



# Kensington Unitarians

Newsletter: December 2009 / January 2010

## What's On In Dec/Jan:

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
'Hand-Made Decorations'

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December, 10am  
**Walking Group:**  
Hammersmith to Barnes  
Meeting at Hammersmith Stn

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 11am  
**"Journeying On"**  
Led by Michaela von Britzke

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec, 12.30pm  
**Youngsters' Social**  
at the 'Sun in Splendour' Pub

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1-2pm  
**'The Joy of Drawing'**  
with Heidi Ferid (3/3)

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 11am  
**"Carol Service"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Dec, 12.30pm  
**Congregational Lunch**

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2-3pm  
**Nia Dance**

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Dec, 3.30-5pm  
**'Songs and  
Silence for the Soul'**

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> Dec, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:** 'Sir Gawain  
and the Green Knight'

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec, 7.00-9pm  
**Adult RE: 'Myth and Mystery'**  
with Sarah Tinker

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, 11am  
**"Winter Solstice"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, 5pm  
**"Candlelit Christmas Eve"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Dec, 11am  
**"Poetry on the Underground"**  
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 10am  
**Walking Group:** Isle of Dogs  
Meet at Canary Wharf (Jubilee)

**More listings on back cover...**

## A Message from our Minister

# Light in the Darkness

Perhaps it's because the weather has been so wet and gloomy these last few weeks that I have been particularly aware of anything that has lifted my spirits, brought a smile or touched my heart in some way. Do you remember those famous words from Albert Schweitzer: "At times our own light goes out and is re-kindled by the light of another. We all have reason to think with deep gratitude of those who have re-kindled our flames."

So here is my list of gratitude for shining lights in the last week:

- The wind that blew at just the right moment and showered me with golden beech leaves.
- The man who gave me his seat on the tube and who laughed when I offered it back to him as I got off.
- The parents who swung their delighted toddler around and around in the park and when he shouted "Again!" they did it again.
- All the people who stopped to help someone in the street whose shopping bag had just broken.
- The person who sent a humorous card from a holiday which was meant to be a sunshine break and it had instead rained for most of the week.
- The autumn snowdrops in Kensington Gardens and all the beautiful flowers we have in the church.
- Gitana who cleans our church so well and who works here on a Saturday night when most of us are either tucked up in bed or having a night out.

I wonder what you would include on your list? Who or what has made a light shine for you in the darkness? In this festive season let's be the people who reach out to others with kindness and practical gestures. Let us give a warm welcome to the strangers in our midst and put ourselves out a bit to help another. Walking alongside another human being, imagining ourselves in their position for a while, taking the time to listen fully to another's experience – these are all ways to break down the barriers of separation and isolation that sometimes mar human lives. This is what it is to be compassionate – to suffer alongside someone so that we might better know what can be done to alleviate their suffering.

*"You may call God love, you may call God goodness,  
but the best name for God is compassion." Meister Eckhart*

I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a year ahead of inspiration and fulfilment.

**Rev Sarah Tinker**

P.S. Thank you in advance to everyone who sends me a Christmas card. I've written out a cheque to our Swaziland project instead of sending cards this year but if you are going to be sending some cards do have a look at those on sale after our services in December. Some of them have an African theme and all proceeds on these will be sent to Swaziland.



## In this month's newsletter...

\* Memories of Patricia Walker \* Report on 'Building Your Own Theology' Course \* 'How I Came to Essex Church' - Sheila & Thomas Prellberg and Angela Gasparetto \* Report on Walking Group Outing to Epping Forest \* 'This I Believe' Project \* Spiritual Bookshelf: 'Finding Joy' by Charlotte Kasl \* and much more...

# Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

Many other groups share our church building. If you are interested in hiring one of our rooms for your own organisation or event please contact our warden by telephone or email.



Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church  
112 Palace Gardens Terrace  
Notting Hill Gate  
London W8 4RT

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

Web: [www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

# Candlelit Christmas Eve Service and Dinner



**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December, 5pm and 7pm**

There will be a special candlelit service at teatime on Christmas Eve. This will be followed by a cup of tea at the church. We are still in the process of organising an evening meal (7pm-9pm) at a local restaurant or pub to follow the service. It is quite likely that we will need people to sign up for this in advance so that we can make a booking. Listen out for further announcements as plans are finalised.

