



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

October 2007

What's On at Essex Church

Monday 1st October, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (3/12)

Thursday 4th October, 7.00-9.00pm
"Conversations with the Bible (2/6)"
Adult RE led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 7th October, 11.00am
"God is No Thing"
Service led by Rev. Richard Boeke

Monday 8th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (4/12)

Tuesday 9th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Science & Religion Engagement Group
"Biodiversity and Interdependence"

Thursday 11th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Creativity Engagement Group
"Feltmaking for Flowers"

Sunday 14th October, 11.00am
"A Fair Harvest?"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14th October, 12.45-2.00pm
Adult RE: "A Sharing Circle"

Sunday 14th October, 3.30-5.00pm
"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Monday 15th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (5/12)

Thursday 18th October, 7.00-9.00pm
"Conversations with the Bible (3/6)"
Adult RE led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st October, 11.00am
"One World, Our World"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 21st October, 12.30pm
Craft Fair Planning Meeting

Thursday 25th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Reading Engagement Group:
"Justine" by Lawrence Durrell

Sunday 28th October, 11.00am
Service led by Daniel Hughes

Monday 29th October, 7.00-9.00pm
Kensington Community Singers (6/12)

A Message from Our Minister...

Time to Reflect

I have just completed my first two years as minister here at Essex Church and after getting over the surprise that two years had passed so quickly I started to think about all that has happened both in my personal life and within our church community. It has not been an easy time for a number of us as we've dealt with the challenges that life can throw our way. People have helped one another along the way and I have witnessed, and experienced at first hand, people's great kindness and thoughtfulness. But kindness cannot take away other people's suffering, only perhaps bear witness to it and offer a helping hand when it seems right to do so. As I was reflecting on what I'd learnt in these first two years of ministry, this was the first to come to mind – that there are issues in life we just have to endure and that the endurance is made more bearable in the company of others.



Another realisation for me is that ministry is not something ideally to 'do' alone; it is a path far more effectively walked with others. I wonder if I have clearly enough encouraged other people to get involved? At Essex Church we have a wonderful reputation for congregation led services and groups but are there even more people who would like to take part? Do you have particular expertise with buildings or finance or would you like to write something for this newsletter or offer to care pastorally for other people? There are always opportunities to volunteer for stewarding or coffee making on Sundays or perhaps there is an event or a course you would like to organise? Do come and have a chat if you would like to offer to help but are not sure what to do.

A number of times in the last two years people have said 'oh, I didn't want to bother you Sarah, you've always got so much to do.' What can I do but apologise if it seems I don't have time to talk and assure you that listening to people is a vital part of a minister's role for me and that it is always possible to schedule in time for a chat or a deeper reflection, even if we have to book a few days ahead.

I shall be doing some more reflecting later on in October when I go off walking in the Lake District for a week from the 22nd to 29th of the month. If you want support or information during that time please get in touch with someone from our management committee who will be able to direct you to the best person to contact.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this Month's Newsletter...

* *"In What Sense do we Belong to a Church?"* – Article by Caroline Blair * *Advent Art and Craft Fair* – Call for Participation * *Stewarding and Coffee Rotas* * *Reading Engagement Group: "Justine" by Lawrence Durrell* * *"A Visit to Wisley"* – Report by Gwen Molloy * *News from the Front Garden* – Works Starting Soon * *Excerpts of "Our Unitarian Tradition"* sermon by Will Lyons * *Creativity Engagement Group: "Feltmaking for Flowers"* * *New Books for Congregational Library* * *"My Unitarian Faith"* by Anthony Silvano * *Training for Engagement Group Facilitators at Rosslyn Hill Chapel in November* * *A Message from Gordon Deaville* * *Invitation to "Chinese Circles"* Art Exhibition by Heidi Ferid * *GA Executive Committee Roadshows* * *LDDPA Quarterly Meeting* – Meet the District Minister * *Science and Religion Engagement Group: "Biodiversity and Interdependence"* * *Adult RE: "Conversations with the Bible"* * *Multifaith Calendar* * and much more!...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church
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London W8 4RT

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Stewarding/Coffee Rotas



Stewarding:

7 th October:	Christine Joshi
14 th October:	Jim Blair
21 st October:	Heidi Ferid
28 th October:	Kassandra Britton

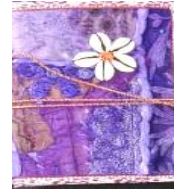
Coffee:

7 th October:	Howard Hague
14 th October:	Caroline Blair
21 st October:	Albert Dolan
28 th October:	Juliet Edwards

Please speak to Christine Joshi in October if you would be willing to help out with stewarding or coffee duties.

Advent Art and Craft Fair

Sunday 2nd December, 12.30pm – 3.30pm



We have set the date for our third Annual Art and Craft Fair so please do tell your friends and family about it NOW and encourage them to put Sunday 2nd December in their diaries.

Planning Meeting: 12.30pm, Sunday 21st October

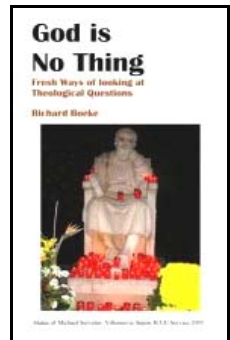
The first planning meeting for this year's event is after the service on 21st October. It's important that we are well-prepared and have a good selection of items to sell so think about what you might be able to offer and do come along.

Sunday Services in October

7th October

– “God is No Thing”

Service led by Rev. Richard Boeke
Richard Boeke will be selling copies of his book, “God is No Thing”, during coffee hour following the service: this will cost £5 from the author, or £6 from Amazon online.



