



Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: June 2010

What's On in June:

Saturday 5th June, 10am
Walking Group: Richmond
Meeting at Richmond Station

Sunday 6th June, 11am
"The Spiritual in Western Art"
Led by Heidi Ferid

Sunday 6th June, 12.30pm
Youngsters' Social

Tuesday 8th June, 7.00-9.00pm
Committee Meeting

Thursday 10th June, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'New U' (1/3)

Sunday 13th June, 11am
"Refugee Week"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13th June, 2-3.00pm
Nia Dance: Holistic Movement

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

Tuesday 15th June, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group:
'Mixed Media Self-Portraits'

Thursday 17th June, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'New U' (2/3)

Sunday 20th June, 11am
"The Gift of Grace"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20th June, 12.30-1.15pm
'Finding Your Voice' Workshop
Led by Margaret Marshall

Tuesday 22nd June, 7-9.00pm
Reading Group:
'Island' by Aldous Huxley

Thursday 24th June, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: 'New U' (3/3)

Sunday 27th June, 11am
"This I Believe"
Led by Rev Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27th June, 12.00pm
Congregational Photographs

Sunday 27th June, 12.30pm
Gardening Sunday

Sunday 27th June, 1.00pm
Social Action Group

A Message from our Minister

Living with Uncertainty

Ey-ya-fu-at-luh-yer-kootl-a. This is apparently the definitive phonetic rendition of the name of the Icelandic volcano that is causing periodic mayhem for air travellers. Various congregation members have found themselves stuck on one side of the Atlantic or another, or in European airports, with no clear information about when their flight might be leaving, if at all. To be at the mercy of an unpredictable cloud of volcanic ash and variable wind currents is an unusual experience for many of us. We expect to be in control and it is only when something goes wrong, be it a relationship break down or a health problem or a seismic shift of the earth's crust - that we get a glimpse of an altogether different reality. And that is the reality that most of us understandably prefer not to face - the reality that tells us we inhabit fragile and temporary bodies in a fragile and temporary world. 'Everything material will fall apart' said the Buddha and that includes us, as well as the crust of the earth on which we live.



When life becomes uncertain what happens to you? I tend to go for the 'rat in a maze' approach - my mind starts to race through every possible scenario in a desperate attempt to stay vaguely in command and to find a way out of the dilemma. When my intellect fails to deliver the needed solution I can end up experiencing the usual range of emotions - rage followed by fear, followed by despair.

One comfort in times of our powerlessness might be to remember that we are not alone. If we are stranded in a foreign land when all we want to do is get home and put the washing on, well at least our fate is shared by people throughout the world. Thousands of other travellers are also stuck. At a deeper level it might even remind us of the vast numbers of people who can never hop on a plane and get away - because they have no money, or no passport, or their country's borders are closed, or because no other country would let them set foot in the door.

And at a still deeper level, volcanic ash clouds bring us a timely reminder of the value of surrender to that which is inevitable - when we achieve this - this 'not my will but thine' approach - we are freed. We may not find an immediate way to leave the country; we may still find ourselves facing our fears and anxieties when our lives do not turn out as we planned. But to kneel before the unknown or the inevitable in simple acceptance of that which is - that's perhaps as close to enlightenment as most of us religious liberals will ever get. For as Alan Watts once wrote, there is much "wisdom in insecurity." Our insecurity is the result of our very attempt to be secure and our salvation comes from admitting that we cannot save ourselves. A thought to ponder when we have read every title in the airport bookshop!

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this month's newsletter...

* The Spiritual Bookshelf: 'A Chosen Faith' - selected by Tristan Prooth *
Congregational Library News * 'How I Came to Essex Church' by Ken Rogers *
'Meet The Choir' - Harold, Margaret, Susan and Peter * Congregational Growth *
'Poetry for the Soul' - Report on the Recent Poetry Group by Michaela von Briztke *
'News from the Essex Church Social Action Group' by Karl Askew * and more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

The community meets for a service each Sunday at 11.00am. The format varies, and usually includes music, singing, meditation, an address, an opportunity to share joys and concerns, and a children's group. Our wide range of activities includes religious education courses and spirituality workshops, meeting for fellowship, engagement groups on a variety of themes, community arts projects, regular chanting and dance sessions, and opportunities for quiet meditation. All are welcome to come and join us.

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 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

Youngsters' Social

After the service on Sunday 6th June



The next of our 'Youngster's Socials' will be after the service on Sunday 6th June. Until recently these events have been bi-monthly but we are experimenting with having some sort of get-together (pub lunch, picnic, etc) on the first Sunday of every month. Please put the dates in your diary now!

If you would like to know more about these social events please email social@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Volunteering Rotas: Stewarding, Coffee and Greeting



Stewarding:

6 th June:	Christine Joshi
13 th June:	Natasha Drennan
20 th June:	Louisa Bird
27 th June:	Doris Campbell

Coffee:

6 th June:	Sue Smith
13 th June:	Sheila Prellberg
20 th June:	Margaret Darling
27 th June:	Julia Alden

Greeting:

6 th June:	David Darling
13 th June:	Jeannene Powell
20 th June:	Arthur Krebbers
27 th June:	Jo Ridgers

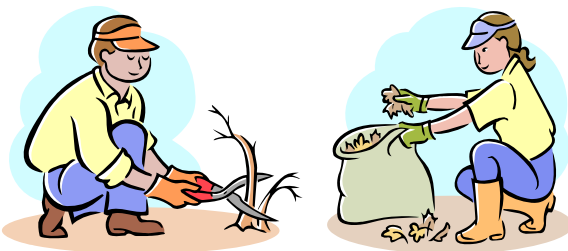
In recent months, we have been circulating the rota list via email, and this seems to be working well.

Please contact Jane with your email address if you are willing to receive this email once a month.

rotas@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Gardening Sunday

Sunday 27th June, 12.30pm



We will be having another gardening session of the year after the service on 27th June. As usual, our very own gardening expert, Michaela von Britzke, will take the lead so do let her know if you are planning to help out.

It would be a good idea to bring along some old clothes and possibly bring gardening gloves and tools if you have them. It may be helpful for some people to bring along compost and plants but please do consult with Michaela before you spend any money to ensure it all fits in with the garden masterplan!

Congregational Growth: Money, Money, Money



When we created our congregational goals for growth last year we didn't write any goals about money. Yet over the last year there has been a steady growth in our congregational giving, especially in our Sunday collections. Thank you everybody for being so generous.

We've also noticed an increase in the number of members making regular monthly contributions to the church by standing order. Back in 2005 there was literally only one person who had taken out a standing order but when we counted up last month there were eleven names on our bank statement. Standing orders are really useful to us for a number of reasons. It means we have a regular income coming in and don't miss out if you miss church. It is easier for us to receive money directly into the bank rather than having to count up and bank all the collection money after each service. You can Gift Aid any donation you make to the church so long as you are a UK tax payer but paying by standing order makes the Gift Aid calculations easier for us. So have a think if paying by standing order might work for you and Juliet Edwards our treasurer will be happy to give you the bank information you will need.

People sometimes ask for guidance on how much money they should give. This of course is entirely up to you but current monthly donations vary between £20 and £50 a month.

New Members Welcomed

It was a pleasure to welcome new members at the service on May 16th before our AGM. Here is the list of people who we think have joined us in the last year but do let us know if your name is not on the list and you think it should be. We now have 61 members here at Essex Church as well as a growing number of friends of the congregation.