# Stewarding and Coffee



## Stewarding:

6 <sup>th</sup> December:	Natasha Drennan
13 <sup>th</sup> December:	Jim Blair
20 <sup>th</sup> December:	Doris Campbell
27 <sup>th</sup> December:	Geoffrey Olans
3 <sup>rd</sup> January:	Howard Hague
10 <sup>th</sup> January:	Alice Lambert
17 <sup>th</sup> January:	Ron Wallwork
24 <sup>th</sup> January:	Sam Reed
31 <sup>st</sup> January:	Christine Joshi

## Coffee:

6 <sup>th</sup> December:	Mark Tribe
13 <sup>th</sup> December:	Julia Alden
20 <sup>th</sup> December:	Louisa Bird
27 <sup>th</sup> December:	Kate Brown
3 <sup>rd</sup> January:	Gill Hague
10 <sup>th</sup> January:	Margaret Darling
17 <sup>th</sup> January:	Sheila Prellberg
24 <sup>th</sup> January:	Thomas Prellberg
31 <sup>st</sup> January:	Jo Ridgers

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

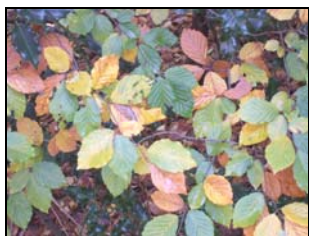
# Carol Service and Congregational Lunch



**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 11am / 12.30pm**

We will be having our traditional Christmas Carol service and congregational lunch on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December. Please put the date in your diary now. There will be a sign-up sheet circulated in late November and it would be great if you could offer to bring some food or drink to share.





## Essex Church Walking Group Report: Epping Forest in Autumn – Loughton to Chingford

Take four women: one, a little tired after medical treatment; one with a bad back; two others, let's just say, not quite the fit young things they once were. Put them in a 6000 acre forest with a little map, a network of intersecting paths, and an inability to find large landmarks like A-roads and substantial ponds; and watch them wander about. Tired, we decided to cut the walk short. Because of our map-reading skills (with me chief map-reader) we made it, instead, twice as long. At one point, trying to find our way back from a dead end, we were reduced to trying to spot individual toadstools that we had passed on the way out. Trying to use the sun as a guide, we were a little concerned in case it went in and we had to rely on stars instead. White-haired, confident people 20 years older than any of us kept striding past and disappearing into the distance.

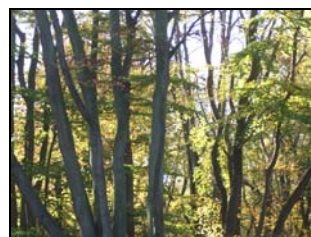
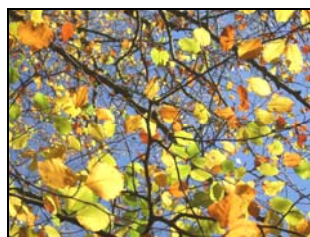


And yet, in other respects, it was a perfect walk. Sandwiched between a rainy Friday and a chilly, gloomy Sunday, Saturday was a perfect winter-walking day. Bright sunshine turned the leaves into green and yellow jewels. The trees in Epping Forest are ancient, beautiful, gnarled old things, widely spaced so there is plenty of light and air between them; every two minutes we had to stop and whip out our cameras and take identical photographs. The paths, though baffling from a map-reading point of view, were clear, springy underfoot and just rolling enough to keep our hearts working. In a forest full of cheerful hikers, riders and cyclists, we must have stood out for our constant cheerfulness. I would hardly have been surprised to turn round and find, Disney-like, a crowd of singing creatures following in our footsteps.

All sympathy to a couple of people who were not well enough to join us. We look forward to seeing more people on future walks.

**Caroline Blair**

Photographs by Jane Blackall



## Forthcoming Walks: Hammersmith/Barnes and Isle of Dogs

We have made provisional plans for the next few months, concentrating on shorter routes in town over the winter, so please put the dates in your diary and plan to come along:

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December** – Hammersmith to Barnes (*meeting 10am at Hammersmith D&P Tube Station – main ticket office*)

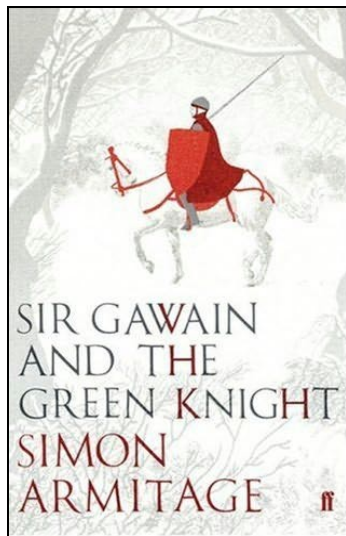
**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January** – Isle of Dogs (*meeting 10am at Canary Wharf Tube Station – near main entrance/top of escalators*)

We usually walk at a rather leisurely pace, chatting as we go, and stopping to admire the scenery and take photos. The route should not be too strenuous and is likely to be no more than 5 miles in length. If you are intending to come please let Jane Blackall or Caroline Blair know or email [walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:walks@kensington-unitarians.org.uk) to let us have your mobile phone number so that we can let you know if there is any last-minute change of plan. Any suggestions of future walking routes are also welcome.