14th October – “A Fair Harvest?”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

What can be done to redress the injustices of world trade that leave many of the world's food growers in poverty? How can we help to improve this situation and do the world's religions offer us guidance? This service will be followed by one of our regular sharing circles in which you are invited to bring something to tell other people about – a photo or poem, a favourite song or picture – or come and talk about harvest festivals you have enjoyed in the past.

21st October – “One World, Our World”

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A service in recognition of One World Week, an ecumenical organisation which encourages us all to make a difference in our communities and across our world.

Our worship services on the 14th and 21st October have a linked theme and there will be opportunities for anyone who wants to get actively involved in our worship. Would you like to choose hymns, write a prayer, play an instrument, lead a meditation or give a reading? Let Sarah know if there is something you would like to do.

28th October – Service led by Daniel Hughes

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

Kensington Community Singers

Mondays: 1st, 8th, 15th, 29th, October, 7-9pm



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

The sessions are great fun. Jen Hazel, our choir leader, has been teaching us a wide selection of songs from diverse sources. We are looking forward to a choir performance in December at the church carol service.

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

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



14th October, 11th November, 9th December
from 3.30 to 5.00pm

Suggested Donation: £2.00

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

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



A picture of Durga, for the Hindu festival of Durga Puja, this month.

A Message from Gordon Deaville



Hello, Gordon here. I would like to pass on through the newsletter my sincere thanks and appreciation for the good wishes I received before and after my recent triple by-pass heart operation in Hammersmith Hospital. Of course, recovery after that takes a few months, but they say I'm doing well. I would also like to record my appreciation of Mr. Smith and his team for a successful operation and of the nurses and other staff at Hammersmith Hospital for the excellent care they give and which I received.

Now I'm able to, I ask you join me and 'Kensal Youth Club/Drama', of which I am Hon. Chair, in congratulating the Club's Hon. President, "Dad's Army" actor, comedian and author Bill Pertwee on receiving an MBE honour from Her Majesty the Queen. He deserves the honour for services to entertainment and charity which, apart from the high profile ones, includes Kensal Youth Drama. Due to his late wife's illness he was unable to come to North Kensington. This did not prevent him from advising the Kensal Youth Drama and sending messages to the cast and crew on first nights. Anyone liking to know more about Kensal Youth Drama should leave their contact details on Judith Elbourne's answer-phone: 020 7837 5692. A starting again meeting will be held in the Kensal Road, W10 area shortly.

Once again, thanks for your wishes, prayers and candle lighting for me. Yours ever, Gordon Deaville

Collage Consequences

Artworks Made by the Creativity Group



In the September creativity group we tried something a little different and made collaborative collages at high speed (segments of the artworks are shown above). Participants were Jane Blackall, Patricia Walker, Betty Evans, Juliet Edwards, Caroline Blair and Ann Mamak.

Young Adult Conference

with BUYAN BA-CON & Senior Plus

12th – 14th October at Great Hucklow

BUYAN and Senior Plus have decided to combine their autumn young adult conferences for one exciting weekend at Great Hucklow from 12th-14th October.

The theme for the weekend is “Self Expression” which is a great theme for getting to know one another. We have two creative workshops planned to support the theme, so get ready to do some thought-provoking games and exercises, and get crafty with mask-making.

The conference takes place at the Nightingale Centre in Great Hucklow, Derbyshire. Cost is from £37 per person including meals. For more information, contact Jenny Kiehn: 07977 928497/ conference@buyan.org.uk

The booking deadline is Friday 5th October.

...a London event which you might be interested in...

The Covent Garden Big Draw

13th – 14th October, 12 - 6pm



Join a celebration of Covent Garden's heritage and its unique cultural assets. Have fun drawing differently with surprising tools; try cartooning, portraiture, life and topographical drawing. All activities are free!

Drawing Differently: Experiment with materials and see Covent Garden from new perspectives. Make patterns using contraptions adapted from skateboards, skipping ropes, hardhats, plastic bottles and remote control cars.

Put yourself in the Picture: Add your self-portrait to giant Visitors' Books, choosing your background from windows and arches outlined on km-long paper rolls.

Transports of Delight: Poster designer Paul Catherall will lead workshops on drawing modes of transport and capturing movement. Enter a competition for new transport poster designs. A 'clippie' will pose beside her retired Routemaster bus for 'portraits'.

The Magic Carpet: Add to an ever-expanding chalk piazza drawing at Covent Garden.

Amazing Space: Visitors on this Walk & Sketch tour will be in good company: drawers from architectural practices are keen to reveal intriguing details and vistas. Members of the Society of Architectural Illustration will also be on hand to offer advice on drawing townscapes.

Big Covent Garden Still Life: An epic arrangement of fruit and vegetables, sumptuously displayed on a 'historic' market barrow to reflect the site's continuing status as a leading city market. Everyone will be invited to help complete a mural based on this giant still life.

Big Draw Website: www.campaignfordrawing.org

November Newsletter Deadline



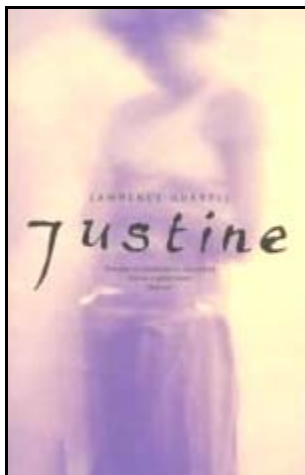
The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 14th October**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

Thank you!!!