Karl Askew	Gina Bayley	Maire Collins
Jo Cresswell	Natasha Drennan	Nicolas Holzapfel
Arthur Krebbers	Alice Lambert	Geoffrey Olans
Robert Osgood	Sheila Prellberg	Sam Reed

Welcome to all of you. New members bring new ideas and a new way of seeing things, so valuable to any community. We look forward to hearing your views in the year ahead.

Rev Sarah Tinker

A forthcoming course here at Essex Church

Adult RE: 'New U'

Thursdays 10th, 17th, 24th June, 7-9.00pm



This summer there will be another opportunity to take part in this three-session course, which will be led by our minister Sarah Tinker, and is open to everyone who is a member here at Essex Church or is thinking of becoming one. It is designed primarily for people who feel new in some way - new to Kensington Unitarians perhaps, or new to Unitarianism or new to liberal religion or new to London or Britain. But anyone is welcome to come along as the course is mostly about getting to know one another better through conversation and activities.

How do we run Essex Church? What links are there with the wider Unitarian movement? What other activities are happening here in the UK and how do we find out more? What is important to us as liberal religious people? These are just some of the areas we will consider.

The course is free to attend but we do ask people to **book a place in advance** by ringing Sarah on 0207 221 6514 or emailing sarah@kensington-unitarians.org.uk.

Congregational Photographs

After the Service on 27th June 2010



To help us all get to know one another's names and faces as the congregation grows we plan to create a photoboard showing our members and regular attenders.

The plan is to take as many photos as possible after the service on June 27th and perhaps to take a photo of us all together on that day. If the weather is good, Jane will set up shop in the church garden, and we hope you will all form an orderly queue to be photographed...

Congregational Picnic

After the service on Sunday 4th July



Please put the date in your diary now – we will be having a big congregational summer picnic on Independence Day – after the service we will head off to a local park. Please bring food and drink to share. All are welcome!

Songs and Silence for the Soul



Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church

**Sunday 13th June from 3.30-5.00pm,
11th July, 8th August from 5.00 to 6.30pm**

NOTE: TIME CHANGE FROM JULY 2010

Suggested Donation: £2.00

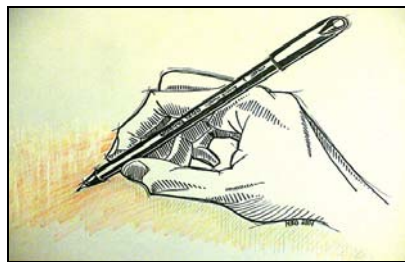
We've been running this monthly Songs and Silence group here at for over two years now and one of its delightful features is how the group varies from month to month, depending on who comes along.

We always meet on the second Sunday of each month. 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 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.

Poetry for the Soul

Reflection on our recent Poetry Evenings



We've just finished a five session course called Soul Poetry, ably led by Carole Grace on Thursday evenings. What a delight to hear people reading their favourite poems to one another, to be reminded of old classics and to hear some poems for the first time. I don't think any of us except Carole managed to make every session but the format of the evenings worked well for people to drop into as they could.

Each session had a different emotion as a theme – love, anger, joy, grief, hope – and elicited such a diverse collection of chosen poems from us all. We heard poems written in English, Italian, German and Farsi and talked of the difficulties in translating poetic language and the pleasure of hearing the spoken word, the rhythm and cadence of a foreign tongue, conveying meaning through tone and expression. Two published poets read their own work to us – what a joy.

We liked the angry poems, poems that complained and found fault, poems that raged. Here's the first verse of Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise':

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

The poems of joy were so often about the natural world and the beauty of being alive, like Dylan Thomas' famous 'Fern Hill':

*And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,*

My favourites are probably still the Sufis – Rumi and Hafiz – who so eloquently express the absolute simplicity of loving the divine so that all else falls away.

*This being human is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival*

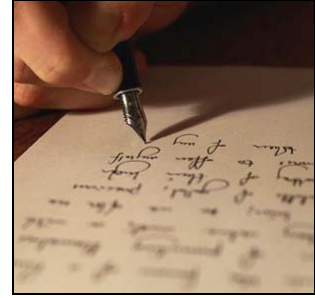
*A joy, a depression, a meanness
Some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

Welcome and entertain them all!

So thank you Carole and thank you everyone for all that you brought to enrich these evenings of poetry – we must do this again before too long.

Michaela von Britzke

News from the Essex Church Social Action Group



The Social Action Group is up and running and now is the perfect time to get involved. The group recently met for the first time and generated a number of exciting ideas. These are still only ideas though and we need your help to make them happen.

We are a diverse congregation with different skills and commitments. In this we are hoping to provide a range of opportunities for people to get involved as they are able and where they have an interest. The issues in our own borough are often overlooked and the group felt that it is important for us to keep a local focus. This could be an opportunity to make a real difference to our local community and also raise the profile of the church.

Some of the ideas that the group discussed included:

- Developing an activity that people can do at home, such as a campaigning or letter writing project
- A simple fundraising effort, such as a 5th Sunday collection for local projects
- Occasional one-off volunteering days, such as working on a nature reserve
- Linking with Age Concern UK or a similar organisation to help provide visiting and befriending for local people who find it difficult to leave their homes
- Publicising volunteering opportunities and providing a space for members of the congregation to raise awareness of issues
- Volunteering for the church, such as helping to organise out-reach or engagement events

How can I get involved?

There are many ways to get involved.

- Come along to our next meeting after the service on the 27th June
- Tell us what you think about any of the ideas above. If you have any ideas of your own we would love to hear them
- Let us know if groups that you are involved in need volunteers or have projects that could benefit from our support
- We need contacts with local groups that organise visiting and befriending with elderly and disabled people

If you would like to be involved but do not feel able to make a time commitment please get in touch. There are lots of small tasks such as, researching local organisations that can be done at any time and would really help.

This is something new for the church. It has the potential to bring us together and to raise our profile within the community. But it will not work unless we get involved. Come along after the service on the 27th June or get in touch by emailing me at karl.askew@yahoo.co.uk

Karl Askew



'Finding Our Voice'

Singing Workshop with Margaret Marshall

Sunday 20th June, 12.30 to 1.15pm



Margaret Marshall has worked as a professional singer all her adult life and is also a very experienced singing teacher. Along with Harold Lorenzelli she has been singing in our choir here at Essex Church for over thirty years now and we're delighted that she is now offering to lead a monthly session to help us all find our voice.

This session is for anyone who is prepared to open their mouth and make a sound and Margaret will show us how to improve the quality and strength of our voices. Using a few simple exercises we'll gain joy and confidence in our singing by learning how to produce and develop the voice, something everyone can do. We'll work with the breath and overcome unconscious blocks that can prevent us singing with our true potential. Fun and achievement are guaranteed and these sessions are designed for everyone, whatever your experience or ability. All are welcome.

'The Present and Future of Faith'

with Peter Owen-Jones

Sunday 20th June, 2-6.00pm

Worth Abbey, West Sussex

Horsham Interfaith is organizing this event for 'Faiths in Sussex'. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Peter Owen-Jones, Anglican Vicar, and presenter of the TV Series, 'Around the World in Eighty Faiths'. 'The Future of Faith' by Harvey Cox or any book by Peter Owen-Jones is suggested as background reading. There will be circle discussions, a tea break, and a panel on the same theme.

In his late 20s, Peter Owen-Jones gave up his career in advertising to follow a calling to be an Anglican Priest. He currently serves near Lewes. Recruited by the BBC to front a series of religious programmes, his books include 'Around the World in 80 Faiths', and 'Letters From The Moon'. The event will be held at the Performing Arts Centre, Worth Abbey. To reserve your place please email Rosemary Sanders at Worth Abbey: toc@worthabbey.net.