## Reading Engagement Group – Conversations About Books That Move Us

### “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” by Simon Armitage

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 7.00-9.00pm



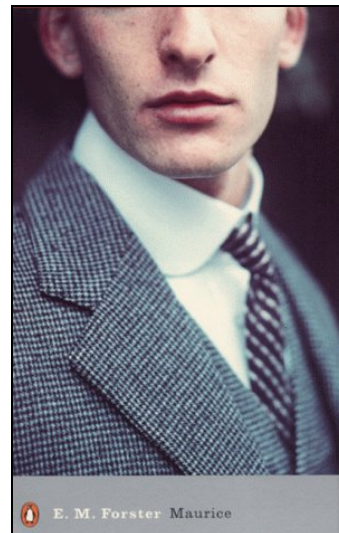
The reading engagement group's next conversation will be about "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" by Simon Armitage. This book will be introduced by Caroline Blair and will be the focus of our group in December 2009.

Information from Amazon UK:

*"Preserved on a single surviving manuscript dating from around 1400, composed by an anonymous master, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" was rediscovered only 200 years ago, and published for the first time in 1839. One of the earliest great stories of English literature, after "Beowulf", the poem narrates the strange tale of a green knight on a green horse, who rudely interrupts the Round Table festivities one Yuletide, casting a pall of unease over the company and challenging one of their number to a wager. The virtuous Gawain accepts, and decapitates the intruder with his own axe. Gushing blood, the knight reclaims his head, orders Gawain to seek him out a year hence, and departs. Next Yuletide Gawain dutifully sets forth... His quest for the Green Knight involves a winter journey, a seduction scene in a dream-like castle, a dire challenge answered - and a drama of enigmatic reward disguised as psychic undoing."*

### “Maurice” by E. M. Forster

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010, 7.00-9.00pm



The first reading group of the new year will centre on a conversation about "Maurice" by E.M. Forster. This book will be introduced by Juliet Edwards in our meeting in January 2010. Please note the change of date!

Information from Amazon UK:


*"Maurice is a young man who grows up confident in his privileged status and well aware of his role in society. Modest and generally conformist, he nevertheless finds himself increasingly attracted to his own sex. Through Clive, whom he encounters at Cambridge, and through Alec, the gamekeeper on Clive's country estate, Maurice gradually experiences a profound emotional and sexual awakening. A tale of passion, bravery and defiance, this intensely personal novel was completed in 1914 but remained unpublished until after Forster's death in 1970. Compellingly honest and beautifully written, it offers a powerful condemnation of the repressive attitudes of British society, and is at once a moving love story and an intimate tale of one man's erotic and political self-discovery."*

All are welcome to join the book group. Please do try to read the books before the meeting if you're planning to come along. It would also aid discussion if you pick out favourite passages to share. Regular members of the reading group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material. We have recently altered some of our plans for the New Year so please check the church website for dates and book choices.



# Kensington Unitarians Membership for 2010

**Kensington Unitarians**  
Becoming a Member of Essex Church: 2010



*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.*

[www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk)

Yes, it's that time again. Each year we ask members and friends of Essex Church to fill in a form and write out a cheque so that we can keep our records up to date and can pay our quota payment to our central Unitarian General Assembly. We will be sending these forms out in January to people who are already on our lists and they will also be available on Sunday mornings. Anybody who has joined in the last few months will be automatically registered as a member for 2010.

Some of you will have been at our AGM in May when the meeting agreed on certain goals for growth. One of those goals was to increase Kensington Unitarians membership to 75 over the next three years and to increase average attendance on Sunday mornings here at Essex Church to 50. But membership is about much more than statistics and finances. Membership is about our commitment to one another and about our yearning for spiritual connectedness. It says that we want there to be liberal religious communities in our society and that we are prepared to make a contribution, not just of our time and our money, but a contribution that comes from standing against the tide of materialism in our society, a willingness to be different, making a commitment to the spiritual explorations of others as well as ourselves.

If you would like to know more about our community here at Essex Church and what membership of Kensington Unitarians entails then do speak to me or one of our committee members to find out more. Or you are welcome to email your queries to [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk).

Rev Sarah Tinker

# Getting Involved at Essex Church

Three Thursday Evening Sessions from 7-8.30pm



These three sessions are designed to warm us up in the coldest time of the year by exploring different ways we can get more involved with this community of Kensington Unitarians. The sessions will stand alone though people are very welcome to come to all three. We'll share some snacks and have a drink as we consider the evening's topic, through conversation and small group exercises.