Reading Engagement Group

“Justine” by Lawrence Durrell

Thursday 25th October, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next topic of discussion will be “Justine” (the first book in the “Alexandria Quartet”) by Lawrence Durrell. This book was chosen by Patricia Walker-Hesson and will be the focus of our next reading group meeting on **Thursday 25th October**.

Information from Penguin Reading Guides:

“The city of Alexandria, Egypt, in the years between the First and Second World Wars is hauntingly evoked in Justine. In fact, it might be more accurate to describe Alexandria as a central character in Justine rather than as a setting. The emphasis on place pervades the novel's formal qualities. Durrell, like a number of his fellow modernists, does not rely on a conventional linear narrative—within Justine or within the quartet—but shifts continuously between past and present. One result is that the story seems to have substantial physical, but not temporal, boundaries. The novel achieves many of its effects with images, so that it often reads more like poetry than narrative. The foregrounding of place in the novel encourages us to consider the extent to which our actions, and even our natures, are determined by our surroundings. Insofar as these features of Justine represent the patterns of memory, the book is an exploration of how we understand and recall experience. Also central to the novel is Durrell's notion of love. Justine...attempts to redefine love, or to define it in modern terms. But in many ways, the relationships the narrator describes - in which sexual desire as well as knowledge and narcissism play a large part - raise more questions than they answer about the nature of love.”

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

November's book will be “Bee Season” by Myla Goldberg

Creativity Engagement Group

“Feltmaking for Flowers”

Thursday 11th October, 7.00-9.00pm

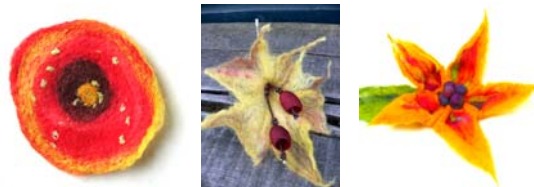


In the October creativity group we will be starting to work on hand-made felt flower brooches. The first of two sessions on this project will be devoted to feltmaking. The use of hand-made felt will give extra depth, variation and interest to the finished pieces. You may make pieces of interestingly patterned flat felt from which to cut flower shapes which you can sew together during the next session (*see picture above*). Alternatively, you can have a go at sculpting a more complicated flower in one stage, for more of a three-dimensional effect (*see pictures below*).

Many regular members have tried this craft before so, even if you are new to the process, there will probably be plenty of people on hand to show you how to do it. Materials will be provided but a donation of £3 is requested to help cover costs. We hope that some people will be willing to sell their brooches at the art and craft fair this December... but this is not obligatory!

As usual, if this particular craft doesn't take your fancy, you are most welcome to bring your own craftwork along, and simply sit with us in good company for the evening. There are usually biscuits and various other goodies to be eaten too...

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



Our Wardens' Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

We've had several Jewish festivals at the church recently: Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year festival on 12/13th September; Sukkot on 26th September, for which our resident synagogue build a small willow shelter in the back garden and finally Simchat Torah on 3rd October. Beit Klal's Rabbi, Sheila Shulman, recently retired and the synagogue have published a collection of her sermons and kindly donated a copy to our library.



We have a couple of new meditation groups starting this month. Bruno Groening circle of friends will be meeting on Saturday afternoons to tune into healing energy. They start on 27th October. Contact Heike Beck h.beck@beck-makler.de for more information. Bhakti Marga (www.bhaktimarga.org) will be meeting every Thursday evening from 6.30 to 8.30pm, this group draws on both Hindu and Christian traditions, they will be practicing Om chanting and silent meditation. Two other healing/meditation groups are meeting here this month: Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA) on Saturday 6th and Radionics on Saturday 20th. They both have websites if you want further information.

Also on Saturday 20th, is one of the regular talks by Richard Sylvester on non-duality (2-5pm, charge £10). The Alister Hardy Society have their next meeting on Tuesday 30th October at 3pm and the Guild of Pastoral Psychology and the Analytical Psychology Club will be holding their regular meetings on Thursday 4th and 17th respectively.

Other bookings include: on Thursday 25th October, the Liberal Democrat Party are holding a fundraising quiz at the church and, on Friday the 12th October, there will be an Interfaith Service. There are also several daytime bookings this month from various departments of Kensington & Chelsea social services, who find this a convenient location to hold user consultations.

In the second half of the month, work will commence on the front garden. As well as some replanting, the paving will be re-laid and the benches and railings repainted. We have obtained a grant of £20,000 for this, and the work will be done by a team from Groundworks West London. During the work, which should take three weeks, access to the front of the church will be restricted, and for three days from 31st October, entrance will through the side door only. This should not affect Sunday services and we hope that the work will be completely finished by Friday 9th November, enabling us to accommodate the Associated Music Board for their regular autumn booking.

David Berridge and Jenny Moy



"Loving involves commitment. We are not automatic lovers of self, others, world, or God. Love does not just happen... Love is a choice -- not simply, or necessarily, a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretence or guile. Love is a conversion to humanity -- a willingness to participate with others in the healing of a

broken world and broken lives. Love is the choice to experience life as a member of the human family, a partner in the dance of life, rather than as an alien in the world or as a deity above the world, aloof and apart from human flesh."

Rev. Carter Heyward



"Faith is not ultimately about believing something in spite of the evidence; it is more like living with courage, gratitude, and integrity in spite of life's inevitable losses.

