



*Kensington Unitarians*

# *The Newsletter*

May 2008

## What's On at Essex Church

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Adult RE: "The Quest" (7/8)

*Closed group – pre-registering is essential!*

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am

"Spiritual Speed Bumps"

*Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Creativity Engagement Group:

*"Illustrating an Abstract Emotion"*

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am-4.00pm

Adult RE: "The Quest" (8/8)

*Closed group – pre-registering is essential!*

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am

"Experiencing Awe,  
Talking Reverence"

*Led by Daniel Hughes*

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 12.30-1.30pm

*Gardening Sunday*

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2.00-3.00pm

Nia Technique with Sonia Leite  
*Holistic Movement Class*

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 3.30-5.00pm

"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Adult RE with Rev. Sarah Tinker:

*"Believing and Belonging" (1/3)*

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am

"Membership Sunday"

*Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 12.30pm

Essex Church AGM

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm

Reading Engagement Group:

*"I Heard the Owl Call My Name"*

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am

*Led by Rev. Anne McClelland*

## A Message from Our Minister...

### Food Costs Doubled

The World Bank recently announced a 'New Deal' programme to fight hunger and poverty in response to the doubling of the price of staple foodstuffs such as wheat and rice during the last three years. I heard about this on the radio whilst driving back from the supermarket the other day.

Pondering on the bill I had just paid I doubted that my food costs had doubled, but then would I have noticed if they had? Food is not the largest part of my weekly spending as it is for most people in low income countries. My economic and indeed physical, well being is not inextricably linked to the wholesale price of a few basic commodities. We here in Britain are further protected by the economic power of big supermarkets which can keep food costs down for us, often at the expense of the food producers in the developing world, by forcing them into ever tougher trading arrangements.

How do you respond to gloomy news? Our world community is facing so many large issues that seem beyond the scope of any ordinary mortals to do much about. Feeling helpless is an understandable response to such major dilemmas but beyond helplessness is a place where our small actions may start to add up and make a difference. I hope that at our AGM in May we will talk about what we can do in our community here at Essex Church to help people who are struggling in other parts of the world. One possibility might be to become a Fairtrade Church recognised by the Fairtrade Foundation. Fairtrade projects now involve 7 million farmers, workers and their families.

Friends who have worked in the Gambia in West Africa, one of the poorer countries of the world, describe simple shared meals where food is stretched to feed whoever happens to be around at the time. There is just enough for everyone with such a meal, not a lot but enough. We live on a crowded planet but there is still enough for everyone – enough food, enough water, enough medicine; the challenges are distribution and justice. As the world economic uncertainty deepens, let's remember those whose lives are being pushed into poverty because of the increased cost of rice and flour and find some ways, however small, to help ensure that there is enough for everyone. "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." – Gandhi.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

## In this Month's Newsletter...

\* *Special Report from the GA Annual Meetings* \* *"The Olympic Torch" – an article from Juliet Edwards* \* *"Making People Welcome" – an article by Caroline Blair* \* *Two Environmental Articles from Will Lyons* \* *"Losing and Finding the Key" – an article by Jo Ridgers* \* *News of an Essex Church Facebook Group* \* *"The GA Annual Meetings 40 Years On" – by Howard Hague* \* *Adult RE: "Believing and Belonging"* \* *"Moon" – a poem by Patricia Walker-Hesson* \* *Plans for an Essex Church Archive Day* \* *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.



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Notting Hill Gate  
London W8 4RT

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# Stewarding and Coffee



## Stewarding:

4<sup>th</sup> May: Jim Blair  
11<sup>th</sup> May: Angela Gasparetto  
18<sup>th</sup> May: Devika Joshi  
25<sup>th</sup> May: Will Lyons

## Coffee:

4<sup>th</sup> May: Caroline Blair  
11<sup>th</sup> May: John Rooney  
18<sup>th</sup> May: Christine Joshi  
25<sup>th</sup> May: Louisa Bird

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

## A "Choir-for-All" at Essex Church

# Kensington Community Singers



## Monday Evenings (except 26<sup>th</sup>), 7.00-9.00pm

Our community choir was launched at Essex Church last autumn and the third term started on 21<sup>st</sup> April. 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. Donations to cover the cost of running the choir are invited (£3/£6/£9 per session – a sliding scale according to income). Contact Jen or Sarah to find out more.

## Essex Church Archive Day



Inspired by some conversations at the recent GA annual meetings, Patricia Walker-Hesson is keen to have an "Archive Day" at Essex Church, where a group of willing volunteers will get together to sort through the mountain of documents relating to the history of the church and get them into some kind of manageable order. This may develop into more of an "Archive Group" as it's quite possible there will be quite a bit of sorting to do... Please contact Patricia if you would be interested in getting involved so that she can set a date for getting started.

# Believing and Belonging



I am starting work on the dissertation for my Masters Degree in Contextual Theology. Its working title is 'Believing and Belonging' and it is a study of our congregation here at Essex Church. I want to research people's religious beliefs and reasons for belonging to our faith community in the context of 21st century Britain with its declining involvement in religious organisations yet increasing interest in what might be described as 'spirituality'. How do we fit into this picture?

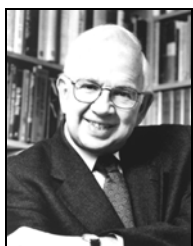
I am hoping that as many congregation members and friends of Essex Church as possible will take part in this research, which will involve a short questionnaire and three evening sessions, with a few follow up interviews.

So do put the following dates in your diaries:

**Thursdays 15th May, 5th and 19th June**

from 7.00 to 8.45pm here at Essex Church. Thank you.

**Sarah Tinker**



"Perhaps failure and disappointment can teach us that we may fail at one thing, we may fail at several things, but that does not mean that we are failures as people. The worth of a person's soul is not measured by the size of his or her bank account or

The volume of the applause a person evokes, but by one's humanity, by one's compassion, even by the courage to keep on dreaming amid the broken pieces of our earlier dreams. True success consists not in becoming the person you dreamed of being when you were young, but in becoming the person you were meant to be, the person you are capable of being when you are at your best."

**Harold Kushner**

# Backroom Bits and Pieces

News from the Church Trustees and Committee



*Every month about 10 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. The Management Committee had a long discussion about the signs outside the church. There is nothing that can be seen from Notting Hill Gate. The Ark restaurant, on the other hand, has a small square sign that is easily visible from the main road. It was felt that a vertical banner might be placed at the front boundary to the Church garden (in official Unitarian green) so that people passing by along the main road can see that we are there. We also discussed ways to brighten up the existing notice boards.
2. Sarah and Howard are rather urgently chasing the architect for detailed plans of the kitchen and toilet areas so we can start to arrange the refurbishment. We have already had many detailed requests regarding the kitchen, from easy-clean tiles on the floor to a dishwasher and a green-waste container.
3. Several of our grey hymnbooks have 'walked' over the years. When we bought them, members of the congregation were invited to 'sponsor' a book (with a bookplate in the front of it) on behalf of a family member, for a cost of £20. It may be a good idea to do this again and bring the number of grey hymn books back up to a number that does not lead to people sharing books.
4. We have discussed the front and back gardens. We do not think we can expect anyone to take on the job of watering the gardens every day through the summer, so we are looking at plants that do not mind the odd dry spell. There will be a 'Gardening Sunday' (after the service but before the Nia holistic movement workshop) on 11th May.
5. The finances of the Church are in good order. We wanted to express particular thanks to Juliet for agreeing to continue as treasurer (subject to the decision of the AGM) and for running this area so smoothly.