## 21<sup>st</sup> January: 'Growing our Congregation'

In this session we will watch a short DVD about how to welcome newcomers and then go on to make plans for growing our congregation in 2010. Bring your ideas, your hopes and doubts, your personal experiences.

*(This session will be repeated from 1-2pm on Sunday 24th January)*

## 4<sup>th</sup> February: 'Worship at Essex Church'

This session is for anyone who would like to be more actively involved in worship here at Essex Church. This is your chance to have your say about hymns, prayers, the format of our worship, as well as find out more about choosing readings and stories and writing and delivering addresses.

## 18<sup>th</sup> February: 'Activities at Essex Church'

One of the side benefits of being a member of a church such as ours is that you are welcome to get more involved in other activities. Do you want to know more about our small groups, possible religious education courses, social activities? Do you have ideas for future activities? Would you like to help plan or run events or get more involved with pastoral care? We are so fortunate to have our building here in Notting Hill Gate. What would you like to see happening here?

# February Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January**. Please send items (such as poems, quotes, articles, notices, rotas, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any of the committee members before this date.

Thank you!!!

# Warden's Column

## What's on in our Busy Building...

Mmmm, it's definitely getting to that time of year where you start to think "It can't be Christmas again already!" 2009 seems to have flown by for me, but I also feel that lots has happened.

Looking back over the last year of Warden's columns - at the beginning of the year, I was very concerned with building matters: getting the floor revarnished at the beginning of January; and the long, slow struggle towards the grand opening of the new toilets & kitchen in June. We've had intermittent problems with the heating in the church (two are currently not working again and we're trying to get them replaced). Other recurrent building preoccupations are storage and furniture arrangements upstairs. Our big successes of the year on those fronts are probably the installation of a buggy store under the ramp leading up to the church (largely paid for by a grant obtained by the nursery) and buying a wheeled coat-rack. Over the summer, I seemed to get obsessed with the bulbs in the front garden. It'll be interesting to see how many of those manage to come back for us this year.



The other main topic for this column is the use of the building. In May, I made a list of all the user groups who had paid over £1,000 to us in 2008. Apart from the Om Chanters, all of those groups still continue to meet here, but I would predict the table for this year would look slightly different.

Seicho no Ie (a Portuguese-speaking Buddhist/Christian group) and Beit Klal (the liberal synagogue) are long-standing users of the Church, as are the Associated Music Board and various psychologists groups. However, looking at the 2010 predictions it's interesting to see how important yoga is becoming to our income.

Lynne Pinette has been running her self-practice Ashtanga group here every morning for some years now and we were very lucky to welcome John Stirk to Tuesday evenings earlier this year, with his brand of osteopathy based yoga. His wife Lolly will be bringing her pregnancy and post-natal classes here on Mondays from January. In fact, all-in-all we're fast becoming one of the yoga centres of West London, and if you look at [www.wlay.co.uk](http://www.wlay.co.uk) you'll see a website Jane set up for Lynne Pinette, with pictures of me being bendy in the Church on it ☺

Overall, in terms of how the building is used, I'd say we've become more open to groups exploring the spirituality through the body while continuing to support those concerned with the mind and with various religious traditions. We've also gained a stronger community focus by hosting many public events run by Kensington & Chelsea Council and Age Concern.

So . . . a good year I think and good foundations to build on in 2010.

Now for those of you who like tables – here's my best guesses for the current top paying groups. I hope I remember to look back next year and see how wrong (or right) I was!

	2008	My Prediction for 2009	My Prediction for 2010
1	Associated Music Board	Associated Music Board	Seicho no Ie
2	Seicho no Ie	Seicho no Ie	Associated Music Board
3	Yoga - Lynne	Yoga - Lynne	Yoga - Lynne
4	Tse Qi Gong	Tse Qi Gong	Yoga – Lolly Stirk
6	Beit Klal	Yoga – John Stirk	Tse Qi Gong
7	Om Chanting	Beit Klal	Yoga – John Stirk
8	K&C Council	Kiddikicks	Independent Psychologists
9	Analytical Psychologists	Om Chanting	Beit Klal
10	Interfaith Seminary	K&C Council	Kiddikicks
11	Temenos	Analytical Psychologists	K&C Council
12	Pastoral Psychologists	Pastoral Psychologists	Analytical Psychologists
13	Sufis	Sufis	Pastoral Psychologists
14		Eritrean Cultural Group	Heruka Buddhists
15		Lucid Metaphysics	Sufis
16		Westminster Psychologists	Eritrean Cultural Group
17		Yoga - Charlotte	Lucid Metaphysics
18		Heruka Buddhists	Westminster Psychologists
19		Independent Psychologists	Yoga - Charlotte
20		Bruno Groening meditation	Yoga - Katrina

Jenny Moy

A forthcoming Unitarian Youth event in the District

## Rumble in the Jungle

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2009



A day of fun, games, creativity at Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church (RPUC) and Kew Gardens

### For 7-11 year-olds

led by John Harley, Liz Hills and Peter Teets.