Hope is not a matter of thinking that everything will come out all right, either for yourself, or even for all of us together. It is more like pointing your life toward a point on the horizon beyond which none of us can see, but toward which we all have to face if there is going to be a worthwhile future for any.

Finally, Love is not a mere Hallmark greeting sentiment; it is more like living here and now, serving justice, doing works of mercy, and walking humbly with one another before a Mystery that transcends us all."

Rev. John Buehrens

Our Unitarian Tradition or 'What are we on about?':

Excerpts of an address given by Will Lyons on Sunday 23rd September



The first time I came to a Unitarian service it was unlike any church I'd ever been to. I found that Unitarians are very tolerant and open towards other religions and belief systems. In fact, there were many people in the congregation who were humanists. Since I'm a humanist, I was glad to see there wasn't a strong emphasis on god in the Unitarian church. The only thing that seemed to unite all Unitarians were seven basic principles that had to do with the dignity and worth in every individual, showing justice, equality, and compassion for each other, and the search for truth and meaning (although there's endless scope for philosophical debate over those words 'truth' and 'meaning') - but that's an idea for another Thursday evening engagement group. Ah, so much to do and so little time!

None of the principles said anything about a deity. Unitarianism is unusual in its view that a person can be religious, spiritual and moral without believing in a god. Everything is talked about and discussed in an open manner, and everyone is free to express their views and have their own individual beliefs. I have to say that, after years in the Anglican Church, I was very impressed. I'd never experienced a church with such a liberal, tolerant, and open-minded atmosphere. The Unitarian tradition is of unique value to freethinking and rational people. It is a religious tradition that emphasizes the importance of reason and tolerance in religion. Its principles are adaptive and it has embraced changes in society such as sexual equality and same-sex relationships; still anathema for most religions. Indeed, Unitarian principles enable people to lead a rewarding, fulfilling life in a chaotic world.

These principles, in my opinion, meet the needs of people today better than traditional Christian teaching. Here I quote from Cliff Reed's booklet - '**Unitarianism - What's That?**' - to illustrate how welcoming and tolerant our church is. It is a refreshing viewpoint in a world where some countries and their governments espouse fundamentalism.

'As to whether any Unitarian, or anyone else, is a Christian is really for that person to decide. From the earliest days of the Church there have been many different ideas about what being a Christian means. Much suffering has been caused by the resultant disputes, persecutions and wars. This sad record has led some Unitarians to regard the term "Christian" with disfavour. For them it is too hung about with unacceptable baggage to be worth retaining. There are also those who simply do not base their belief system on the Christian tradition. Some of these define their position as religious humanist. Others favour a broader theism, an earth-centred spirituality or a faith that draws principally on religions other than Christianity. However, Unitarians generally hold Jesus in high regard. We favour a simple and inclusive definition of the word Christian. Thus a Christian is any person who seeks to live in accord with the life and teachings of Jesus; who identifies with what is best in the Christian tradition, and who, perhaps, sees in Jesus a revelation of the God who is immanent in all people. This is the wellspring of love that permeated his nature and his ministry. In this sense, many Unitarians are Christians. And we also recognise as such all who share the same spirit, whatever their position on the Christian theological spectrum.'

(Words from Cliff Reed, whose booklet is available downstairs in the library)

Another pleasant aspect of this church is its friendliness and, while not living in each others pockets, I have found a care and concern more ingrained than in any of the mainstream churches I have been to. It's not the 'pastoral care' of other churches - to keep the numbers up - but a genuine concern for one's welfare. Stephanie rang me up a few weeks ago because she hadn't seen me here one Sunday and enquired after my health, knowing I've had a period of illness recently, and I remember that Sarah 'honed her sick-visiting skills' - as she put it - on me when I first attended Essex Church. I especially like making friends. In this place I respect all members of the church and feel this is mutual. Sunday morning is one of the best times of the week for me because I am with friends - that's after worshipping at the altar of Starbucks on my way in.

Humility, I think, is an integral part of the Unitarian tradition and one aspect of what distinguishes it so radically from other religious traditions because Unitarians don't think they've got all the answers. This humility comes naturally to those that seek a religion that is consistent with the evidence we have compiled about the nature of the universe and doesn't require the suspension of our rational faculties. It is a religion that fully embraces the scientific enterprise - to paraphrase Professor Lewis Wolpert (and Gwen said this to me not long ago) - '*it is not to believe six impossible things before breakfast*'. It is a humility that is warranted when we examine the evil that has been done in the name of religion when a group becomes too sure it has a monopoly on the truth. One of the Wars of Religion, for instance, when one of the battle cries was '*Une foi, un loi, un roi - one faith, one law, one king*' were to devastate France from 1562 to 1598. In this country there was the Civil War and there have been many other instances over the course of history; in modern times, Northern Ireland and more recently, Iraq.

The Unitarian tradition is one that affirms our spiritual nature. It is incumbent on us to use our reason and the inspiration we draw from our experience in Unitarianism to create a life that has purpose, to live well and to lead a life that is morally upright. By exercising our free will, we create the fabric of our lives. As another famous Unitarian, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said: **'Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you.'**



In what sense do we 'belong' to a church? Reflections on Hucklow Summer School 2007

One of the eye-opening facets of going to a national Unitarian event, like the Hucklow Summer School, is meeting people whose experience of belonging to a church is completely different from one's own. In my first workshop we were asked to think of examples of when our church had been positive and welcoming to diverse people or groups. The person I was sitting next to said "I can't think of any". This stayed in my mind for the rest of the week.