**Caroline Blair**

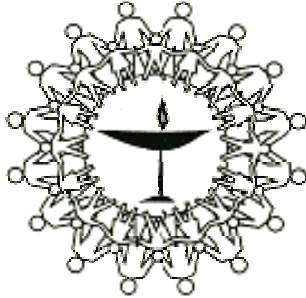
*The next meeting of the Essex Church Management Committee will take place at 7pm on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May.*



# Essex Church

## Membership Service and Annual General Meeting

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00am and 12.30pm



This year's Essex Church AGM will be after the service on Sunday 18th May – please make sure you come along to hear more about the work which goes on behind the scenes and to support our endeavours.

Members should by now have received the Annual Report which is sent out, to all those who have filled in a form to confirm their membership for this year, in April.

### **Nominations for the Management Committee**

Nominations are invited for people to join the management committee. If you would be interested in getting involved, please contact a member of the committee for more information about the work it entails, and find someone who will nominate you for election at the forthcoming AGM. Please speak to Jane Blackall if you need a form.

# Dances of Universal Peace



Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2.00-5.00pm

**Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church,  
Ormond Road (near Richmond Bridge)**

The Dances of Universal Peace are inspired by the wisdom and sacred phrases of the world's authentic spiritual traditions, which are sung while dancing. The words along with the movement engender a mood of joy, peace, liberation, contemplation and presence.

There is no need for any previous experience of this, or any other form of dance. Please bring snacks to share during the break. The cost of attending is £8 (£5 concessions).

Several members of our congregation have been attending these sessions at the Richmond church over the last few months and speak highly of them. For more information, please contact Lindsay Stevens (020 8891 5825 or email her on [lindsayastevens@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:lindsayastevens@blueyonder.co.uk)).



## A Blessing for Beltane – 1<sup>st</sup> May

Beltane is:

The birds and the green and the brightness,  
The song and the dance and the ancient play.  
Growth and flowering and creativity,  
Energy and love and passion.  
May the Goddess of flowers, love and beauty  
And the God of strength and vitality  
Bless you and keep you all this Beltane night,  
And may you remember the spirit of May Day  
Through the thirteen moons to come.

Blessed be.

Gail Duff

## Creativity Engagement Group

# Illustrating an Abstract Emotion

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm



This session will be led by Juliet Edwards. Juliet says: "We will provide paper, pencils, felt tip pens, paints and brushes. When I did this in another group I chose 'hope' and my picture included symbols such as a bridge over troubled water (!), light at the end of the tunnel, a candle. As our engagement group begins with a check in, I think ideas will arise fairly naturally from what people say about themselves."

As usual, if this particular activity 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 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-Hesson about our activities. Photographs of work from several of the projects we've worked on over the last few years can be found on our church website.*



# The Olympic Torch

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April I found myself feeling very torn about the whole business of the Olympic torch. I love the symbol of the flame (as in our Unitarian chalice) from which other flames can be lit without the original flame being diminished. Four years ago I had seen the Olympic torch carried on the river Thames by the British rowing team and I felt I had shared with other watchers a special privilege.



This year, because of the way in which the Buddhist monks in Tibet had been treated, celebrating the Olympic flame was not a straight forward decision. In the end I decided to go to Queensway tube station, which was one of the points where protesters were gathering, and take some photos. The Tibetan flag is amazingly colourful.

I asked two men wearing Free Tibet T shirts if I could take their photo. They were pleased to oblige. They had come from Germany specially to protest. They explained that the torch was not being carried through Germany. Germany had learned its lesson regarding human rights they told me. I told them I was on my way to church and they expressed approval. I walked along Bayswater Road towards church, realising that I was probably a bit late. Down towards the Shepherds Bush roundabout I could see the police assembling, some on pedal bikes others on motor bikes and others keeping one side of the road free of traffic.

I decided that I really wanted to see the torch and joined the thin line of sightseers. I got into conversation with a young woman, telling her that I really should be at church. When I told her it was the Unitarian church she said "From what I've heard about Unitarians, I think they'll forgive you." – not only someone who had heard of Unitarians but knew of their forgiving nature too – that was nice. It was she who also told me that it was Victor Ade Davies who was carrying the torch. He and what I thought were other athletes in blue track suits accompanying him, passed by quite quickly but I think I got a good photo. The film is still in the camera. I also later found out that the men in blue tracksuits

were actually Chinese security guards. It was just after 11.30 and the crowd began to disperse. I headed for Essex church where I met Charles Miller with Nathan and Joseph who had been to watch too. True to prediction Sarah welcomed us into the service saying that we'd only missed a bit of the sermon!



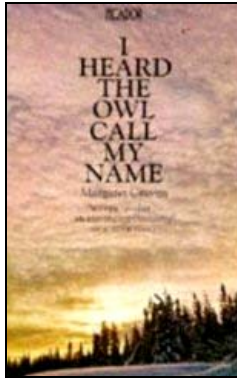
**Juliet Edwards**

## Reading Engagement Group

### “I Heard the Owl Call My Name”

by Margaret Craven

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next topic of discussion will be “I Heard the Owl Call My Name” by Margaret Craven. This book was chosen by Caroline Blair and will be the focus of our next reading engagement group meeting on **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**.

Information from Amazon USA:

*“A quiet, graceful testimonial to a vanishing way of life, I Heard the Owl Call My Name was Margaret Craven's first book, written when she was sixty-nine. It tells of a young vicar named Mark, sent to a remote Kwakiutl village not knowing he has less than three years to live. In the village, Mark comes to understand the Kwakiutl Indians around him and sees how their traditions are being destroyed through the influence of white men. He watches the “English woman anthropologist” who comes to study the natives and insists upon calling the villagers “Quackadoodles;” he experiences the impact when the government declares it legal for Indians to buy liquor and when traders cheat the villagers out of their cultural treasures; he sees the children lose their ties with their families and heritage while living in residential schools among whites. In striking contrast to the avarice and arrogance of most whites is the selflessness of the Kwakiutls and the beauty of running salmon, tall trees, and tribal festivals. Mark becomes a part of the Kwakiutl world, learning its language and ways, until finally “Time had lost its contours. He seemed to see it as the raven or the bald eagle, flying high over the village, must see the part of the river that had passed the village, that had not yet reached the village, one and the same.” Gentle, full of profound philosophy, this is a book that both calms and disquiets, saddens and exhilarates.”*

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.

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

## Women Ninety Years On:

### A Quiet Revolution

The Women's Library Lecture

by Rt Hon Shirley Williams

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May at 6:30 pm

Shirley Williams reflects on the ninety years since women won the vote, in the annual Women's Library Lecture. The daughter of novelist Vera Brittain and political scientist Sir George Catlin, Baroness Williams has been immersed in politics since her childhood. A major influence in British political life for over five decades, she has been a Labour minister, notably Secretary of State for Education and Science, and founder member of the SDP and Liberal Democrats. She was created a peer in 1993, and continues her campaigning life in the House of Lords.

*Please note: this event could be subject to a delayed start, if there is a late vote in the House of Lords*

The Women's Library  
London Metropolitan University  
Old Castle Street  
London E1 7NT

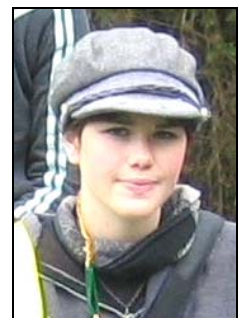
Website: [www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk](http://www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk)

## A Message from Iona Blair

Dear Church Friends,

Thank you so much for the help you've offered to help raise funds for my Swaziland trip this summer.

I've been busy arranging it and planning the work I'll do when I get there.



I'll ensure that some of the funds can be given as donations to the charities and I'll pass on your best wishes to the people I encounter.