The Abbey is located about 5 miles south of Three Bridges, which is the nearest rail station. See the abbey website www.worthabbey.net for full details.

...a forthcoming event here at Essex Church...

Compassionate Communication Course



Advance Booking for Special Autumn Course

Thursday Evenings Here at Essex Church

9th, 16th, 23rd September, 7th, 14th October

THIS COURSE IS FILLING UP – BOOK SOON!

We have made arrangements for trainers in compassionate communication (or 'non-violent communication') to come to Essex Church and teach a five-session course this autumn.

You may already have read the article I wrote about my own experience of an introductory weekend on this subject, with Jill and Richard Broadbent who will be teaching this course, in the February newsletter. I found the training to be very inspiring and worthwhile and would highly recommend it.

Participants will be encouraged to make a small voluntary donation to help cover the cost of providing this training course. It would be highly beneficial if participants could attend all five of the sessions but this is not compulsory.

What is Compassionate Communication?

A response from Jill and Richard's own website:

"Everyday communication is often characterised by reactivity, misunderstanding and a lack of the connection we long for in relationship.

Compassionate Communication is a means of exploring how we make choices in our communication. It supports a greater understanding of how others may hear us and how we may hear others and so provides a pathway to the compassionate and empathic understanding of others and ourselves."

If you are interested in taking part I would very much appreciate it if you would register your interest and put the dates in your diary now as places are limited and we will be advertising the course widely across the district. Please contact me to sign up: rebelrebel@clara.co.uk.

Jane Blackall

The Spiritual Bookshelf

#13: 'A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism' by John Buehrens and Forrest Church

This is the latest in our occasional series of articles where members and friends of the congregation tell us about a spiritual or religious book which has special meaning or value for them...

One word describes this little book: weighty. I mean that in the best possible way as it is not a taxing read but it does have sharp reminders for people of our faith as to what it means to be a religious liberal as well as liberally religious.

Before choosing this book from my shelves, I took a good, long look at the sections filled with everything from several translations of the Bible to John Shelby Spong, Thich Nhat Hanh and Henri Nouwen. I recently read the book for what must be the twentieth time (my copy is well thumbed), reminded of the incredible responsibility it is to be a Unitarian. It reminded me that in Britain, we are free and, rather than needing more freedom, 'need the resolve to employ the freedom we have responsibly. We need to invest a little of our precious freedom and bond ourselves to others in redemptive community.'

'A Chosen Faith' has helped me through some of my desert places, as I have carried it from house to house, half way around the world. Although it is called an introduction, it is of much use to the established Unitarian since, as Denise Taft Davidoff writes in the preface, it 'can help you speak your faith...When you stumble, go back and read it again.' The book has become a resource, a place I can turn to as part of a process when I am prompted by occasion to redress a point of my own theology. The book is divided thematically around the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association, each author writing a respective chapter. One of Forrest Church's unforgettable contributions is his Universalist image of 'the cathedral of the world'. I remember powerfully the first time I read this chapter and how it moved me. 'Together we comprise an interdependent web of being,' he writes, 'if the cathedral is built out of star stuff, so are we.'

Another passage which touches me deeply is in the first chapter, 'Awakening': 'Of course, I am a heretic. The word *haireisis* in Greek means choice; a heretic is one who is able to choose...Faced with the mystery of life and death, each act of faith is a gamble. We all risk choices before the unknown.' As I grow as Unitarian and Quaker, I can gladly call myself a heretic. Part of this book's excellence is that it helps me define how I choose to believe more than what. The chant of 'deeds not creeds' echoed throughout the book, is the constant reminder that ours is not an intellectual faith. Right-wing fundamentalists, it is suggested in the text, are often far more advanced in their energy and resources than we are, thus 'deeds not creeds' becomes our Achilles heel. 'In face of this, we are left with two choices. One is to climb off our moral high horse; the other is to learn to ride. Both are preferable to high-minded posturing and sophisticated resignation, but only the latter represents the true promise and fulfilment of our faith.'

I am convinced that part of being a Unitarian is to engage actively in transforming our communities, using our hands, our collective experience and the compassion of our hearts, powered by trust in whatever or whoever we call to beyond. 'We are all brothers and sisters of the earth, children of one great mystery. Kinship can be recovered only by modern prophets who respect ordinary people, who will nurture, rather than exploit, their hopes and faith; by humble prophets who will dare to proclaim "the prophethood of all believers."' Living this faith is not easy. Do we ask for an easy ride? Buehrens helps to answer that question by not offering 'the cynic's advice, "Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed," but I will tell all those who approach our churches and fellowships that the dawn may not appear just where you expect: your new religious community will not always fill your every desire; on the other hand, you may perhaps find, almost certainly in unexpected ways, something of what you truly need.'

I am convinced in my belief that, to use a Quaker term, 'that of God', the Divine, a Seed, the Light—whatever you want to call it—is in everyone. That unknowable within the depth of our beings allows us to be in community, to feel compassion, to be companions. 'If God is inside us, our neighbour is inside us as well, not only inside us, but also among us, between us, intertwined with us, never apart. With this new knowledge, our religious challenge is greater than ever. We must employ our reason and the insights of science, mindful of the dangers of idolatry, to increase our understanding and cultivate the garden of the spirit in ways undreamed of before.'

This is our chosen faith where we, quite simply, 'join in celebrating one world, one people, one love, which is Truth.' Welcome home.



Tristan Prooth



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

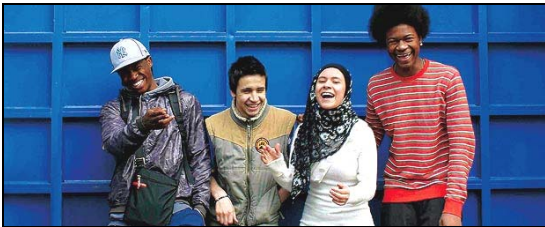
Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3.00pm
(13th June, 11th July, 8th August)

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 dance.

Cost £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674

Refugee Week Celebration



Saturday 19th June, 11am to 4pm
Croydon Unitarians, The Flyover, Croydon, CR0 1ER

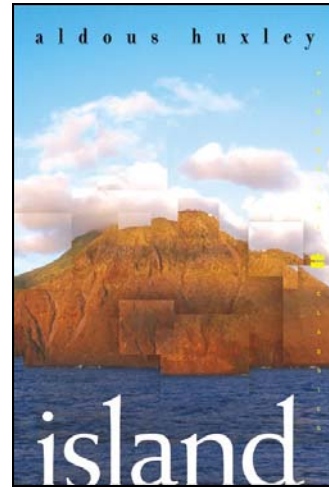
To mark National Refugee Week, Croydon Unitarians are holding an all-day party and learning event, on 19th June. Participants will be invited to have fun as they learn about those who have been forced to flee their countries, and about their living conditions at home and here in Britain.

Everyone is invited to:

- Share a meal from another country
- Hear and tell stories
- Listen to music (and maybe dance)
- Compete in a quiz
- Watch a film
- Learn how they can help others understand refugees
- Give practical gifts to local refugee families (collecting Toys and Nappies for local refugee centre)

All are welcome. For more information, please contact
Art Lester: artlester@hotmail.com.
Heather Wignall: hmwignall@aol.com.