At Kensington we are used to being part of a fairly small but thriving congregation, well looked-after by our own minister; we are used to the concept that during the week the building is also used and valued by Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and other faith groups; we are used (I hope) to the sense that everyone is welcome and accepted. Not everyone is that lucky. For every person from a Church like ours at the summer school, there was another person from a Church too small or poor to have a minister, or with just a share of a minister who travels from Church to Church, or with an ethos so conservative that every aspect of life seems set in tablets of stone. To 'belong' to such a Church may mean virtually carrying it in the valiant hope that things might improve.

It is easy to feel complacent about our own Church. At Hucklow we were by far the biggest congregational group, and were disproportionately represented in the running of activities there. But if there is one question that I think came out of the week as a whole it is, "What do we owe to the Church?" Not in the obvious sense of helping with the washing up and refraining from stealing the spoons. But in what sense do we 'own' the Unitarian Church as a whole, and our own community particularly?

In a sense we are all ambassadors for the Church. Every time someone sets foot inside the Church, or even takes part in a conversation about it, we are all responsible for the impression they carry away. If we seem genuinely open-minded, warm, caring and accepting, but also true to our own standards, we act as 'ministers' of the Church. The workshop group I attended had the theme 'diversity', and we explored, not the nuts and bolts of different 'communities' ("This is how Muslims pray. This is how sight-impaired people prefer to be read to." You know the kind of thing) but the actual process of listening to and being receptive to 'others'. The responsibility of being open and receptive to others cannot all be dumped on Sarah, or the Church Committee, or the confident people with briefcases and good shoes, or whatever group might look best qualified to take it on. It has to be shared by the whole community. Events like the summer school are a valuable reminder of this fact, and of the truly diverse nature of the Unitarian community outside our own nice white walls.

Caroline Blair



Bodywork Sessions:

Available on Mondays here at Essex Church between 10.00am - 4.00pm

Using a combination of massage, aromatherapy and craniosacral therapy, Fiona Watson (ITEC dip.) can provide individual sessions to meet each client's unique requirements. For full details please phone Fiona on 07960 758068.



General Assembly Weekend: 13th-14th October 2007



Please donate to this year's General Assembly Appeal. The GA carries out many functions on behalf of the Unitarian community in the UK and relies on our generosity to carry out a number of essential tasks: organising the training and recruitment of ministers, representing our denomination, advising groups on legal and financial issues, running a national programme of youth activities, publishing a selection of useful resources... just think what else the GA could do if it had a bit more money to spend! A special collection will be taken during the service on **Sunday 14th October**. Gift Aid will be added and the total matched by the Bowland Trust.



A Visit to Wisley

Two cars of Unitarians set off on one Saturday in September for Wisley, the Royal Horticultural Society garden in Surrey, ably driven by Heidi and Michaela. After the rain of July and the heat of August, the vegetation was so abundant that the plant labels were often obscured; but if we looked carefully we could find the labels explaining both species and variety. Plants that we knew already were there in brilliant colours we had not seen before – deep purples and brilliant blues. The michaelmas daisies especially were at their peak.



Wisley rises above the land around it yet the plants did not seem windswept. There was a newly constructed earth mound with a spiralling path up it which gave a marvellous vista across to the new glass house and beyond. This greenhouse is rather reminiscent of the ones at Kew and contains different environments. The tropical plants were set out beautifully in this building and colourful orchids hung from above, their air roots reaching downwards towards us. Wisley also has a number of smaller gardens with particular themes such as town gardens and the herb garden where the air was filled with the scents of rosemary and fennel.



Although the house is not open to visitors it gives a lovely domestic feel to the gardens with its lake and pond, complete with mallard ducks, and arts and crafts style chimneys. It gave a fine view for our last look back at Wisley after our splendid day there.

Gwen Molloy

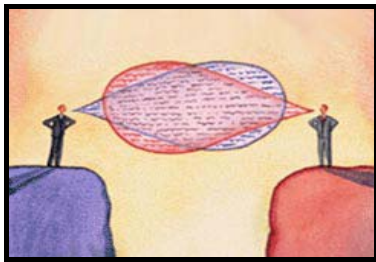
Top: Michaela, Doris and Patricia in the Herb Garden

Middle: Heidi, Sarah, Gwen and Anthony

Bottom: Anthony, Heidi, Sarah and Michaela (back)
Jane, Gwen, Patricia and Doris (front)

Science and Religion

A New Engagement Group at Essex Church



Continues Tuesday 9th October, 7-9.00pm

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

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

Tuesday 9th October: "Biodiversity and Interdependence"

The concept of interdependence is important in a number of traditions, including our own – the seventh of the Unitarian Universalist principles states that UUs affirm and promote "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" – this session will provide an opportunity to explore how our religious outlook influences our relationship to the natural world.

Introduced by Jane Blackall

Tuesday 11th November: "The Nature of Consciousness"

Led by Michaela von Britzke – more details next month

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

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

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

What do you think?

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

Dark Spirits, Shadow Dancers

Saturday 3rd November, 11am – 4pm



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

Group led by Sarah Tinker and Katharine Cable
Bring lunch to share, drinks provided.
Cost: £5 to £15, pay what you can afford

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

Please book for this workshop as soon as you can and no later than 29th October.

"My Unitarian Faith"

by Anthony Silvane

I need a faith.

I need a rational belief system.

I need to value the teachings of Christ;
but not to the exclusion of other great teachers.

I do not want to make out of Jesus
something he was not.

I need to appreciate the beauty of the world;
but also to acknowledge and endeavour to
deal with the many negatives in life.