Thanks again, Iona Blair

*Sarah, our Minister, says: “The running total promised so far for Iona is £350 with more to come. Let's see if we can get close to the £1,000 she hopes to raise by the next newsletter...”*



# Nia Technique



## Holistic Movement Sessions:

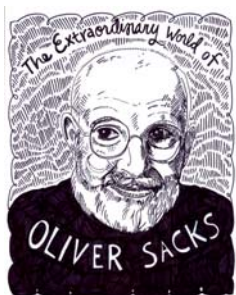
Sessions led by Sonya Leite

Sundays 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June - 2.00-3.00pm

Following the success of the introductory session back in January, a regular Nia class is continuing here at Essex Church, on the second Sunday of every month from 2-3pm (usually the same day as "Songs and Silence for the Soul"). The cost will be £7.00 (£5.00 concessions).

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

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



"Defects, disorders, diseases can play a paradoxical role, by bringing out latent powers, developments, evolutions, forces of life, that might never be seen or even be imaginable in their absence. It is the paradox of disease, in this sense, its 'creative' potential, that is amazing."

Oliver Sacks

...this month: another story of a member's path to Unitarianism...

## Losing and Finding the Key

Just over two years ago I found my way to Kensington Unitarians. Before that I hadn't even heard of Unitarians let alone attended a service even though I used to come to the church for a meeting every month. Was I blinkered or what?



About five years ago I discovered the monthly Interfaith Seminary meetings held on a Friday evening at the church. At that time I was on a fairly determined spiritual quest to find a focus, a path, a *something* I could relate to and call my own. Something I could feel comfortable with that was inclusive of all the world faiths and none. I thought I had found it at the Interfaith Seminary (IS) and attended the meetings regularly for a couple of years. I even considered doing the training. A meeting once a month wasn't really satisfying my voracious appetite though and I looked around for more. I found 'The Tent' at St Ethelburgas and the Brahma Kumaris too which satisfied me for a while but I was really hankering after something I could go to weekly. I wanted to spend quality time with like-minded people in a 'spiritual' setting.

One Friday in February 2006 I attended the IS service travelling by bus to and from my house in Waterloo/Kennington. Arriving home I realised I didn't have my keys but as my son was in I was okay. I searched the house/bags/pockets etc but couldn't find them so I rang the IS and also London Transport to check the 148 buses I had used. It was Friday. No-one got back to me on Saturday so I decided to go to the church on Sunday instead of waiting to be called.

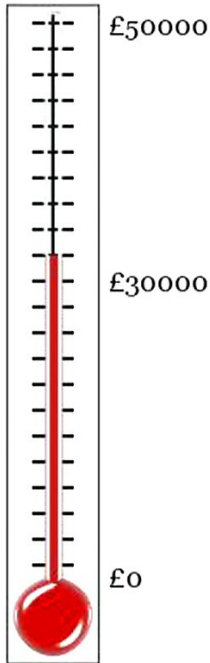
I had sat in the church many times over the past two years and was suddenly quite curious to find out who used it and what they did there, expecting nothing...except to get my keys back! The service held by Sarah and was very similar to the one I had been to the previous Friday evening with the IS. There was no mention of 'JESUS IS THE ONE AND ONLY WAY' (which is what I thought I would be hearing). I was *so* excited even though there was no sign of my bunch of keys! What I found though was *exactly* what I had been looking for and I'm happy to say that for the time being anyway I have stopped searching and feel I can now go deeper with what I have here.

I *did* find the key but not the one I *thought* I was looking for!

Don't you just *love* the symbolism?

Jo Ridgers

## Fundraising News



I am delighted to be able to tell you the latest good news on the fundraising front. Now that the accounts for 2007 have been finalised by the accountants we have been able to move 10% of our lettings income for the year into our Accessible Building Fund, which has now just reached £30,000. This sum has also been swelled by some more generous donations from assorted individuals and groups for which we are very grateful.

This leaves us £20,000 to raise so keep up the good work everyone.

**Juliet Edwards**



“**Community** is a happy-sounding word, and it is common for religious liberals to emphasize the ideal of community as a primary reason and purpose for the institution of the church.

Such idealism has its place, but building an authentic human community is never easy and only fleetingly happy... Real community can only be built through hard and unglamorous work. Like any effective relationship, it requires commitment.

Often these days we hear people say they are seeking a ‘spiritual community’ but want nothing to do with ‘organized religion.’ By the former they seem to mean a place that will meet their own religious needs; the latter they seem to associate with a place that will make demands upon them to support the institution’s needs.

The reality is that you cannot have one without the other, and part of the church’s job is to lead people to the discovery of the spiritual truth that it is only by giving that we receive, giving not only our money but ourselves. In other words, only by making a commitment to a community can we hope to build a community.”

From “**Belonging: The Meaning of Membership**”  
Published by the Unitarian Universalist Association

## Newington Green Unitarians in the News

Congratulations to the Unitarian congregation at Newington Green, and their leader Dr Andrew Pakula, who have gained some excellent publicity for the initiative they have taken in response to the GA Resolution on civil partnerships [*the full text is included in the report on the annual meetings*]. Since the law unfairly discriminates against same sex couples in not allowing them to have a legal ceremony in a religious building, the congregation has decided not to have any legal wedding ceremonies performed in their building until this unjust law is changed. Instead they are offering all couples, irrespective of sexual orientation, the chance to have their partnerships blessed.

**Rev. Sarah Tinker**

*This is how the story appeared on the BBC News website:*

### “Gay Rights Church Bans Weddings”

Weddings have been suspended at a 300-year-old church in north London in protest at “unjust” religious marriage rights of same-sex couples. Newington Green Unitarian Church will only conduct a ceremonial blessing for both heterosexual and gay couples who have legally wed in a civil ceremony. The church’s minister, Andrew Pakula, said the church’s committee voted unanimously in favour of the decision. The church in Islington suspended full wedding ceremonies from 30 March. The church describes itself as “an inclusive, liberal religious community welcoming people from all traditions and perspectives”. It said it would continue to bar full weddings until the law was amended.

Mr Pakula said: “When we realised the extent of the injustice in the existing civil partnership law which completely prohibits any connection between religion and civil partnerships, we decided it just wasn’t something we could take part in. We have at this point continued to do blessings and civil partnership blessings so anyone who has done the legal business in the town hall can come to us and do a gorgeous religious celebration.”

The church’s decision comes after the Unitarians’ national conference called for the Civil Partnership Act to be changed to allow religious content in civil partnership registrations. Mr Pakula added: “Historically churches have been major perpetrators of injustice for gay and lesbian people and as a church that welcomes people of all sexual orientation, as both members and clergy, we feel it is our duty to stand up on the other side. We are standing on the side of love here and that is our stance.”



# GA Annual Meetings – 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in Hatfield

Reflections on the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Once again, there was a remarkable turn-out from people associated with Essex Church at the Annual Meetings of the GA this year, with 12 of us making an appearance for at least part of the four-day event: Sarah Tinker, Caroline Blair (*our official delegate*), Jane Blackall, Patricia Walker, Juliet Edwards, Howard Hague (*who was working very hard on the Essex Hall staff team*), Gill Hague, David Darling, Victor Anderson, Gordon Deaville, Daniel Hughes and Jen Hazel (*who was co-leading the GA youth programme*).

For ministers, the Annual Meetings start a day early so that we can have our Ministerial Fellowship meeting. By its nature ministry can be a rather solitary job, so all the more need to get together from time to time, and it was a delight to see friends and colleagues again. This year we were discussing ways in which ministers can create support networks around them.