Essex Church Reading Group 'Island' by Aldous Huxley



Tuesday 22nd June, 7.00-9.00pm

The reading group's next conversation will be about "Island" by Aldous Huxley. This book will be introduced by Michaela von Britzke at our June session.

Information from Amazon UK:

"One of the truly great philosophical novels..."

For over a hundred years the Pacific island of Pala has been the scene of a unique experiment in civilisation. Its inhabitants live in a society where western science has been brought together with eastern philosophy and humanism to create a paradise on earth. When cynical journalist, Will Farnaby, arrives to search for information about potential oil reserves on Pala, he quickly falls in love with the way of life on the island. Soon the need to complete his mission becomes an intolerable burden... in counterpoint to 'Brave New World' and 'Ape and Essence', in 'Island' Huxley gives us his vision of utopia."

The group takes special care to ensure that everybody gets an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to. Members come together to share our diverse views and appreciate our differences in a spirit of curiosity and respect. The group has a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere and newcomers are always most welcome to come along to any session.

The group has been meeting monthly since 2003. Regular members take turns in choosing a book for everybody to read and talk about so we tackle a wide variety of material. Please pick up a book group flyer or check our forthcoming selections online:

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

Recent Artworks from the Creativity Group



Members of the Essex Church creativity group spent three sessions working on a block printing project this spring. We took one session to work on our designs, another to transfer the designs to a printing block, and on the third session we produced the finished prints. On the whole we were very pleased with the results – prints by Juliet Edwards, Jane Blackall, and John Carter are shown above (left to right) – so much so that we plan to do it again in the autumn. Why not join us next time?

Jane Blackall

In Green Park, Piccadilly



Oh, such a such a sad dismantled flock
Of daffodils on every side
Beside the path, beneath the trees
Drab and shaking in the breeze.

Beneath them colonies of daisies cluster
Quick to take their chance to shine
Daffodils distressed, downfallen
Daisies blithe on every side.

No moral here, don't try to draw it
Plain high and low are past their prime,
But where green and gold fall down together
Sure, meek and white may take their time.

John Hands



Elizabeth Gaskell Bicentenary



**Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey
25th September 2010**

All Unitarians are invited to attend the dedication of a pane of glass to Elizabeth Gaskell in the memorial window in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey on Saturday September 25th following the evensong service, which will start at 3.00pm. The dedication ceremony will begin about 4pm. There will be time to look round the Abbey free of charge before it closes at 5.00pm. This event has been arranged by the Gaskell Society who have funded the cost of the design and installation of the window along with a one-off payment for its future maintenance. The dedication will probably have the highest profile of the many events planned for the bicentenary year. Further details are available from the Gaskell Society- www.gaskellsociety.co.uk.

Rev Dr Ann Peart (via Gordon Deaville)

There was an article about Elizabeth Gaskell, well known Victorian age author and Unitarian in our April Newsletter

I come from a long way back when the old church stood in all its Gothic splendour. It was in the days when you had to mind the pews and keys....a dark, imposing formality about the whole place. I knew a member of the congregation who as part of the relationship insisted on my attending services on Sunday morning. And then I met the organist of the day and there was a vacancy in the quartet which was a regular feature of the Church. They wore gowns in those days, all very grand but that didn't last long.



Three of our organists have been Davids and now we have none...organists, that is. We have shifted to purely piano. The organ did sound good but there were those who winced at its sonorous tones, and then it more or less broke down and we have come to rely on the piano, instead. Economics partly dictated the changeover, but the piano probably works better in the space that we have. And now we only have a quartet on special occasions, again an economic necessity. The departure of our last Music Director/Pianist led to a search for a replacement but none suitable could be found so I have taken on responsibility of finding pianists and between us Margaret and I, along with the help of our musical colleagues, staff the Sunday morning slot.

My own background is languages. I read French and Spanish at Durham University and then came down to London. I began life as an Anglican until my mother, annoyed that my brother kept getting kicked out of Sunday school for bad behaviour, shifted my brother and I to what was then known as the Church of Christ, an American foundation which believed in adult baptism and had leaders and deacons and imported American ministers. They have now merged with the United Reformed Church and my mother still attends at the grand old age of 94.

I enjoy the challenge of providing music for the services and I think we are lucky that the Church is able to support and encourage the music that contributes to the life of the Church. Essex Church suits me very nicely. I'm not a joiner by nature and I don't adhere to any particular doctrine other than the sanctity of life and preciousness of the moment we live in. My expression of the spiritual comes in my music. I try to make what I do real and to communicate the truth of what I sing by borrowing others' words and filtering them through my own interpretative powers. What results did not begin as mine but ends up seen through my particular perspective. So I make my spirituality on the hoof, so to speak. I come in through the back door, as it were. Singing is my medium and the Church allows me to funnel that need to reach out to something which lies outside me but is also intimately part of me.

Harold Lorenzelli

Meet the Choir...

We are very fortunate to have such excellent professional musicians to enhance our worship here at Essex Church. Read on to find out more about our long-standing singers (Harold and Margaret) and pianists (Sandra and Peter)...

I grew up in Inverness in the Highlands of Scotland and, in spite of wanting to become a doctor, I found myself at Edinburgh University reading music. I graduated with a B.Mus degree and was subsequently awarded the Bucher Scholarship by the University for study abroad. As I had continued my advanced studies in piano – I



obtained an LRAM – I decided to go to Vienna and study at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst which is now Vienna University. Initially I went for one year but stayed ten! – and in hindsight, often wish I was still there. I did a diploma in Vocal and Instrumental Accompanying and a teaching diploma in Harpsichord. The faculty subsequently asked me to join the staff as a vocal coach specialising in German Lieder. In that time I did recitals throughout Europe and was assistant for many International Summer Schools and Masterclasses. Then the Wanderlust took hold again, and I returned to the UK briefly where I taught at Wycombe Abbey School – basically to keep the bank manager happy!

Then I decided to move to France to take up an appointment in the Théâtre des Arts in Rouen which gave me the opportunity to work in an opera house. I was beginning to think that it was time to settle down somewhere, so I came to London and became a freelance musician - not an easy job, but very interesting and rewarding. I have a busy life as an accompanist and vocal coach - which has taken me to Europe, the Middle and Far East. I have been involved with the renowned Carmen and Tosca Arena Productions at Earls Court, and retain my links with Scotland having played in a Ceilidh Band for many years. I still play for the Demonstration Team of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. However my great love is working with singers and I am a vocal coach at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Thames Valley University.

My association with Essex Church began in the early nineties. I knew Margaret, and her teacher, David Pollard, was music director here. I used to provide holiday cover for him - and the rest is history! I remember on my first visit asking Francis if I should play Amen at the end of the hymns and if you sang or said The Lord's Prayer. He politely replied "We don't do that here". Having been brought up in the Church of Scotland, I found the services a refreshing change and I always vow to go out and be a better person!

Sandra Smith



I was born and brought up in Richmond. As a family we attended Richmond Parish Church where I was christened and confirmed. I sang in the choir and rang the bells.

On going to the Birmingham School of Music I became a member of Birmingham Cathedral Choir and during my two years of Post-graduate

Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music was a lay clerk at Manchester Cathedral – a good, sound Anglican foundation.

So when I first came to Essex Church as an occasional deputy for the then Organist and Director of Music, David Pollard, it was a rather bemusing experience. I noticed, eventually, that neither God nor Jesus were mentioned that often. This did not particularly worry me but did cause me to muse occasionally as to what the ‘Unitarians’ were about. Having read some of the notices about illustrious Unitarians from the past I thought ‘If it’s good enough for them, don’t knock it yet.’