In a nutshell, I wish for a wholesome
integration of life's various facets.

*Thanks to Anthony for this summing up of his faith.
How would you put your faith into words?*

October Multifaith Calendar

✧ 5th October – Simchat Torah – Jewish

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

✧ 7th October – Pavarana – Buddhist

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

☪ 9th October – 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 (the night of the 26th) of Ramadan.

☸ 11th October – 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.

☪ 13th October – Eid-ul-Fitr – Muslim

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

🌐 15th – 22nd October –

Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace

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

✧ 20th October – Birth of the Bab – Bahai

In 1844, when he was 25 years old, Mirza Ali Muhammad called himself Bab ud-Din, meaning doorway to the Faith. He believed that his mission was to reform Islam and to prepare the way for a successor who would complete his work of reformation. In this sense, many have compared him to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus. The Babs successor identified himself a decade later, in the person of Babauallah, who founded the Bahai religion.

✠ 31st October – All Hallows' Eve – Christian

The Church set the date for the feast of All Saints in the 8th century. The feast day would be followed by All Souls Day, when people would pray for the deceased, who might some day become saints. The eve of All Saints was a time to stay awake and pray for the dead.

🌀 31st October – Samhain – Wiccan/Pagan

Wicca celebration of endings and beginnings. Revering of elders is observed. Samhain (pronounced 'sow'inn') is a very important date in the Pagan calendar for it marks the Feast of the Dead. Samhain has been celebrated in Britain for centuries and has its origin in Pagan Celtic traditions. It was the time of year when the veils between this world and the Otherworld were believed to be at their thinnest. When the spirits of the dead could most readily mingle with the living once again. Later, when the festival was adopted by Christians, they celebrated it as All Hallows Eve, followed by All Saints Day, though it still retained elements of remembering and honouring the dead.

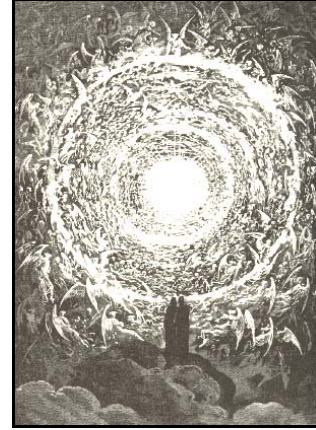
“Images of the Divine”

An Exhibition of Religious Art

6th October – 18th November

Tues - Sat: 1pm-4:30pm; Sun: 2pm-4:30pm

Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham TW1 3DJ



This multi-faith open exhibition brings together a variety of contemporary UK-based artists who directly explore the religious and spiritual in their work. Religious and spiritual subjects have been central to western and non-western art since art began. Although marginalised by many formal 20th century modernist movements, the depiction of the sacred in secular and non-secular art has endured.

Images of the Divine juxtaposes traditional works, such as Christian religious icons, carving and mosaic, alongside abstract and contemporary work in media as diverse as painting, drawing, prints, photography, book art, comics, sculpture, installation and animation. Practitioners include established artists alongside emerging new talent. Work by artists under the broad umbrella term of 'outsider' artist will also be on display.

Website: www.richmond.gov.uk/exhibitions



“To the Universalist, truth in religion is like truth in poetry. Our common text is the creation. Though limited by the depth and field of our vision, we are driven to make sense of it as best we can. So we tell stories, formulate hypotheses, develop schools of thought and worship, and pass our partial wisdom down from generation to generation. Not only every religion, but every philosophy, ideology, and scientific worldview is a critical school with creation as its text. By whatever name we call its author or co-creator, we are all interpreters of the poetry of God.”

UU Minister, Rev. Forrest Church

Photography Exhibition 2008



Members of the creativity group have come up with a topic for next year's photography exhibition. The title will be **"Everyday People"** and, as usual, we encourage everybody to interpret the theme widely. All are welcome to take part and we will have at least one special creativity group session in the spring to consider the theme together. We are intending to hold the exhibition a bit earlier next year (May/June) but there's plenty of time to prepare...

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

"Touching Wholeness"



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

12th-14th October at Braziers Park, Oxfordshire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Conversations with the Bible"



**A Fortnightly Adult RE Group
Continues 4th and 18th October at 7.00pm**

Other Dates: 1st, 15th and 29th November

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

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

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

Bristol Schumacher Lectures 2007

"Crisis and Opportunity"

**Saturday 13th October, 10am-5pm
Council House, College Green, Bristol**

Speakers at this one-day event will include:

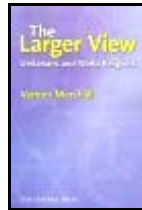
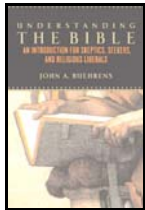
Nicky Gavron – Deputy Mayor of London
"Cities and Climate Change"

Mark Lynas – New Statesman Columnist
"Cutting Carbon: Global Warming's Greatest Opportunity"

Lecture ticket (£35 standard, £30 concessions) available from The Schumacher Society. Telephone: 0117 903 1081

Website: www.schumacher.org.uk

New Books for Congregational Library



I have recently brought up the following books for the congregational library:

BUEHRENS, John A

"Understanding the Bible: An Introduction for Skeptics, Seekers and Religious Liberals." Boston, Beacon Press, 2003.

GA WORSHIP PANEL

"With Heart and Mind: over forty mini-essays with prayers and meditations on a wide range of subjects." GA, 2007.