**9.45am:** Arrivals at RPUC.

**10am-12 noon:** indoor fun activities.

**12 noon:** lunch - please bring sandwiches - leave church and catch bus to Kew Gardens.

**1pm-3pm:** Fun and creativity with photography.

**3pm:** bus back to RPUC.

**3.30pm-4.30pm:** final activity and ritual.

For info please contact the GA Youth Coordinator,  
Rev John Harley: 07985 900 935 or  
jharley@unitarian.org.uk

## Creativity Engagement Group

### 'Hand Made Decorations'

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 7.00-9.00pm



At our next creativity group session we will be making simple hand-made decorations – paper chains and the like – with which to adorn the church in readiness for the festive season. We have got a selection of basic materials but if you have any interesting paper/card and your own favourite implements for cutting and sticking then it would be good to bring them along

### 'Design for Printmaking'

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 7.00-9.00pm



We will be having a few linked sessions of the creativity group in early 2010. In January, we will be working on some simple designs which we can make into printing blocks in the next session, and print onto paper and fabric in the months that follow.

It would be a good idea to bring along any inspirational materials that you can use when coming up with your design – you might want to go for abstract patterns, designs from nature, or draw something entirely from your own imagination – it is probably a good idea to go for something bold so it will be easy to carve.



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



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

Second Sunday of the Month from 2-3.00pm  
(13<sup>th</sup> December, 10<sup>th</sup> January)

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

Cost £7 (£5 to Essex Church members)

Contact: Sonya Leite on 0207 371 1674



**The Richard Price Memorial Lecture  
by Susie Orbach entitled  
'Frankenstein's  
Bodies Today'**

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010, 7.30 pm  
at Newington Green Unitarian Church**

Susie Orbach is a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, writer and social critic. Her first book was 'Fat is a Feminist Issue'; her latest book is 'Bodies'.

The Richard Price Memorial Lecture commemorates one of the great Unitarian thinkers of the eighteenth century and a former minister at Newington Green. The lecturer is asked to speak about a topical or important aspect of liberty, reason and ethics.

Tickets £15 / £10 - buy in advance on 08444 771 000 or via [www.new-unity.org](http://www.new-unity.org), or on the door, subject to availability.



"Buddhist practice has led me to discover and gain access to another universe, the universe within. There is most assuredly another universe, another universe which lies beyond the universe of the five senses.

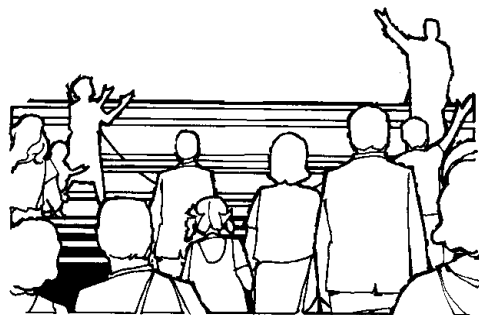
Disbelievers will scoff at this idea, just as earlier disbelievers scoffed at the possibility of the microscopic or subatomic worlds, presumably because these worlds 'couldn't be seen'. Indeed, it has been my experience that there are quite a few sophisticated and highly educated secularists who express this conceit of human reason. It is the 'I'll believe it when I see it' frame of mind, the assumption which privileges empirical observation over that which makes empirical observation possible.

Buddhist practice has led me to reverse the polarity on this assumption, and to understand that what one sees is often determined by and limited to one's beliefs....and further, that one's human or emotional experiences are similarly structured by what one believes or is prepared to believe about them. Once one is able to reverse the polarity on this I'll-believe-it-when-I-see-it conceit, then a new world appears....and a new and exciting and uncharted universe emerges into one's consciousness and awareness.

One is then prepared to take on a new journey, a new path, a new sojourn, a new life beyond the world of the taken for granted. My Buddhist practice has given me access to this other universe... and I will feel glad and appreciated to devote the remainder of my physical life to express my gratitude for this discovery."

**UU Buddhist, John Johnson**

**District Course in  
Congregational  
Leadership**



This is a second opportunity for London & South East Unitarians interested in assuming a more active leadership role in congregational life. Reports from those who went on the course last time around were very positive. It is a great opportunity to make connections with other Unitarians from the region. The course has four sessions which will cover:

<b>January 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Worship</b>
<b>February 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Building the Community</b>
<b>March 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Rites of passage</b>
<b>March 27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Leading Groups</b>

Each session will be held from 11:00am to 4:00pm.  
Venues and session leaders still to be announced.  
Attendance at all four sessions is encouraged.