When David Pollard finally left his position in charge of the music Sandra and I took over until a new Director was appointed and when he left for Australia we continued filling in and I finally began to get an idea (only a glimpse, mind you) of what you were all about.

It is a very warm and inviting place to be and I enjoy coming to play for you, particularly as you are happy to listen to what, I hope, for the most part, is relevant to the theme or, on the other hand, is simply something which delights the ear awhile, as Purcell would say.

Peter Crockford



I first came to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music; where I met my husband Ian in the first term. I grew up in a family of 6 girls, on a farm in Leicestershire. I loved London and still excited by the variety of concerts, art and people; a big change from a small village without even a shop or pub! I married young and had 2 girls. When the girls started nursery I

joined the ‘Kent Opera Company’ – touring seemed a luxury after looking after small children – coffee and lunch breaks WOW! I worked as a professional free-lance singer, singing roles in opera festivals and concerts around the country – a late night concert at the ‘3 Choirs Festival’ singing arias with orchestra and, in Bangkok with ‘The Bangkok Symphony Orchestra’, were highlights. Touring also gave opportunities to see Japan for 3 weeks and many places in Germany.

I juggled family life with jobs and at the beginning of my career, 30 years ago, began singing at Essex Church; when David Pollard, who was my singing teacher, was organist. I had been a church-goer all my life and appreciated time each week to meditate and think. Essex Church was certainly different to what I had been used to and has been an influence on my life. I am now less rigid and more flexible in my thinking; realising that doubts are part of faith and that there are many ways to express our worship and share our humanity. It has been wonderful to share making music in services with so many musicians and, I have been pleased to suggest lots of young people to come and sing. My husband and I have always had music students as lodgers and, as David Pollard, Brian Parsons and Sandra Smith are all professors at ‘The Guildhall School of Music’, there is a never-ending stream of talent!

I began teaching 10 years ago, which I love. Above private lessons, I also teach a class at ‘Central School of Speech and Drama’ and, ‘Queens Park Song Class’. I enjoyed giving my first singing class at Essex Church; it is a pleasure getting people to sing and enjoy their voice. This last year my husband Ian died and more than ever in my life I thank God for music where our deepest feelings can be expressed and we can be comforted.

Margaret Marshall (Holmes-Drewry)

“I think the people who say they don’t believe in religion, and I’ve met a bunch of them in my day, mean something else. What they really mean is, they don’t believe in having to say a creed to belong to something. Or they mean they don’t believe in a God who loves some and hates others, often with little way to comprehend the reasoning behind this teaching. Sometimes they mean they don’t like being told what to do, what to believe. We understand that. We are all people who don’t believe in a religion like that! Let them know that you have discovered something a bit different—and it has made a difference in your life. Tell them about your discovery, our community of inclusive love—and don’t just leave them hanging there, angry at God, angry at religion. Our religion is a unique way of doing things, of creating an understanding, a foundation for your life. To me, sharing about our religion is true evangelism; it is the true sharing of some really good news.”

Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rev. Eva Cameron

Modern Marshmallow Art



It seemed such a good idea in a service on sculpture to have the congregation create sculptures together. I'd done this before with marshmallows and cocktail sticks but this time something was different.

We live in a world where our favourite sweets are generally getting smaller or disappearing altogether (for example, creme eggs are positively quail size these days in comparison with the duck egg size of my youth. And it is hard to find a good quality toffee anywhere nowadays). But when it came to the marshmallows, a very different story emerged. I'd fantasised about us being able to re-create a spiral nebula together or a replica of DNA's double helix structure but the marshmallows that I'd bought were just too heavy to be lifted by a small wooden cocktail stick. They were twice the size that marshmallows used to be.

As one could expect with Kensington Unitarians, people battled gamely on, a 'good effort' was made, and three small sticky sculptures were created. When we amalgamated them into one creation, gravity was defied long enough to take a photo and then our sculpture was consigned quietly to the bin. We are not alone in seeking ever new ways to enliven our time of worship nor in best laid plans going awry. Unitarians in Godalming were recently entertained by a talking parrot that refused to talk back. I've asked if we can borrow it.

Rev Sarah Tinker



Universal Spiritual Gathering

Friday 11th June, 6.30-8.15pm
Held at Essex Church



The Universal Spiritual Gatherings are led by graduates of the Interfaith Seminary. All are welcome.

11 June: Walking with the Divine
with guided meditation "As I walk"

Imagine experiencing the deep truth at the heart of all faiths and none that the Source of All is our companion in life - always at our side no matter what. This month we are delighted to welcome Reverend John Merril whose main spiritual practice is walking with the Divine in nature. He will share a beautiful guided meditation - taking us on a sacred walk through nature. In addition we will celebrate and connect with the Divine as our ever present companion through blissful chant with Sean Shoket and Lila Cohen (Illumina) as well as inspiration and timeless wisdom from many faiths. All are welcome. Donations for expenses are welcome. Any surplus will go to ChildLine.

9 July: Beacons of Light – with wisdom
from 100 great spiritual leaders

For further information contact service hosts:
Reverends Danielle Wilson - 07802 898 252,
Kathryn Reynolds - 07976 739 286

'In loving connection with Essex Unitarian Church'

"We think of grace arriving like an ambulance, just-in-time delivery, an invisible divine cavalry cresting a hill of troubles, a bolt of jazz from the glittering horn of the Creator, but maybe it lives in us and is activated by illness of the spirit. Maybe we're loaded with grace. Maybe we're stuffed with the stuff. Maybe it's stitched into our DNA."

Brian Doyle



Essex Church Creativity Group

'Mixed Media Self-Portraits'

Tuesday 15th June, 7.00-9.00pm

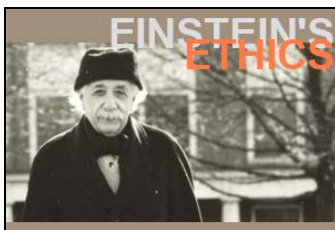


In June we will be having a go at making mixed-media self-portraits (inspired by a book of the same name).

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 and enlarge it on a 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!

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

Seen on the Web



Readers may be interested to look (and listen) to a site called 'Speaking of Faith' at www.speakingoffaith.org. The site is one of many hosted by American Public Media and is an entry point to many other goodies.

One which I found personally appealing was 'Einstein and the 'Mind of God'' which consists of an introductory programme and series of podcasts. The series takes Einstein's science as a starting point for exploring the great physicist's perspective on ideas such as mystery, eternity, and 'the mind of God' and delves into Einstein's Jewish identity, his passionate engagement around issues of war and race, and modern extensions of his ethical and scientific perspectives.

Submitted by Will Lyons

80th Birthday Celebration for John Hands

Our own John Hands celebrated his 80th birthday in style last month with a party after the service on 23rd May...



John Hands



John Hands and Heidi Ferid with the Birthday Cake



Mary Spurr, Doris Campbell and Jo Ridgers

Thanks to Juliet Edwards for providing these lovely photographs of the special occasion.

Slow...



Burning fires, slow delivery of coals,
Slow flickering of gas jets, slow torches and cool
Tapers, slow horses – even cabs
Slowly cantering. Slow train wending
Slowly out of smoke-filled stations,
Slow letters by post: slow deliveries and
Street-criers: slow evenings by firelight
Slow digesting of food and ponderous books.
Slow sermons on slow Sundays, slow hours
And hours at the City counting houses, slow
Sinking into poverty, slow degeneration of
Health; slow remedies, slow unaspiring lives.

