
'The Lost World of Tibet'

Sat 5th September, 10am
Walk: Chilterns - Chesham
Meeting at Baker Street Stn

Sunday 6th September, 11am
Service led by Dan Costley

Thursday 10th Sept, 7-9pm
RE: 'Spirit on Screen' (2/4)
Nonverbal film - 'Baraka'

Sunday 13th Sept, 11am
"Gathering the Waters"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th Sept, 2-3pm
Nia Dance
Led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 13th Sept, 3.30-5pm
'Songs and Silence for the Soul'

Wednesday 16th Sept, 7-9pm
Book Group: "Hitchhiking to Heaven" - Rabbi Lionel Blue

Thursday 17th Sept, 7-9pm
RE: 'Spirit on Screen' (3/4)
'The Atheist Tapes'

Sunday 20th Sept, 11am
"Harvest Thanks"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 24th Sept, 7-9pm
RE: 'Spirit on Screen' (4/4)
'Around the World in 80 Faiths - Middle East'

Friday 25th September, 11am
Macmillan Coffee Morning

Sunday 27th Sept, 11am
"Spirit on Screen"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Adult RE starts 1st October:
'Building Your Own Theology'
led by Rev Sarah Tinker
and Howard Hague

Sunday Services at Essex Church

2nd August – "Walking the Talk"

Service led by Members of the Congregation

Jane Blackall, Angela Gasparetto and other members of the congregation will lead the first service in August on the theme of "Walking the Talk": living our liberal religious values and conducting ourselves in a way that creates less harm and does more good in the world.

9th August – "Spirit in Art" – **Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

From earliest pre-history human artistic expression has often seemed to contain something of the spirit. How have people used art to express their yearnings, their beliefs, their questions, hopes and fears and how has art been used for good and ill in the service of religion? If you would like to speak in this service about a piece of art that has particular meaning for you do get in touch with our minister.

16th August – "Gaia - Earth Goddess or Avenging Angel?"
– **Service led by Howard Hague**

James Lovelock, who is 90 this year, developed his Gaia hypothesis in the late 1960s. This proposes that the earth, including its living and nonliving matter, functions as a single self-regulating system. Although originally dismissed as just the theory of a maverick scientist, recent developments including a recognition of major climate change have caused people to look at it more favourably. In today's service we will be looking at some of these ideas. Can the earth - and humanity - survive?

23rd August – "Looking to the Stars" – **Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

As we celebrate this year's anniversaries of the first landing on the moon and Galileo's development of the telescope, in this service we will be exploring the science of astronomy and its relationship with human spirituality. With sacred and healing sounds led by Sean Shokat and Lila Cohen, encouraging us to appreciate our part in the universal spirit.

30th August – "In a Garden"

Service led by Rev. Joy Croft and Rev. Sarah Tinker

In late summer, as herbaceous borders continue to bloom and delight us with their scent and colour, we will consider the metaphor of the garden and its appearance in religious writings from around the world.



6th September – **Service led by Dan Costley**

Student minister Dan Costley, from the Horsham congregation, will be visiting in September.

13th September – "Gathering the Waters" **Service**

Our yearly ritual in which we ask people to bring a little bit of water to add to a bowl that represents our community. Perhaps you will visit a holy well this summer, or swim in the sea or simply bring us water from your home or garden. As we celebrate the start of our Essex Church community's autumn season we also recognise how precious water is to all life.

20th September – "Harvest Thanks" – **Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Another autumn ritual harks back to ancient times, when farming communities celebrated the safe gathering in of their harvest. Join us for our own 21st century harvest celebration in which you are invited to bring something that represents a harvest in your own life - some personal achievement, something for which you are grateful, a symbol of autumn perhaps?

27th September – "Spirit on Screen" – **Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker**

Our new evening group showing interesting films and discussing them afterwards will just have finished, with plans afoot for similar evenings in the future. In this service we will be considering some of the themes explored by the group and there will be chance for people to speak about their favourite spiritual moments on film. Let our minister know if you would like to take part in this service.