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

Please contact the District Minister, Rev David Usher, for more information or to register for the congregational leadership course: [davidusher@ldpa.org.uk](mailto:davidusher@ldpa.org.uk).

**Unitarian Talent Show**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010  
Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead**

Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel is planning a talent show with a Valentine theme and would like to involve the Kensington, Newington Green and Golders Green congregations as both participants and audience. The organisers have reserved two slots for people from our congregation to perform and are asking for songs, music, skits or poetry with a Valentine theme.

Please put the date in your diary and plan to go along and support this event which will be a fundraiser for an (as-yet-to-be-determined) Unitarian good cause.



# Memories of Patricia Walker

"I'm not sure that I've met anyone in our Unitarian movement who has been quite so supportive of ministers as Patricia Walker. Throughout the four years that I've been here at Essex Church in my first ministry, she has been gently guiding me, backing me up, listening to my concerns and providing much needed information. Her long involvement with the church gave her very useful insights into the role of ministry, which she saw as a shared task, with congregation members playing a vital role. When we started to look at ways to grow our congregation we asked Patricia to share her particular skills in greeting newcomers, because new members would so often say that their first conversation had been with her over a cup of tea after the service. Her interest in people as individuals was notable and she would often, quietly, let me know when someone needed a phone call or a visit. I also appreciated her love of our church building and her interest in maintaining it. "Buy the best, Sarah!" she would say when we mulled over purchasing new crockery or kitting out the new kitchen. All of these qualities will be terribly missed here at Essex Church, but perhaps most of all I shall miss Patricia's quite unique combination of brusque kindness that said exactly how things were, but with that characteristic loving twinkle in the eye."

**Sarah Tinker**

"Patricia introduced herself to me on my first visit to Essex Church about six years ago. I was later to discover that that was very typical of Patricia, always looking out for the new person and making them feel welcomed. Her welcome was never intrusive or overpowering, she just made you feel that she was interested and wanted to listen and find out more about you. When I attended my first GA, Patricia drove me up to Chester and it was a wonderful opportunity to get to know her better. At the GA she was a wonderful supportive presence but always gave me space to discover the meeting for myself and to meet new people. I knew that Patricia was devoted to Unitarianism but it was wonderful to see it in action at Chester. She literally glowed when she met old friends and discovered new ones. But she was never overwhelmed by the movement; she was always her own woman and was quite happy to tell you about the people she disagreed with. Yet while she disagreed with them she always saw them as an integral part of the Unitarian family. Her ministry of welcome and listening was available to all."

**David Francis Darling**

"I miss Patricia. She was always interesting to talk to and made sense. When I first joined the community at Essex Church my first impression was that she was matriarchal but I soon found out that she had a soft, practical side and was extremely kind. I quite often recall the time I was returning from a walk along the Thames and was passing through Chiswick when I had a diabetic hypoglycaemic attack and had to sit down on the pavement. Along came Patricia, who despite her own health problems, helped me round to her home, revived me with a piece of fruit and then drove me home in her car."

**Will Lyons**



"Talking about Patricia just after she died, I noted that when I started at the Church, she was the very first person to meet and greet me. As I said it, I reflected on how many people would say the same thing. Because of shyness, preoccupation, and a natural preference for chatting to those we already know, greeting and welcoming visitors and first-timers is not always the most popular role at the church. But Patricia was always there, spotting the newcomer, the shy and uncertain, anyone returning after a long gap or illness; she even had an infallible eye for anyone with a new shirt, or haircut, or pair of shoes, and would home straight in with the appreciation.

After the funeral, I tried to describe to people Patricia's exact role in the church. I tried 'pillar', but it sounded hopelessly ladies-in-hats; somehow fusty and conservative. She had an abrasive quality that 'pillar of the community' sounds totally at odds with. I considered 'mother', but that wasn't right either. It sounds cuddly and soft, where Patricia was feisty and energetic. In the end, very suitably for a Unitarian Church, I settled on the image of Patricia as a flame burning at the centre of the church, giving out both warmth and light. Of course our whole Church flame has not been extinguished: a community with so many committed and caring people does not let its flame go out; but with the loss of Patricia some of the energy of the flame has been dimmed.

I know that over her last year Patricia was both weak and in pain, but she was still just as much a flame in the church. She lit it up and warmed it, even as her own body diminished. That kind of flame doesn't come from a sense of duty; it can only come from love. She loved our community, and I hope she realized that she was loved in return. We miss her."