Slow childhoods

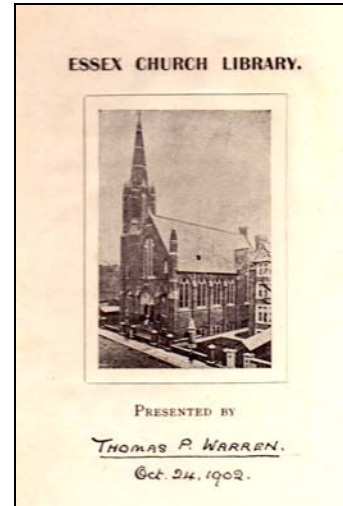
Slow learning, slow courtships, slowly
Dilapidating marriages, slow visits to reputable
Brothels; slow visits on stage-coaches.
Slow heavy meals on slow Sundays: slow constipation, slow
Seething over unbreakable, unmakeable relationships.
Slow voyages, slow waiting for the tide,
Slow digesting of information, slow messages by servants
Slow listening at doors, slow singing by candlelight
Slow smoking concerts; slow deaths and slow burials
Slow obituary notices, slow fading of memories, slow
Slow wasting away...

Slow awakenings, slow breakfasts, and mornings,
Slow walks in the park, slow turning back at evening,
Slow contemplation, slow prayers by the bedside,
Slow waning of hopes, and slow, slow
Atrophy of standards; slow evenings in the country, slow
Fading of hopes and possibilities, slow beginnings, and slow
Endings: slow cessation of slow life.

Slow world we might wish to slowly re-enter,
Slow installations, and slow removals: slow
Conclusions, slow crimes, and slow revenges,
Slow permitting and slow forbidding.
Slow progress, slow decisions, slow breaking and
Slow mending. Slow retribution, slow dusks and slow
Slow drawing down of blinds.

John Hands
(December 2000)

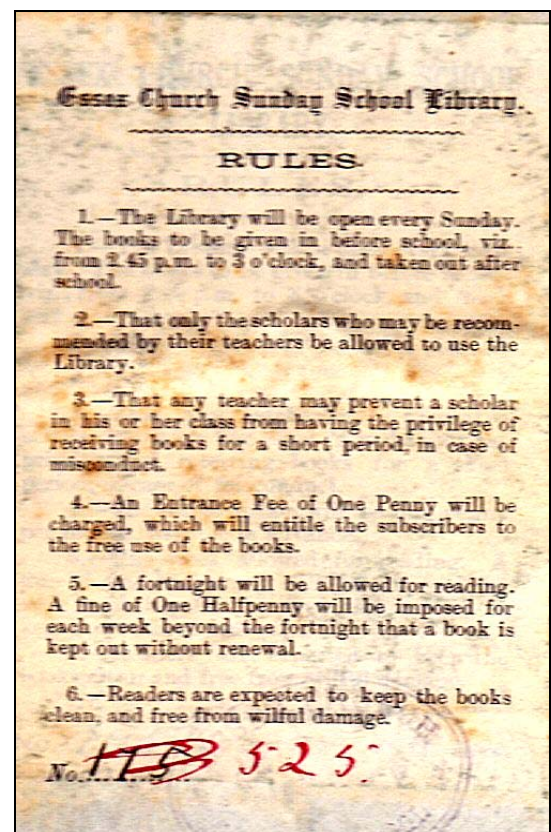
Library News



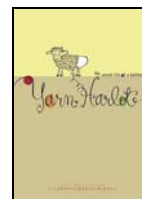
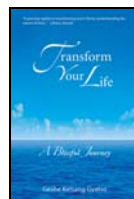
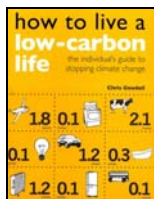
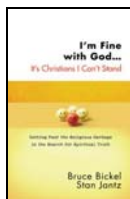
Thanks to Howard Hague the church library stock is going through a clear out and new books are being added (see opposite page). Not to mention Will Lyons' collection of audio CDs, which is now catalogued and in a folder on the library shelves. There are so many fine titles in the library and all are available for members and friends to borrow.

These bookplates hark back to another era when Essex Church must have provided a book lending service for local people. Most of us have too many books of our own now so before you buy any more, have a look at the library shelves. There might be just the title you were looking for.

Rev Sarah Tinker



Essex Church Congregational Library: New Acquisitions



The following titles were added to stock during 2009.

We are very grateful to the members of the congregation who donated these items.

BALASURIYA, Tissa	Mary and human liberation: the story and the text. 1997
BICKEL, Bruce	I'm fine with God... it's the Christians I can't stand. 2008
DALGLEISH, Paul	1702-2002 Three hundred years of service: the Old Meeting House, Mansfield. 2002
GOODALL, Chris	How to live a low-carbon life: the individual's guide to stopping climate change. 2007
GYATSO, G K	Transform your life: a blissful journey. 2001
PEARL-McPHEE, S	Yarn harlot: the secret life of a knitter. 2005 (donated to the Essex Church Creativity Group)
WIKSTROM, Eric W	Simply pray: a modern spiritual practice to deepen your life. 2005

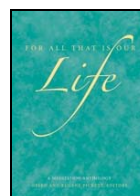
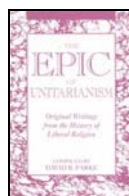
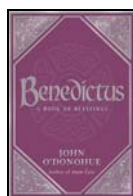
From Patricia Walker-Hesson's Personal Library:

It was Patricia's wish that such of her own books as were thought useful should be added to the church library for the use of members of the congregation. It will take some time to process all the books that Jane and I have chosen, and regular reports will be made on progress. The following are the first titles to be added to stock:

BOOK OF SAINTS	The book of saints: a dictionary of servants of God. 1989
DRURY, Stephen	Stepping stones: the making of our home world. 1999
DUFFY, Carol Ann	Answering back: living poets reply to the poetry of the past. 2007
ELIAS, Jason	In the house of the moon: reclaiming the feminine spirit of healing. 1995
FISHER, Len	Weighing the soul: the evolution of scientific beliefs. 2004
GADON, Elinor	The once and future Goddess: a symbol for our time. 1995
HAWKEN, Paul	The magic of Findhorn. 1975
HAY, Louise L	You can heal your life. 1988
LET US SING	More hymns for Unitarians. 1994. (The 'Pink Book')
O'DONOHUE, John	Benedictus: a book of blessings. 2007
PARKE, David B	The epic of Unitarianism: original writings from the history of liberal religion. 1985
PARRINDER, Geoffrey	Collins dictionary of religious and spiritual quotations. 1992
PICKETT, Helen	For all that is our life: a meditation anthology. 2005
PICKETT, Helen	Rejoice together: prayers, meditations and other readings for family, individual and small-group worship. 1995
SEWELL, Marilyn	Cries of the spirit: a celebration of women's spirituality. 1991
SMITH, Godfrey	The Christmas reader. 1986
TREVOR-ROPER, Hugh	The rise of Christian Europe. 1965.
VAN DE WEYER, R	Celtic parables: stories, poems and prayers. 1997
VAN DE WEYER, R	Spinoza in a nutshell. 1998
WATTS, Alan W	Myth and ritual in Christianity. 1954
ZUKAV, Gary	The seat of the soul: an inspiring vision of humanity's spiritual destiny. 1991

These titles are now on the shelves in the library downstairs. If you would like to borrow any of them, please put the details in the loans book provided.