HEAD, Geoffrey

"Far-Off Magic: the story of Unitarian commitment to providing holiday and convalescent homes." Great Hucklow, The Nightingale Centre, 2006.

MARSHALL, Vernon

"The Larger View: Unitarians and World Religions." Lindsey Press, 2007.

SEARL, Edward

"We Pledge our Hearts: A Treasury of Poems, Quotations and Readings to Celebrate Love and Marriage." Boston, Skinner House Books, 2006.

The latest books added to stock are normally to be found on the top of the cupboard at the side of the church. The main stock is in the library in the basement. Please make use of the library - it is there for you.

Howard Hague



"Jesus did not say, 'If I be lifted up I will draw some'. Jesus said, 'If I be lifted up I will draw all, all, all, all, all. Black, white, yellow, rich, poor, clever, not so clever, beautiful, not so beautiful. It's one of the most radical things. All, all, all, all, all, all, all, all, all. All belong. Gay, lesbian, so-called straight. All, all are meant to be held in this incredible embrace that will not let us go. All."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (born 7th October 1931)

Chinese Circles

An Art Exhibition by Heidi Ferid
Tuesday 6th November, 6.30-9.00pm



This painting is one of the Chinese Circles series by Heidi. It will be part of Heidi's next exhibition at the Rivington Gallery, 69 Rivington Street, London EC2A 3AY (in Shoreditch, Old Street tube exit 3).

Heidi says: "The private view will be on Tuesday 6th November from 6.30pm to 9.00pm, and it would be great to see you there. Please let me know if you can make it - by email, or ring me on 020 7794 9130. Hope to see you."

For more information: www.heidiferidart.co.uk

An Evening of Words and Music Saturday 27th October, 7pm at Golders Green Unitarians, Hoop Lane

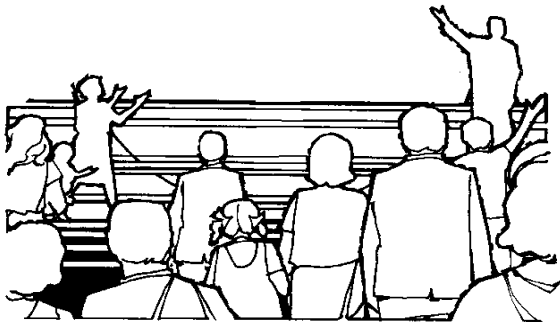


Come to Golders Green Unitarians and enjoy an evening of entertainment in aid of the GA Community Appeal. Money raised by the voluntary collection will be doubled by the Bowland Trust. Meet friends from other London Unitarian congregations. Refreshments will be provided and laughter and lively conversation guaranteed.

Rev. Feargus O'Connor, minister with GGU, would be very pleased to have some performers from Essex Church contributing to the evening's entertainment. If you wish to perform on the evening please let Feargus know by 21st October: call 020 7837 4472 or email ggunirev@aol.com.

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

LDPA Autumn Quarterly Meeting Saturday 20th October, Essex Hall



1.30pm – Service led by Rev. David Usher
2.15pm – Refreshments and Fellowship
3.00pm – “Visions for the Future”

The LDPA has a new district minister. What will this mean for how the District will work? How will this affect your congregation? At this quarterly meeting, the district minister and council will present ideas for the future, and how you can be involved.

This will be an important meeting for the future working of our district – please do come along and have your say.

London District Website: www.ldpa.org.uk



“I am still an incorrigible idealist. I believe in our ability as humans to live with one another side by side, regardless of our differences. The challenge is to honour and give an ear to all voices, even to the most unpleasant and critical, inside and out — the Yiddish tricksters and the angry ancestors, resistant spouses, political opponents, and even

one's own flesh, and blood, who rail at us for going against the grain — to say to each and every one of them: Shamati! I have heard you.

All voices require respectful tolerance. But only one voice must be followed. This is the voice of our own heart. It calls to us devotedly throughout our lives, and the greatest task we can undertake as humans is to listen for this voice and follow it with equal devotion. Although we may travel out of its range for years at a time, and although it may be submerged by other, more forceful voices, we can always endeavor to return to it. Because this voice of our heart will, in the end, keep us on our true life path, guiding us to our soul's secret destination.”

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone

Backroom Bits and Pieces

News from the Church Trustees and Committee



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

1. More detailed plans are being made for landscaping the front of the building. It should all look much better once it is terraced and re-planted. At the moment the soil is very poor and dry because the water just runs off it down the slope. The paving will be re-laid as it has subsided and we are concerned in case it becomes unsafe.
2. We also discussed other building matters, particularly the roof, which seems to have leaked slightly but persistently for the last 30 years. Howard, Caroline, Sarah, Jenny and David spent an hour inspecting the roof and discussing the drains, gutters etc. A few proposals have now been made to improve drainage.
3. It was suggested that some lighting by the signs outside the church might give them more impact. The wardens will seek advice about exterior lighting.
4. Sadly, a lot of the new white crockery that we bought two years ago has gone – possibly broken, as it is well-used. It may be possible to top supplies up.
5. Sarah has now been with us for two years (and lasted better than the crockery). There has been a lot of positive feedback about the Sunday services and other Church activities that she does.

Caroline Blair

An Interfaith Service for Peace

Sunday 28th October, 3pm
at Mansford Street Unitarian Church, E2 6LX

There will be a special interfaith service for peace, organised in conjunction with the World Congress of Faiths, at Mansford Street (Bethnal Green) on 28th October. For more information please contact Feargus O'Connor on 020 7837 4472 or ggunirev@aol.com.