I was surprised to learn that our congregation is seemingly the only one that pays for ministerial supervision, although a few other ministers pay for their own supervisors. In jobs such as counselling and social work regular supervision sessions are now regarded as essential. We are also lucky in London to have enough ministers to run a London District Ministers' group that meets quarterly and a less formal Ministers' support group, meeting every six weeks or so.

Contact with colleagues is also useful because we can inspire one another to explore new ways of working with groups and organising worship. That is probably one of the most helpful aspects of the Annual Meetings as a whole for me, experiencing high quality worship in many different formats. It has sent me back to London with a renewed enthusiasm for finding new hymns and songs for our worship here at Essex Church. We heard that a new (purple) hymn book should be completed by 2010 but fortunately we don't have to wait that long to give some of them a try!

**Sarah Tinker**



*Patricia Walker placing a 'sticky dot' to vote for GA priorities after the Growth sessions.*



*London District Minister Rev. David Usher and student minister Daniel Hughes.*

I have been attending the Annual Meetings off and on for over forty years. However for the last three years I have been there as a member of GA staff, with particular responsibility for the bookstall. This of course changes one's perspective, since I am there to do what needs to be done, and to a large extent have not been able to choose what events to attend. For example I have not been able to get to meetings of the Unitarian Historical Society or the National Unitarian Fellowship since they take place when the bookshop is open. I am also aware of the huge amount of work that goes into the planning and arranging of the meetings over several months by the small team at Essex Hall. The meetings themselves are quite stressful as a member of staff, since you always have to be thinking what needs to be done next. This year, for the first time, I helped to take the minutes of the business meetings as they were happening, using a laptop, which is not the usual way I handle minutes. Still, all good experience! Of the events I was able to attend, the highlights for me were the opening ceremony arranged by the Women's League, and the Anniversary Service on the last evening.

**Howard Hague**

What has stayed with me from the 2008 GA meetings at Hatfield is the innovation of short slide presentations under the collective heading 'Celebrating our Congregations'. These five-minute slots gave a flavour of our differing church communities and their varied activities and achievements, from Dundee to Newington Green and places in between. Representing several Districts they were positive and inspiring, with some good ideas for growth.

But for me the slide presentation put together by James Barry of recent Senior Weekends run by John Harley and his team of volunteers, was truly inspirational. It showed largish groups of young people enjoying various activities at Great Hucklow in Derbyshire, obviously having a wonderful time and hopefully making friendships that will last a lifetime. It does not get better than that.

**Gill Hague**



*Gill Hague visiting the 'Future Ministry' stall, one of many displays at the annual meetings.*

I'm writing this two days after the General Assembly (GA) Meeting in Hatfield and I'm just about beginning to feel rested. All of the social, devotional, special interest and business sessions do consume your energy but they also enliven your heart with renewed passion. The GA is certainly not a boring business/committee type gathering - unless you go as a delegate you don't even have to attend the business sessions that are held. I gave most of the interest sessions (you can go to groups such as the Unitarian Pagans, Christians, Historical Society) a miss this year as I had been asked to help out at the business meetings. You easily can pick-and-mix a combination of sessions that work for your interests and energy levels.



*Anniversary service preacher, Rev. Art Lester (minister of Essex Church from 1996-2001), Gilly Fraser-Lester and Rev. Sarah Tinker.*

The most significant aspect of the gathering for me had to be the sermon delivered by Revd Art Lester during the principal service. Art spoke of the need to place a practice and language of reverence into the heart of our Unitarian community. Do we not come to Kensington Unitarians in order to be fed at a deep level within our hearts and minds? Art reminded us that a religious life lived authentically and open to the divine is what draws and retains people within our Unitarian community.

I spent time at the Unitarian College, Manchester (UCM) display stall as well as having an extra day before the GA at the Ministerial Fellowship conference. UCM is my place of training and the Fellowship represents the professional Ministry within Unitarianism. A 'spirit' filled time was also to be had in the bar each evening - a wonderful opportunity to build new friendships. The GA gathering is a good balance between inspiration, organisational news and social engagement. I always love it.

**Daniel Hughes**

"It may be that we have stopped viewing God as someone you can really talk to. If that is so, then the happy-clappies have it all over us. Maybe God and the Spirit and all that have become nothing more than an idea, a topic for discussion. Maybe it means that we think that God isn't there at all, that He has joined the mobs in the great drive-in temples of loony America, and left us to merely philosophise. And if God doesn't make an appearance in Church on Sunday, how can we expect to see anyone who is actually looking for Him? Our failing is not one of hypnotising the throngs with guitar chords and rhetoric as the evangelicals do; it is that we often attempt to worship an idea. You can't worship an idea. You can't fall to your knees before an opinion, and you can't find yourself weeping with pity and love over a finely-tuned philosophical argument. The question of why we are declining may have an answer that is at once simple and complex. Simple because it can be expressed in a single sentence. Complex because it may entail some re-thinking of our customs, our activities and - yes - even our theology. I think I might put it in another question: *are we nourishing the soul?*"

**An excerpt from Rev. Art Lester's Anniversary Sermon**



*Jen Hazel enjoying lunch after a few days of hard work as one of the youth leaders.*



*Juliet Edwards catching up on the news in the final edition of meetings magazine 'GA-zette'.*

I like the campus of the University of Hertfordshire where this year's GA annual meetings took place. It is an interesting contrast of shapes, building materials and colours. I also took advantage of the sports hall and went for a swim whilst I was there. That was the day I felt virtuous despite having two, three if you included breakfast, cooked meals a day.

An innovation this year was short clips in the form of DVDs or powerpoint presentations about churches in different parts of the country slotted into breaks during the business meetings. It was fascinating to see other churches and congregations, their social initiatives and social lives together. Dukinfield and Bury St Edmunds seemed particularly good at events.

I went to the Unitarian Earth Spirit Network / Pagan meeting where the speaker was stuck in traffic and didn't make it to the meeting. David Arthur gamely entertained the group with tales of his experience of being Pagan chaplain at Wakefield prison. At the beginning of the meeting we opened the "four corners" from the east to the north and at the end of the meeting closed them in reverse order. It was a simple and very peaceful ritual.

Finally, a word of praise to Jen Hazel who was one of the Youth Leaders. Following the Youth Group's visit to "Stomp" at a London theatre, she devised the "Unitarian Heartbeat", a routine of body music - clicking fingers, clapping, foot stamping - that the youngsters performed very effectively at the Anniversary service.

**Juliet Edwards**





*Gavin Lloyd, proposing motion seven in one of the business sessions, with members of the GA Executive Committee at the table in the background.*

A number of motions were debated by delegates in the business sessions at the annual meetings. One particularly interesting motion was on the topic of marriages and civil partnerships and the text of the resulting resolution is given below:

**Resolution 7 – from the Oxford Chapel Society:** *“That this General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, mindful of the need for marriages and civil partnerships in England and Wales to be placed on an equal footing, and the need for full compliance with the spirit of the Human Rights Act, calls upon H M Government to introduce relevant legislation permitting ceremonies for civil partnerships to be performed in any place of worship or other premises in England and Wales licensed for the celebration of marriage. In addition this General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches calls upon the Scottish Executive to introduce legislation permitting religious celebrants to officiate at partnership celebrations in Scotland.”*

Information about further developments relating to this resolution may be found elsewhere in this month’s newsletter...