Howard Hague
Hon. Librarian



Multifaith Calendar

✠ 3rd June – Corpus Christi / Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion – Christian

The festival of Corpus Christi in the Roman Catholic Church, or the Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion in the Anglican Church, occurs 60 days after Easter and celebrates the Eucharist. In the ancient world it was customary to scatter flowers in the path of important people as a sign of respect and reverence. This custom was adopted by the Church to honour the Blessed Sacrament, carried in procession on the festival of Corpus Christi.

☞ 16th June – Martyrdom of Guru Arjan (1606) – Sikh

This festival commemorates the fifth Guru who made the first compilation of the Sikh Scriptures, the Adi Granth, and supervised the completion of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Guru Arjan was executed on the orders of the Moghul Emperor for refusing to pay a fine arising from a charge of treason. Sikhs hold a gurburb on this day, including an akhand path, a non-stop cover to cover reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.

☼ 21st June – Summer Solstice – Pagan/Wiccan

Solstice, Midsummer or Litha means a stopping or standing still of the sun. It is the longest day of the year and the time when the sun is at its maximum elevation. This date has had spiritual significance for thousands of years as humans have been amazed by the great power of the sun. Like other religious groups, Pagans are in awe of the incredible strength of the sun and the divine powers that create life. For Pagans this spoke in the Wheel of the Year is a significant point. The Goddess took over the earth from the horned God at the beginning of spring and she is now at the height of her power and fertility. For some Pagans the Summer Solstice marks the marriage of the God and Goddess and their union is seen as the force that creates the harvest's fruits. This is a time to celebrate growth and life but for Pagans, who see balance in the world and are deeply aware of the ongoing shifting of the seasons, it is also time to acknowledge that the sun will now begin to decline once more towards winter.



Warden's Column



For a long time I've had an ambition to make some kind of display on the office wall about all the groups who use the building and other key people. I'd like it to feel a little bit like an altar, or a mandala - a way of focusing some spiritual energy into my work and my work relationships.

Anyway, I've finally taken the first small step in that direction by making a set of cards with group names & contacts and sticking them on the wall. I tried to make the size of the cards proportional to how much groups used the building - which was an interesting exercise in it's own right. I ended up identifying quite a small group of 'core' users: 3 yoga teachers (John & Lolly Stirk and Lynne Pinnette); Michael Tse's Chi Gung classes; the Analytical Psychology Club; the Associated Music Board exams; Beit Klal Synagogue; Seicho no Ie (another religious group) and of course the Unitarian congregation.

After some reflection, I realised that the Lloyd Williamson nursery, although they only occasionally affect my work directly are actually a hugely important user of the building: occupying about a quarter of our floorspace & generating half our income. So I swapped their small blue card for a huge green one :-)

Next step would be to start adding photos to the cards - which will probably take me another year! But it feels good to have made this gesture towards conceptualising my work in terms of relationships rather than tasks.



Jenny Moy

How I Came to Essex Church – Ken Rogers



You may have seen Ken Rogers here at Essex Church on a Sunday morning wearing his distinctive red coat, uniform of the Chelsea Pensioners, residents of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. To become a Chelsea Pensioner you have to have served in the British Army and Ken has a long and proud record of such service, 23 years in all. His service included 3 years apprenticeship leading to a senior weapons technician position. He was involved in the Cyprus emergency, the Suez invasion, the army of occupation in Germany and also served for 5 years with the Gurkhas in Malaya. Born in Southampton, Ken emigrated to Australia where he lived for forty years with his wife Betty. His three sons, eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren are still

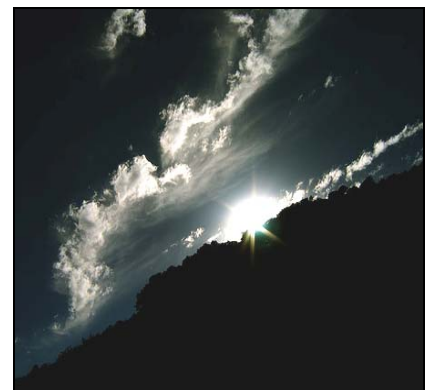
living over there but Ken returned to London and to his new life in the Royal Hospital Chelsea when Betty died in 2008.

How did Ken find Essex Church? His friend Jean Barker brought him to services and though he describes himself as 'not a great churchgoer' he finds the services here at Essex Church 'very down to earth with a no nonsense attitude' and says that he always feels comfortable here. We're really grateful to Ken for donating two tickets last month for Chelsea Flower Show and for arranging to show some American Unitarian visitors round the Royal Hospital. They were delighted to hear about its fascinating and distinguished history – founded by Charles 2nd and designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Adapted from Ken's notes by Sarah Tinker

"Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual, because we have violated another life, a life which we loved, or from which we were estranged. It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when year, after year, the longed for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsion reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment *a wave of light breaks into our darkness*. If that happens to us, we experience *grace*. After such an experience, we may not be better than before, and we may not believe more than before. But *everything is transformed*."

From 'Shaking the Foundations' by Paul Tillich



District Quarterly Meeting

Saturday 19th June 2010

Brighton Unitarian Church, New Road, BN1 1UF

1.30 – Service led by Jef Jones

2.15 – Presentation by Kate Whyman

3.15 – Tea and Refreshments

The service will be led by Jef Jones, Lay Leader of Brighton Unitarians, and Kate Whyman will be speaking on Unitarians at the World Parliament of Religions. Kate was the official British Unitarian representative at the recent World Parliament of Religions, held in Melbourne Australia. She will speak about the experience, and what role Unitarians do and should have within such international organisations. There will be time in the day to enjoy the Brighton seaside.



The GA 2010 - A Good Place to Be!

175 congregations and fellowships belong to our denominations General Assembly, warmly known as the GA. Every year about 350 people gather for its Annual Meetings - see the May Newsletter

I enjoyed several previous GA annual meetings. Now I have Myasthenia Gravis in my throat and face, but live in the community, and was able to go to this year's GA meeting in Nottingham. I take food, water and medication by gastronomy feeding tube. My food pump and tube food are too heavy to carry together on foot and train. Thanks are due to John Crosskey for taking my food in the Essex Hall (GA HQ) van. I travelled smoothly by train, on a day that was warm and sunny, as were the days that followed. After taking and packing my much medication I got away for a smooth train journey and arrived in time, after more medicating and food pump connecting, for some of the vigorous, reflective and thought-provoking Welcoming Ceremony, led by the very talented children and young people, whose National Youth Officer and nationwide voluntary youth workers are talented as well.

The youngsters theme was "In the Now". Lovely black and green costumed choir singing, guitar playing, acting of funny but thought reflective sketches and finally, behind us, large samba drum and percussion band playing. It was a joy to hear and a delight to behold. A great start for me after missing a year. When our Church reaches its goal of a thriving children's group, Essex Church children will be there with the others in our nation wide Unitarian community. May it not be too long coming.

My highlight of the Meetings was just being there! Nottingham Uni's Jubilee Campus, with its grass, lake, waterfowl and very distinctive heron, was very pleasurable. Some eat their lunch on the island in the lake. It was again a joy to meet up with and chat with old acquaintances and friends, sometimes sitting on a bench in the sun. It's as important a part of the Meetings as the formal sessions. After my long hospital stay last year, many said it was good I was there. The chat includes visiting stalls from Unitarian organizations. Amongst them, The Nightingale Holiday Centre in the Peak District showed how excellent it was. I can agree – do enquire about it. Unitarian College, Manchester's stall included sales of their excellent yearly publication "Stirrings", with prose and poetry by its Principal and past and present students, and I enjoyed browsing through and buying some new and second hand books in the GA bookshop or on the second hand stall.