**Caroline Blair**

# A Celebration for Patricia

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2.00pm



Do join us for this informal memorial service for Patricia, which will be followed, at her request, by a champagne reception with nibbles. We'd be grateful if you could let us know if you plan to come along so we have an idea of numbers to cater for and let our minister know if you would like to take an active part in the service.

"It was the new building in Palace Gardens Terrace which caught her eye, and a chance encounter with (then minister) Frank Clabburn which led to her coming to a service, investigating further, and gradually becoming totally involved in Essex Church. With a shortage of active young members, if any one proposed a new venture, it was incumbent on everyone else to support the initiative. And Patricia was always willing to join in. It was her organisational skills which were invaluable. And the efficiency – take a committee meeting one evening – the minutes were ready next day. This on top of her bead-work, her stall in Kensington Market, her life with Donald, whose eyes she was.

The huge number who attended her memorial service showed how many people's lives she touched. She had that rare gift of accepting people, warts and all. Compassionate, generous, great fun to be with, especially exploring new places. Mosaics seen in Ravenna and Venice, magically scintillating after a very heavy rain one day in North Cyprus, the thrill of seeing the mosaic of the bird on the edge of a bird bath in Ravenna and the footsteps in that corridor in North Cyprus stay with me always. So easy to entertain – a week on the beach in Sussex or Norfolk, or sitting together in Libya watching young girls enjoying themselves too. Or take her to a bead shop... Or enjoy a meal together. Waiting for her at a favourite restaurant one evening when she did not realise she was being watched – her face showed the agony it cost her to put one foot before another – complaint came never. When the medical staff said it had been an honour to treat her, then surely they meant it.

Did she have any weakness, this paragon? Of course! She was a HUMAN. She had a morbid fear of spiders. I ache with laughter at her tale of how she would retreat to the safety of a kitchen chair, while Donald got busy with a jam-jar: "left hand down a bit," she would instruct him. "No, no, a couple of inches to the left!" and eventually team-work prevailed. Panic over."

**Stephanie Saville**

"Patricia was a very active and loyal member of the church committee and the trustees for many years. She served as chairperson of the committee from May 1999 until September 2000, and later acted as minute-taker of the trustees and committee for a number of years.

Like most congregations, Essex Church has had its ups and downs over the years, and Patricia was generally the first person I turned to for her wise counsel and very practical advice. She could always be relied on to provide sound commonsense, and point us in the right direction. I shall always be grateful to her for this, and for so much else. She was also something of an expert on building matters, and this was often invaluable as we try to look after our premises which are starting to show signs of wear and tear.

All in all, Patricia made a huge contribution to our beloved community over three decades, and she will be missed more than we can say."

**Howard Hague**

"Patricia - I met you at the beginning of 2004, when I first came to this church imagining that I had slipped in at the back unnoticed...as if!!

You were dressed in bright colours, purple mainly and in clothes I found interesting; nothing run-of-the-mill for you! You were, at that time quite a substantial woman, a Woman of Substance indeed! Perhaps you were always interested in clothes, I don't know, but it seemed to my new eye that you were 'in bloom' at that time. As you lost weight you seemed to take even more interest in what you wore, delighting in wearing new styles ...but perhaps you always did?

Over the following 5 years I watched you, gradually at first and then increasingly fast, lose weight as you lost interest in food unless, I was told, you were in company. At first the weight loss quite suited you but latterly I found it alarming and it seemed to run alongside ever increasing pain. When I first met you pain is what you talked about a lot, I assume because it had increased and fairly much consumed your thinking on a daily basis. Pain does that... but as you adjusted to your new body and the constant pain in a curious way you seemed almost more content! I never understood that but perhaps it was a kind of acceptance of what is, of what you couldn't change?

You will stay in my memory as a highly talented and vibrant woman interested in all that was happening around you at church, which is the only place I knew you in. I didn't ever visit you at home or see you with your family. To me you were a vital part of this community, I miss you and fully appreciate the interest you took in me and my family and other newcomers to this warm and welcoming fluctuating group of people.

Rest in peace. With love and gratitude..."

**Jo Ridgers**



"On the 22nd of October 2009, Essex Church said farewell to our dear friend Patricia Walker-Hesson, one of our community's longest-standing members. This was both a very sad and a joyful occasion as we also celebrated her life.

Two things occurred following the funeral service which lead me to reflect both on the service and the gathering afterwards. Firstly, I received a text from Jo, a member of our community (who was by then on the train back to Rye where she had been awaiting the birth of her grandchild) who remarked: "it was a joyful and sad occasion - such a huge mixture of emotions".