*Rev. Celia Midgley, outgoing GA president, giving her closing address at the meetings.*

Another resolution on matters of social justice was passed at the annual meetings:

**Resolution 6 – from the Foy Society:** *“That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches urges Her Majesty’s Government and the Scottish Executive to focus more fully on strategies for prevention of crime and for the rehabilitation of offenders and to rely less on often ineffective punishments, such as imprisonment.”*

One more resolution arose from recent changes to the Churches Main Committee:

**Resolution 8 – from the Yorkshire Union:** *“That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches supports HM Government and the devolved administrations within the United Kingdom of GB and NI in their endeavours to negotiate, where appropriate, with organisations which represent the widest possible spectrum of faith communities such as the Interfaith Network of the United Kingdom. It welcomes the initiatives already undertaken, looks for parity of dealing with all faith bodies, and urges the continuing commitment of resources to this important work.”*



*Howard Hague, on duty as a member of Essex Hall staff, with Jane Blackall and Gill Hague.*

For me, attendance at the General Assembly meetings means being constantly on the look-out for faces I know and, more especially, for friends I may see only once a year. It is a joy for me to be with so many Unitarians – to see old friends and to make new ones. It is heart-warming to be with people from all over the country who come from a similar starting point.

This year the topic was Growth and the mood was forward-looking and full of optimism. But, of course, the people who come to General Assembly are, on the whole, the most enthusiastic and active people in the movement. It is sad to know that there are congregations who are seldom, if ever, represented at GA. We were very proud that 12 people connected with Essex Church were at the meetings!

My plea, whenever I come back from General Assembly, is for people to come with us next year who have never been before. Contact with the wider movement is very rewarding.

**Patricia Walker**



*Caroline Blair, Juliet Edwards, and Patricia Walker in the Weston Auditorium.*



“I went just for the Friday - "Growth Day" - and came away with a mixture of feelings. I enjoyed the sermon by Art Lester, the minister in Croydon, which was very well delivered and thought-provoking. In fact, it has provoked me to say how much I disagree with him. He believes, and most of the "Growth" speakers earlier in the day from different congregations apparently believe too, that the problem of Unitarianism's future is essentially a spiritual or theological one. If only we loved God more - or devised a better concept than "God", or had a more sophisticated view about agnosticism or pantheism or whatever, then we would grow rapidly as a denomination. But, although I believe that spirituality and theology are very important, I don't see it like this at all! It seems to me that Unitarian's set of attitudes is already very well suited to the search for truth and justice in the 21st Century. Many of us may feel more at home debating the spirituality and theology, but the priority it seems to me is that Unitarian organisations just need to get better at some of the practical things, especially skills in communications and publicity. Now if I hadn't gone along to the GA meeting and been provoked by Art Lester, I might not have got round to saying that.”

**Victor Anderson**



*Rev. Celia Midgeley handing over the GA presidency to Joyce Ashworth for 2008-9.*

Chatting with people from far and wide and keeping up friendships is always enjoyable. This year was enhanced by my receiving a booklet, “Stockton’s First Dissenters” and some notelets from Jane Tomlin of Stockton Unitarians. They were the second prize in their balloon race (details of landings were in “The Inquirer”) for which I had purchased an entry last year.

But most enjoyable for me this year was the Anniversary Service led by Rev. Jane Barraclough with; some 300 of us singing hymns together, a presentation by the children who thanked us for listening, a fine choir from people who volunteered at the Meetings and more things than I can say. In his moving Anniversary Address, Rev. Art Lester spoke of the need to have, in addition to the practical steps we had learnt on Growth and Renewal day, centred authentic spirituality bringing people to a deeper life of the spirit.

**Gordon Deaville**

One of the highlights of the meetings for me was in a session organised by the GA’s communications commission. Rev Michael Dadson, Minister with the Macclesfield congregation, told the story of how his community had worked together to increase their profile within the local area. A group of enthusiastic members had formed a publicity group which met regularly to look at various strands of this project. One key aspect of the process which has been adopted in Macclesfield is that the first step was to focus on “in-reach”: a period of reflection on the characteristics of their own particular community during which they came up with a shared sense of who they are and what they have to offer (and composed a short covenant statement which expresses their shared values and ways of being with each other). The feeling was that this made for a much more solid foundation from which to do “out-reach” and encourage new people to join them. I was particularly touched by a welcoming leaflet which the congregation produced. They have a very strong sense of inclusivity which was beautifully expressed by these simple words on the front cover:

*“When I look at you I see a human being ~ that’s all ~ and that’s everything.”*

**Jane Blackall**



*Patricia Walker enjoying lunch in the de Havilland restaurant.*



*Caroline Blair catching up with the latest news from the annual meetings in GA-zette.*

I was last at GA two years ago and I was struck both by the number of friends I had made over the last two years, having now had an opportunity to get to know them better, and at the shift from “we are a small dying denomination” to “we are growing if only in some areas and we believe strongly that we have a message to offer the world”. I was particularly impressed by the growth of Unitarianism in Africa and enjoyed watching snippets of congregational growth in the UK. I went this year as a non voting member so that I wouldn't feel guilty about missing some of the sessions but found that I didn't want to miss anything. I would certainly recommend going to the GA for anyone who wants to see the “Bigger Picture of Unitarianism”.

**David Darling**

# Making People Welcome

*At the General Assembly annual meetings I went to two workshops on 'hospitality', i.e. making newcomers feel welcome, and also making existing members of the congregation feel valued.*

I hope that most people do find Kensington Unitarians a warm and welcoming community, but these are some of the suggestions that were made at the workshops. Some of them may not apply to us, some may, and some may apply to **any** community.



1. People who feel happy with the role of meeting and greeting visitors, please do so. It was amazing how many people had visited churches and not received a single word of welcome from anyone. Not everyone is comfortable taking on the welcoming role, but as long as **some** people are things should be ok.
2. On the other hand, don't start conversations: "What did you say your name was again? Would you like to be Treasurer of our committee?" Some people had been put under pressure almost from their first sip of tea to join committees, put their names on rotas etc. People need time.
3. Have some information handy that people can take home. This means information about Unitarianism, and also something about the individual church. We have good leaflets and flyers in our foyer – if anyone hasn't had a look at them, do find a couple of minutes to browse...
4. Make members of minority groups feel welcome. In the workshops was a gay man who had heard a church committee member (**NOT** at our church!) saying that "we don't want to encourage people like that", and someone who had witnessed a congregation nip upstairs for a nice cup of tea leaving someone in a wheelchair on their own at the bottom!
5. Do display up-to-date service times outside the church. Some people had experienced turning up at a church on a Sunday morning only to find tumbleweed blowing across the deserted steps.
6. Gossip: keep it nice. Bringing feuds and grudges to the notice of visitors and new people is terrible.
7. One person's cosy group of friends can easily look like another person's in-group or clique. Try to make conversations as inclusive as possible.
8. Finally – no winning this one. Young people complained that they felt left out in a church dominated by older people. Retired people complained that they felt unappreciated in a church where they did most of the donkey work and saw young people being offered extra attention and subsidies. Young families did not complain much because hardly any of them seemed to be coming to church anyway. Good will and open communication seem to be the key – as it was pointed out to us, 'hospitality' is not some kind of trick; it arises naturally from a healthy community.

Caroline Blair



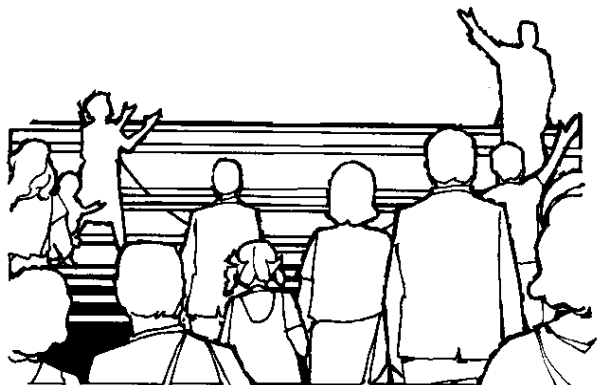
"The ancient world known most for its hospitality is ancient Greece where the concept of "xenia" or "guest-friendship" was cultivated. Hospitality means the practice of generosity towards guests. Scholars think that xenia came out of their belief that the gods visited humans and their fear that a stranger might be a god in disguise; if the guest was not treated well and it turned out to be a god, the host's days would be short for sure.