My pills are crushed, put into purified water and enter my gastronomy tube via a syringe. There are a lot of them and it all takes time. I take one 4 or 5 times daily, ideally every 4 hours from the morning, so that I can be understood in the afternoon and evening. At the GA meetings I took it at break, some times with others. With some chatting in the breaks, this meant I clipped off parts of some events. I feed over night, connecting to food and pump mid evening, so I had them with me at the last sessions of the day. With outside walking between the venues, I was blessed by it not raining. Had it done so, I would have varied the time. So, amongst other events I joined in the Anniversary Service. Apart from its leader and preacher, the youngsters gave more talented input here. About 350 Unitarians worshiping and singing together is great and uplifting!

One of the other valuable events for me was from the multi choice early evening programme - Taizé Song and Prayer. The two leaders shared with us a service of musical prayers in the style of the ecumenical monastic community of Taizé in Burgundy, France. I have always liked this music. What may seem to you strange chants are sung repetitively, so that we may think about the words and gradually get more depth and meaning. The chants are prayers, but in Taizé worship there are also spoken prayers, a Bible reading, here John Ch. 20 v1-10 (REB), about 10 minutes silence for reflection and no address. Among the chants we sung were 'Sing Praises all you Peoples' and 'My Soul is at Rest', (a line from Psalm 62). It made me more relaxed and become very deeply calm.

To know more about Myasthenia Gravis and how to help look at the Myasthenia Gravis association web site: www.mga-charity.org or telephone them on: 01332 290219. Otherwise, I commend the GA Annual Meetings to you. Why not come next year? You can attend one or two days, if you can't make them all.

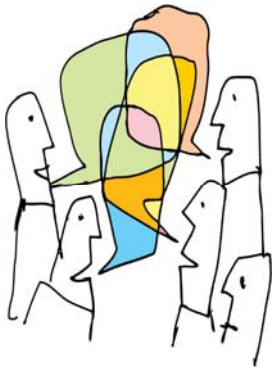
Gordon Deaville



This I Believe – New RE Course Here at Essex Church

‘What Do You Believe Anyway?’

Thursdays 8th, 15th and 22nd July, 7.00-9.00pm



Have you ever been asked that question when someone discovers that you are Unitarian and they don't quite understand what that means? A few months ago in the newsletter we had a selection of statements that Kensington Unitarians had written about their faith – people sometimes call these statements ‘Elevator Speeches’ or ‘Lift Pitches’, with the idea that you might only have a minute or so in a lift to tell someone about Unitarianism.



But the question of what you believe is a somewhat different matter. There are all sorts of beliefs that shape the way we are in the world, all sorts of things that we've experienced or learned that affect what we do and how we do it.

In the 1950's Edward R. Murrow, a journalist, asked famous individuals to write 500 word essays about what they believe and broadcast them on the radio. Four years ago, a radio producer began it again. He describes the reason they took this up again:

“The goal is not to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, the hope is to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own.”

I think this work is the kind of thing that we can be doing here in our community. Whilst we say that we respect each other's beliefs, and that we are a diverse group of people, we don't often explore those differences. It's not always easy to talk openly about what you believe. And more often than not, when asked what we believe, the answer has to do with God and Jesus, with life after death or the virgin birth. It isn't about those daily moments that truly define what you believe. But our small groups here at Essex Church do give us a chance to explore at a deeper level with one another, to speak and to listen in a way that's different from everyday life. A number of us completed the Building Your Own Theology (BYOT) course at the end of last year and this new ‘This I Believe’ course is another way for us to explore our beliefs with one another. BYOT did what it said on the packet, or rather the course booklet; it encouraged us to share with one another our theological beliefs. ‘This I Believe’ is more about the smaller, intensely personal ideas and commitments that you seek to live out and that you hold to when the world gets tough perhaps or when you are making changes that challenge your identity.

You are each and all invited to join in reflecting upon what it is you believe, and to express it in a short essay. I will be leading a three week course at the church on the 8th, 15th and 22nd July where you can come and do some exercises to help clarify what you'd like to say, and where you can share with others in the process. If getting to the church isn't going to work for you, there is a workbook that you can use to create your own statement of belief, and we can email that to you or give you a paper copy.

Let's give it a go and try to say what we believe, and listen to each other that we may strengthen what it is that gives our lives meaning, and that we build the bonds between us. Our hope is that eventually we will put together a collection of statements that people have written for the BYOT course and / or the This I Believe course.

Rev Sarah Tinker

With many thanks to the Rev Linda Hart, minister with Richmond and Putney Unitarians, who has already run this course and has passed on all her materials for us to use.

“In my life prayer has been like the planting of seeds - the splitting of bulbs - the improbable strengthening of small hopes and the clear guidance needed to live through heart-wrenching situations. Prayer has helped me to keep my balance - to continue reaching out - to hear and follow that still small voice within whenever I can just make the time and the space to listen. And prayer has helped me to win out against hopelessness - to start over again and again - fine-tuning my attention to the gifts that do exist - to the changes that are happening. I believe that our prayers work if we are willing to be changed by them. Let us simply begin - offering our prayers in whatever way we choose - to whomever we choose. May our prayers be like planted bulbs, growing even in the darkness, eager to bloom months later when we have forgotten to expect them. And as we pray, let us be changed, let us feel the responsibility and the hope that lives in each one of us, and let us move our feet, building the community of love and justice we so long for here in this world.”



Unitarian Universalist Associate Minister, Jen Crow

Essex Church Walking Group:

Richmond Park / Isabella Plantation

Saturday 5th June - 10am at Richmond Stn



This month, Carole Grace will be leading the walking group on a route through Richmond. The plan is to take in the Isabella Plantation – an ornamental woodland garden – the azaleas and rhododendrons should be in full bloom.

The Essex Church Walking Group has made provisional plans for its activities over the next few months so please put these dates in your diary and plan to come along:

Saturday 3rd July

– Blake's London with Will Lyons–
(meeting 10.30am in foyer of the National Portrait Gallery)

Saturday 7th August

– Grand Union Canal and Horsenden Hill –
(meeting 10am at Greenford station – led by Caroline Blair)

Saturday 4th September

– LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED –
(please contact Caroline or Jane if you have any ideas)

We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length.

If you are intending to come please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.



Sunday Services at Essex Church

6th June – “Spirituality and
Painting in Western Art”
– Service led by Heidi Ferid



Our very own Heidi Ferid will lead the first service in June. Heidi says: “I will show 4 examples of paintings from 300 BC to the 20th century and try to identify changing attitudes to spirituality. The congregation will also have the opportunity to explore their views in small groups during the service.”

13th June – “Refugee Week”
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Today marks the start of Refugee Week and in this service we will be considering the plight facing so many people in our world as well as the great contributions that refugees continue to make to British society. The world's religions all remind us to welcome the stranger, not least because in differing circumstances we might be the outsider, seeking refuge.

20th June – “The Gift of Grace”
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A beautiful concept yet hard to define, grace is sometimes described as a gift of the spirit. Are there times in our own lives when we have felt touched by grace? Are there ways we can live that allow us to be more receptive to such spiritual gifts?

27th June – “This I Believe”
– Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In July we will be offering an evening group in which to explore our beliefs and this service will examine the value of creating a statement of what we believe.

July Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 11th June**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the management committee members before this date.