STOP PRESS!

News from the Front Garden



Yes, it's happening at last; the long awaited improvements to the front garden here at Essex Church will be starting this month. Our warden's column mentions some of the details, not least of which the good news that we have been awarded a grant of £20,000 from KCEL Ltd. the charity linked to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the national landfill taxes that are now levied on skip hire and refuse collections.

As part of the funding arrangement we have to pay back £2,000 to that charity to help fund their future projects and we have paid about £1,000 to Groundworks, the landscaping charity that helped us with our bid, towards the costs of the application.

The proposed project has gone through a number of changes as we had to be realistic about what can be achieved with the money. It sounds a lot of money but it doesn't go far when you start moving earth and re-laying paving. Have a look at the sketch plan and the detailed costings which are now on the church notice board in the foyer and do ask our wardens or me if you have any queries.

There is a lot of competition for these grants so we have done very well to receive one. The aspects of our bid that helped us to be successful were the fact the front garden is open for use by the public and that the benches provide a welcome place to sit down for busy Londoners, and also the way that our church building is used by so many different groups from so many different sectors of our local community. That is something to be proud of and I look forward to having a garden that we can also be proud of and that reflects the lively, welcoming and well-run community we have here at Essex Church.

Groundworks will be doing the work for us and they specialise in environmental improvement projects of this kind, which they run as training schemes for young unemployed people. It is good to think how many different groups will benefit from our improved gardens, not just our congregation.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Training for Engagement Group Facilitators



Saturday 10th November, 11am to 4pm
Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead

*The chapel is about half a mile from Hampstead station
(Northern Line, Edgware branch).*

If you are interested in finding out more about Engagement Groups – particularly if you would like to set up a small group, or are already facilitating one, in your own congregation or fellowship – you are most welcome to come along to one of the forthcoming training days, organised by the Engagement Support Panel, to be held in London and York this autumn.

The training day will begin by covering the basic principles of Engagement Groups in some detail. We will discuss best practice for group facilitation, share our varied experiences of small group work, and address some of the challenges that facilitators might anticipate or encounter in congregations.

This event will also provide an opportunity to connect with the regional engagement support network.

**The training day will be facilitated by
Rev. Jim Robinson and Dr. Jane Blackall**

Please contact Jim to let us know that you are planning to attend or for more information:

Telephone: 020 7435 3506

or email: maryjimrobinson@btconnect.com

There will be no cost to attend these training sessions but places will be limited, so please register in advance.

Reasonable travel expenses will be covered by the Engagement Support Panel.

Please bring a packed lunch – drinks will be provided.

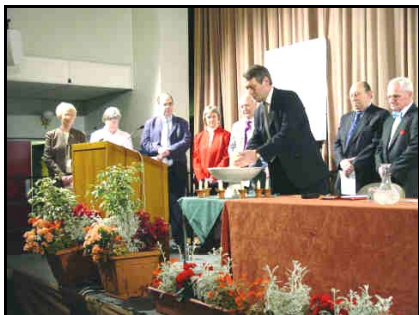
**Engagement Support is a Panel of the
GA's Education and Training Commission (ETC)**

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

An important denominational event this winter...

Meet and Question the GA's Executive Committee

London Road Show at Essex Hall
Saturday 15th December, 12 - 4pm



All Unitarians are invited to attend a series of regional 'Road Shows' in the coming weeks and months.

These open forums have been organised by our General Assembly to give the membership a chance to come and hear - and question - the Executive Committee. Members of the Executive are expected to briefly outline what's been achieved since the new structures were introduced in April 2006, and to explain their priorities. Members will be encouraged to raise concerns and questions about all matters affecting our denomination and its work.

The General Assembly hopes this will not only provide lively debate, but will lead to greater clarity and a stronger sense of purpose at all levels of our Unitarian and Free Christian movement, so that the ambitious goals set by our Annual Meetings can be achieved.

Please put this event in your diary and come along to get more involved in our Unitarian denomination.



"...because power is a dirty word, a lot of good people I know would rather not have anything to do with it, thank you very much. They don't want to become sullied by its bad reputation and therefore don't claim the power that could be theirs. They shirk their right and responsibility to shape the world as they see fit. They abdicate. I think that the tragic flaw of the progressive movement is that it has so constructed its identity around the suspicion and critique of power that it has rendered itself powerless. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be powerless anymore."

UU Minister, Rev. Robert Hardies

Information from Danielle Wilson of the Interfaith Seminary

Universal Worship Gatherings

Held at Essex Church by the Interfaith Seminary



Fridays 12th October and 16th November, 6.45-8.15pm

The Interfaith Seminary invite you to join their "monthly celebration of dialogue with the Divine" at Essex Church.

The Interfaith Seminary Graduate Ministers, students and friends offer inspirational evenings of music, meditation, insight, story and prayer drawing on the universal themes at the heart of all great spiritual teachings.

Website: www.theinterfaithseminary.com

Unitarian Renewal Group Day Gathering "Building Spiritual Community"



Saturday 17th November, 12-5.00pm
Unity Church, Islington N1 2DU

Special Speakers at this Event:

Jim Robinson, Joyce Ashworth, Don Phillips

Discussions and Question and Answer Panel

*What builds spiritual community?
What is spiritual? What is community?*

Cost: £8 waged/£6 concessions
Bring a packed lunch (tea/coffee provided)

Bookings by 31st October to:
Ann Peart, 34 Old Broadway, Manchester M20 3DF
Cheques to "Unitarian Renewal Group"