When people come here [*into our church*] for the first time and are warmly welcomed and deeply listened to, they are much more likely to return. It is a courageous thing to come into a whole group of strangers. As a spiritual community, we could say that it is not only our obligation to be hospitable to visitors but it is also growing our own soul as well. What a wonderful contribution to the world to be a champion of radical hospitality for there surely would be less hostility, less loneliness, less fear. It is possible that radical hospitality can change the world."

Rev. Ann Fox, UU Society of Fairhaven

*...a forthcoming Unitarian events in the local London District...*

## LDPA Course in Congregational Leadership



This is a forthcoming four-session course designed for London and South East Unitarians interested in assuming a more active leadership role in congregational life.

The four sessions will cover:

### 17<sup>th</sup> May

– Worship with David Usher at Sevenoaks

### 7<sup>th</sup> June

– Congregational Life with David Usher at Godalming

### 28<sup>th</sup> June

– Rites of Passage with Jane Barton at Brighton

### 19<sup>th</sup> July

– Leading Groups with Jim Robinson at Hampstead

The course is sponsored by PULSE (the London and South East District) and is free of charge to participants.

For information or to register contact David Usher:

**District Minister:**

**Address:** 5 Westerham Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 2PX.

**Telephone:** 01732 465248

**Email:** [dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk)

*A day workshop with the Art and Spirituality Network*

## Art, Conflict and Collaboration



**Saturday 31st May, 10am to 4.00pm**  
At Wandsworth Quaker Meeting House  
59 Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PT

Led by Marian Liebmann and Linda Murgatroyd

Conflict experiences can have a profound effect on the whole of our lives, including our spiritual lives, and spiritual traditions have taken different approaches to it. This workshop offers an opportunity to use art to explore how conflict can arise unintentionally, through differences of expectations, experience, culture and interpretation. We will be working in small groups for much of the time, creating together and learning from our interactions, and will have opportunities to reflect.

This workshop will not be addressing specific conflicts in our personal or community lives, nor will we be looking at conflict mediation. The insights gained may help us understand how conflicts arise and so help us respond better in future. All materials are provided and no prior experience is needed.

A simple vegetarian lunch will be provided - donations towards its cost will be invited - if you have a special diet you are welcome to bring your own food.

**Cost £25 including all materials, and drinks.**

Further information and bookings:

[www.artandspirituality.net](http://www.artandspirituality.net)

[artndspirituality@gmail.com](mailto:artndspirituality@gmail.com)

## 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.





# May Multifaith Calendar

## ✿ May – Saga Dawa – Buddhist

*This Tibetan and Nepalese festival, on the full moon day of May, celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. The festival is a day of strict Buddhist observance, with fasting. It is also a festival of lights, as lamps are lit everywhere. When Saga Dawa is celebrated in the UK the emphasis is on the joy associated with the Buddha's birth and enlightenment.*

## ✚ 1<sup>st</sup> May – Ascension Day – Christian

*Ascension Day, the 40th day after Easter, commemorates the last earthly appearance of the risen Christ. According to the Bible, Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. It is one of the four most important dates in the Christian calendar, coming after Christmas and Easter but before Pentecost.*

## ✿ 2<sup>nd</sup> May - Yom Ha-Shoah (Holocaust Day) - Jewish

*Jewish people remember the six million Jews, including one and a half million children who were victims of the Nazi holocaust. Memorial candles are lit and people attend special services.*

## ✿ 8<sup>th</sup> May – Yom Ha'atzma'ut – Jewish

*In the tradition of interpreting significant events in Jewish history as religious occasions, this modern festival celebrates Israel's independence.*

## ✚ 11<sup>th</sup> May – Pentecost / Whitsuntide – Christian

*Pentecost, also known as Whitsuntide, is often thought of as the 'birthday' of the Church. Christians remember the first disciples of Jesus receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and first proclaiming the Gospel, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Called Pentecost after the Jewish festival day when the event took place, the name Whitsuntide comes from the custom of people presenting themselves for baptism on this day, dressed in white.*

## ✚ 11<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> May – Christian Aid Week – Christian

*Many churches devote this week to fund raising for Christian Aid, often through house to house collections. Christian Aid works in nearly 60 countries helping people, regardless of religion or race, to improve their own lives and tackle the causes of poverty and injustice.*

## ✿ 20<sup>th</sup> May – Vesakha Puja / Wesak / Buddha Day – Buddhist

*Buddhists celebrate Wesak, or Vaisakha Puja, or Buddha Day, according to their tradition. This is the biggest of the Buddhist festivals, with lay people coming together at monasteries. Houses are decorated with lanterns and garlands, and temples are ringed with oil lamps. Theravadin Buddhists celebrate the life of Gautama Buddha on Wesak: his birth, enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, and his final passing away.*

## ✚ 22<sup>nd</sup> May – Corpus Chrii – 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.*

## ✿ 23<sup>rd</sup> May – Lag B'Omer – Jewish

*The Omer lasting from Pesach to Shavuot, is a period of 49 days of sadness in the Jewish calendar. On the 33rd day, Lag B'Omer, this is relieved in memory of the end of a plague in Roman times. This is also the one day in the Omer when weddings are allowed to take place.*

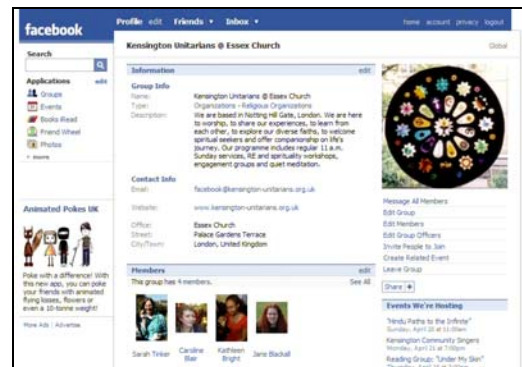
“Trying to separate the spiritual from the social is a meaningless, if not dangerous, enterprise. I challenge the seeming contradiction between prayer and politics, contemplation and action, being and doing. We should not talk about putting faith into action or religion into practice as if faith did not include action or religion, practice. Spiritual and social are in a dialogue so interwoven it is hard to distinguish one from the other.”



Richard S. Gilbert

... a new online publicity initiative for you to take part in...

## Essex Church Facebook Group



We are currently in the process of setting up an experimental Essex Church Group on Facebook (a social networking site on the internet) as a means of publicity and of reminding members about events.

The idea of this group is that, once you have registered and set up a personal profile (this is free and you can set a high privacy level so that nobody else can see your profile unless you have personally approved them as a 'friend') you can join the Essex Church group and then you will be notified of events and information you might be interested in.

If you are already a member of Facebook, simply search the site for "Essex Church" or "Kensington Unitarians", and our group should come up as the top result. Somewhere on the page you will find an option to join the group if you should wish to do so.

If you have any problems joining the group then do contact me and I will do my best to help out...

Jane Blackall



“God is in the flutter of the butterfly and the sweet aroma of the honeysuckle, in the steam rising from the pot of potatoes on the stove and in the smells and sounds and passing light in every room of the house. God is also in the negative, horrific sensations — in the explosion of the bomb and the firing of the pistol. All these sensations are there to be read theologically if we have the holy imagination to recognize them. Otherwise they are mere impressions lost to consciousness and reflection.

The holy person is the one whose senses are at their peak and whose imagination is ever ready to notice the slightest sign of the divine presence revealed momentarily in the most mundane of sensations. He is the one who doesn't feel the need to analyze all of experience either for a greater ego or in defence against the thick, fertile, and ineffable torrent of vitality that streams at us every moment. She is the woman who can live as a body among bodies and in a world that has a body that is an extension of her own physical being. Allowing the physical is equivalent to inviting the spiritual because God is in the details, in the colours and aromas and textures.”

**Thomas Moore**

## Parachute Jump!



So, here's the deal. On May 24, I will be jumping out of an aeroplane. I hope to remember to put on a parachute beforehand. I am doing this as a part of my pathetic mid-life crisis, but also to raise money

for Scope [a charity focusing on disability issues, particularly people with cerebral palsy]. The quickest, easiest and most painless and secure way for you to sponsor me is online by going to the address below.

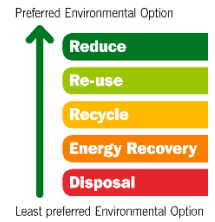
I hope you will sponsor me. If you pay tax in the UK, you can add to the benefit of your sponsorship by gift aiding it. And now I will sit back and wait for the sponsorships to come flooding in. Thanks for your support. I will let you all know how it went. I hope.

**David Usher**  
London District Minister

To donate visit: [www.justgiving.com/davidusher](http://www.justgiving.com/davidusher)

## What a Load of Rubbish!!

In my early career in the Fire Service in Lancashire back in the 1960's, we had on our Station's 'ground', a premises which, believe it or not, was a 'waste' manufacturer. 'Waste' in this context meant material recovered from old cotton and woollen fabrics. This 'waste'



(called 'shoddy' in Yorkshire) was used for a variety of purposes, stuffing in upholstery, etc. and the poorer quality material was used as 'wipes' for cleaning oily machinery (that was in the days when we had some industry to speak of). The 'waste' was produced by reducing the fabrics to fibre by means of enclosed 'breaking' machines in which a load of items was torn apart by flailing knives. Our part in the process as the Fire Service was to attend the fires which occurred from time to time on the occasion a spark was struck when the knives hit some 'tramp' metal in the batch. This might not be found until the batch had been unloaded into a room full of previously prepared 'waste' and then it was a long 'job' digging it all out!

These days we are all waste manufacturers, as Sarah Tinker reminded us in her recent 'Circle of Care' address. I am becoming more and more ashamed of the quantity of paper, tins, plastic, cardboard and glass which I put out each week for collection by my local council. The Local Government Association says that over 26.8 million tonnes of rubbish is dumped in landfill every year. If you do the sums then you'll find out that's half a tonne per year each. Because most plastics are non-degradable, they take a long time to break down, possibly up to hundreds of years - although no-one knows for certain as plastics haven't existed for long enough - when they are landfilled.

There are three approaches to being more eco-friendly and caring for the environment.

### REDUCE

- cut down on your use of non-essential and excessive packaging.

### RE-USE

- plastic makes up around 7% of the average household dustbin. Marks and Spencer are going to charge for a strong reusable bag which will help reduce the number of bags which go to landfill each year.

### RECYCLE

- all boroughs have recycling collection schemes, so if you don't already have a recycling box or bag provided by your local council, it's worth you calling them up and checking that you haven't been missed out! Different councils collect different materials although most collect cans, glass and paper.

For further information here's a useful web address:

[www.recycleforlondon.com](http://www.recycleforlondon.com)

**Will Lyons**

# Moon



Moon,  
Full Moon,  
Crescent Moon,  
Sharp spiky crescent Moon.  
Our Lady standing on the Moon,  
Harking back to Greek goddess, Moon.  
Looks like a ship, Moon.  
Sailing the skies, Moon,  
Dream world, Moon,  
Sometimes you see it in the day, Moon.  
In the blue sky, Moon.  
Blue sky, soft and gentle,  
All enveloping blue sky and Sun.  
Sun and Moon,  
The cycle of the day,  
Day after day.  
We have no choice,  
Day after day, night after night,  
Sun, Moon.  
Soft sounding, Moon.  
Comfortable, slow sounding Moon.  
Harvest Moon,  
Large red, low hanging Moon.  
Always beautiful, Moon.  
Moon that guides our life.

**Patricia Walker**

*This was the result of a free-writing exercise I did as part of a course called The Artist's Way, that I have been attending at our Richmond church.*



“Peace comes from living a measured life. Peace comes from attending to every part of my world in a sacramental way. My relationships are not what I do when I have time left over from my work... Reading is not something I do when life calms down. Prayer is not something I do when I feel like it. They are all channels of hope and growth for me. They must all be given their due.”

**Joan Chittister**

# Thinking Again on Biofuels



Riding my current hobby horse of ‘eco-friendliness’, I thought members of our Community would be interested in this extract taken from an article in the ‘New York Times’. I subscribe to the web newsletter of U.S. Democratic Congressman Pete Stark who is a Unitarian and is, as far as I know, the only U.S. politician to publicly state his non-Christian world-view. His comments are always interesting and in his latest newsletter he posted this extract.

*“Several new studies show the biofuel boom is doing exactly the opposite of what its proponents intended: it's dramatically accelerating global warming, imperilling the planet in the name of saving it. Corn ethanol, always environmentally suspect, turns out to be environmentally disastrous. Even cellulosic ethanol made from switchgrass, which has been promoted by eco-activists and eco-investors as well as by President Bush as the fuel of the future, looks less green than oil-derived gasoline.*

*Meanwhile, by diverting grain and oilseed crops from dinner plates to fuel tanks, biofuels are jacking up world food prices and endangering the hungry. The grain it takes to fill an SUV (4 x4) tank with ethanol could feed a person for a year. Harvests are being plucked to fuel our cars instead of ourselves. The U.N.'s World Food Program says it needs \$500 million in additional funding and supplies, calling the rising costs for food nothing less than a global emergency. Soaring corn prices have sparked tortilla riots in Mexico City, and skyrocketing flour prices have destabilized Pakistan, which wasn't exactly tranquil when flour was affordable.”*

Last year, Achim Steiner, executive director of the United Nations’ Environment Program, said growing international demand for ethanol and other biofuels on the international market threaten the Amazon rain forest if safeguards are not put in place because the world's largest remaining tropical wilderness is a target area for agriculture.

It makes you think, doesn't it?

**Will Lyons**



## The GA Annual Meetings – Forty Years On

*During a recent sort-out in Sheffield, one of my brothers came across a report I wrote on the 1968 GA Meetings in London, which I attended as the delegate for Fulwood Old Chapel (in Sheffield). The following are some excerpts from my report to the chapel committee. Clearly I saw things in rather black and white terms in those days! You will see that the Anniversary Service was held in the (old) Essex Church. It's the only occasion when I recall being in the old Essex Church building, which was demolished in 1973. My memory is that it was very large and rather dark.*



The Annual Meetings of the General Assembly for 1968 were held at University College, London from 8-11 April. On the whole they were neither as interesting in themselves nor as far-reaching in their conclusions as those held the previous year at Nottingham. On the Monday afternoon the Women's League combined their annual meeting with a celebration of their diamond jubilee. Many past presidents attended the occasion. Monday evening saw the first session of the Business meetings. In his presidential address the Rev Fred Kenworthy expressed the belief that the Unitarian movement, though small, had its contribution to make to the life of religion. The way to do this was not to tag on to the 'intellectual gymnastics' of the new radical theology but to insist upon the essentials of religion, to provide a faith relevant to the ordinary person. The business meeting was followed by an Act of Witness, commemorating the Edict of Torda of 1568, when religious toleration was granted to Transylvania. The programme included singing, Hungarian folk dancing and piano items from Bartok which, even if lasting a little long, were appreciated by all.

Tuesday morning saw the second Business meeting, when the Council Report and Accounts were discussed. This had been a busy year administratively. As GA Zette, the conference newspaper pointed out however, very little seemed to have been achieved. The Review Commission appointed to look at headquarters running had scarcely started its work; the same was true of the subcommittee looking into the denominational press. The Theological Panel had been set up, but little has been heard from it. These various bodies will presumably report in 1969. The Grants and Extensions Committee has decided to toughen up its policy generally. I quote: "The time has come when grants must be much more directed towards assisting a policy of encouraging, and much less to a policy of maintaining in existence causes which have ceased to be viable." There was much discussion about the meaning of the word 'viable'. This sentence is characteristic of the Council's new attitude in general; that is, the desire to see growth rather than stagnation within the Unitarian movement in Britain today.

The Anniversary Service held at Essex Church, Kensington was adequate but not outstanding. The congregation numbered some 500 on this occasion. The sermon was one of 'taking stock', rather than being a directive for the future, but its audibility was one quality. Afterwards the Rev Eric Wild was host at the meeting 'Look at Unitarian Youth'. With the help of films and slides, the various activities of the young people were related, including the UYPL [Unitarian Young People's League], the Foy Society, and the growing East-West contacts movement.

One of the highlights of an otherwise not too brilliant conference was the report of the Foy Society's 'Census of Unitarian Congregations' on the Wednesday afternoon. This survey was carried out some three years ago by Foy members, and after considerable difficulties of administration and printing is now complete. A shortened version of the original, 'Unitarian Congregations Surveyed', is recommended for the non-statistician. Foy took the District Associations as the basis for their tables and figures, and many surprising points emerge. In Britain one person in 3,320 is a member of a Unitarian congregation. The average congregation in the Sheffield District has 68 members, and of every 100 people, only 14 are less than 35 years old. It was stressed that this survey should be studied closely by every church and District Association. Admiration was expressed on all sides for the vast amount of work done.

The Essex Hall Lecture for 1968 was delivered by Rev Dr H.J. McLachlan on the subject of 'Human Rights in Retrospect and Reality', and the Welsh Department meeting was addressed by Gwynfor Evans MP. The final Business meeting took place on Thursday morning. Mrs Amy Howarth was appointed President of the Assembly, and the Rev C. Gordon Bolam Vice-President. In her address Mrs Howarth called upon people to enjoy their Unitarianism. A shield will be presented to the church with the greatest sale of Lindsey Press publications. There then followed a debate about Resolution 10, which proved – not unexpectedly – to be controversial. It calls upon members to support a system of Pledged Giving to the General Assembly of not less than 10 shillings per annum, in order that the work of the GA may proceed smoothly ('What about the £200,000 Appeal?' someone asked). In an amended form it was passed, i.e. 'commends' and not 'adopts'. In the final Resolution, Council was called upon to examine how domestic missions and other churches in areas of special need could be aided. It was passed. And so the delegates departed for another year. It was not the best G.A. I have attended; the meetings were on occasions dull, the catering was barely satisfactory and the accommodation was probably not up to the usual standards. It's up to Sheffield to do its best in 1969.

*Oh dear, I must have been an angry young man at the time!*

**Howard Hague**

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



**Sundays 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 12<sup>th</sup> July,  
10<sup>th</sup> August - 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.

## Gardening Sunday

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 12.30pm-1.30pm**



There will be a short gardening session after the service on 11<sup>th</sup> May – there is plenty of weeding, tidying and planting to be done at this time of year – and you might wish to think of it as a warm-up for the Nia Technique class later in the afternoon...

Please wear your old clothes and bring along tools if you have any. All are welcome to join in and help out. Speak to Caroline Blair for more information.

## Our Wardens' Column

### What's On in Our Busy Building...

April was a quiet month. The yoga group took a three week Easter break and, apart from our regular groups and the new Monday afternoon 60+ group on managing diabetes, not much else was happening.

There's a bit more going on in May: the Guild of Pastoral Psychologists are having one of their regular Thursday talks on the 1st of May, and they're here again on Saturday 17th for their Spring Conference; the Analytical Psychotherapists are here on Thursday 15th; on Friday 16th there's an Interfaith service; the Interfaith Seminary are here again on the 22nd and 23rd of May for study groups; on Saturday 24th Michal Levin is holding another of her healing sessions; Campden Hill, a local housing association on Notting Hill Gate, are holding their AGM here on Tuesday 27th. Overall it's still quite quiet though, and we're enjoying the peace before Music Board exams start again in June.

A few things have gone wrong in the building recently, most notably the downstairs toilet, which developed a leak and was out of action for several weeks. Thankfully it's now been repaired, thanks to a plumber recommended by Sheila in the bookshop next door. One of the underfloor hinges on the Hall doors has now seized up completely and we are looking for someone to replace it. Some locks have also seized up and need replacing.

Doing the church flowers continues to get more interesting as more variety becomes available at the farmers market, and our own garden starts to come into its own. On Easter Sunday, we also had the benefit of some beautiful lichen covered branches which Jenny found in the street on her way home.

Groundworks have now completely finished with our garden, and we look forward to seeing their careful planting come into its own over the coming months. The daffodils have been magnificent, flowering through the whole of April and bluebells are just coming out around the tree and by the side of the steps. The lavender behind the bin is also looking very good at the moment.

**David Berridge and Jenny Moy**





“Let us take care of the children, for they have a long way to go. Let us take care of the elders, for they have come a long way. Let us take care of those in between, for they are doing the work.”

Words from a  
traditional African Prayer

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

A brand new event for teenagers in the South...

## “London Calling”

Come along to a brand new monthly  
YOUTH GROUP for 13-17 year olds



On Sundays from 5.00-7.30pm:  
27<sup>th</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> July

Time to make friends, be creative and have fun.

At Unity Church, accessed through the gate entrance located between 277 and 278 Upper Street, Islington, London N1 2TZ, next to the Islington Fire Station.

Map available at: [www.new-unity.org](http://www.new-unity.org)

If you want to join in please send your details (*name, age, contact details, parent or guardian's name, and congregation if you have one*) to John Harley, Unitarian Headquarters, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex St, London WC2R 3HY.

For further information ring John on 020 8670 9280.

## Sunday Services at Essex Church

### 4<sup>th</sup> May – “Spiritual Speed Bumps”

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

Have there been times in your life when you have had to slow down, or stop for a while, in order to re-consider your path? Have you had life changing moments when you have known that, for better or worse, life will never be the same again? In this service I shall be exploring the challenge of such times and the potential growth and learning that they might bring. You might never look at speed bumps in quite the same way after this service. Also, after the service on 4<sup>th</sup> May:

**Microphone Practice:** an opportunity for anyone who wants to take part in future worship at Essex Church.

### 11<sup>th</sup> May – “Experiencing Awe, Talking Reverence”

*Service led by Daniel Hughes*

How is it that a community of people who have a variety of experiences and understands still gather week on week? What contains our community when we do not regard ‘belief’ or ‘faith’ as essential for the religious life? As we consider the role of the ‘Spirit’ this Pentecost Sunday, we will consider if it is not an appreciation for awe and reverence that in fact unites us. A religious life free from belief is one that can truly transform us.

### 18<sup>th</sup> May – “Membership Sunday”

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker*

Come and celebrate our congregation here at Essex Church in this service, during which we will recognise all our members and give an especial welcome to people who have joined us during the last year. Where do we belong in life and what does belonging offer us in the 21st century? Visitors are especially welcome at this service, which will be followed by our AGM

25<sup>th</sup> May – *Service led by Rev. Anne McClelland*

## June Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

**Thank you!!!**