Later that evening, a friend rang me at home to ask how I was feeling as well as to find out about the funeral service. My friend had been aware of my relationship with Patricia and on occasions, admired the various pieces of beautiful jewellery which had been given to me by Patricia either for birthdays or Christmas. During our discussion, my friend commented on how distressing her own mother's funeral service had been because at the time, she had felt that the Vicar had not known her mother as the funeral service could not be said to be reflective of her mother or her mother's values in any way; commenting: "I know my mother wouldn't have liked it".

These comments lead me to reflect on Jo's message, the address given by the Rev. Sarah Tinker, and the various readings by Patricia's family and members of our community. So it was with much delight that I was able to say to my friend that I felt sure that Patricia would have approved of the service had she been present because I felt that the service had been an excellent reflection of her life and values. I also commented that, although I felt that it had been a sad occasion, it had also been joyful because all of Patricia's friends and family had managed to celebrate her life as well.



Looking around the room at the gathering, it seems to me that the "essence" or "core" (for me this means her creativity, kindness, ability to share, her love of humanity, regardless of race or background) were present throughout the occasions. I believe that these qualities were reflected in the beautiful jewellery which she had lovingly crafted by her and shared with her family and friends. On the church walls were also exhibits which had been lovingly crafted by Patricia. It seems to me that this was not just a passion, but more an "everyday spiritual practice" for Patricia, as I can recall how upset she had been when she felt too unwell to participate in this activity.

I have known Patricia for about nine years. I don't actually recall our first meeting, but I know that our relationship developed during the period that I chaired the Management Committee. Naturally we sometimes disagreed, but it seems to me on reflection that she always believed that she was acting in the best interest of Essex Church. As our relationship developed, I came to experience her generosity, in many ways. From the various meals we shares, pieces of jewellery given the visits to hospital whilst I was admitted and the telephone calls when she heard that I had been unwell.

I believe that although Patricia is physically no longer, with us, her "core" remains with all her friends and family. An example of this is: as I got in my car the other day; I became aware of the prayer bead hanging there, and recalled Patricia facilitating the workshop. Wearing pieces of jewellery, I am reminding of her generosity and love. I miss her very much, and sometimes still forget that she is physically not in Chiswick where I can't just drop in unexpectedly, and was always made to feel welcome."

**Doris Campbell**

"I feel grateful to Patricia for so many things. One of our main areas of connection was around Hucklow Summer School. Patricia encouraged me to go to summer school for the first time way back in 2000, only a year after I had first pitched up at Essex Church, and arranged for me to be supported by the congregation and the district to attend. She also gave me a lift to Hucklow. I clearly remember, as we pulled up to the Nightingale Centre for the first time, thinking 'why on earth have I agreed to come?!?' But in fact that has turned out to be a pivotal moment in my life: so many good things – friendship, love, truly transformative moments – have followed from it, and I credit Patricia with having given me an amazing gift. In the end we both joined the summer school panel to organise the annual event. I feel that working together on this project, which was very close to our hearts, is one of the ways in which we got to know each other so well. It felt like a great achievement for both of us. I know Patricia was sad to give it up when it was her turn to step down from the panel this year and I too was sad that we would no longer have this shared project. Patricia and I went, with Sara Frith, for a weekend break in Norfolk just a few weeks before Patricia died. We planned the holiday during the busy run-up to summer school so we could look forward to having a proper rest afterwards. I am so glad that we had this last bit of fun together (the photo, left, was taken while apple-picking in mid-September). I hope Patricia knew how much I loved and appreciated her."

**Jane Blackall**





✞ 8<sup>th</sup> December - Immaculate Conception  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Christian

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is mainly marked by the Roman Catholic church, to celebrate the doctrine that Mary herself was born free from original sin, leaving her sinless to bear Jesus.

❁ 8<sup>th</sup> December - Bodhi Day - Buddhist

On Bodhi Day some Buddhists, for example those in the Pure Land tradition, celebrate Gautama's attainment of Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, India.

✨ 12<sup>th</sup> December - Hanukah - Jewish

Hanukah is the Jewish celebration of the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, after it was recaptured from the Syrian Greeks in 165 BCE. Candles are lit, one for each of the eight evenings of Hanukah and food cooked with oil is eaten, to remember the miracle with oil that kept the Temple lights burning.

☪ 18<sup>th</sup> December - Al-Hijra  
- New Year's Day (1425 AH) - Muslim

This day commemorates the Hijra, or migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Medina in 622 CE. Muslim years are dated from this event and termed AH (After the Hijrah).

✞ 25<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Day - Christian

On Christmas Eve churches hold evening carol services and Midnight Masses. Christmas Day celebrates the birth of Jesus who Christians believe to be the Son of God. Gifts are reminders of offerings brought to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

☪ 27<sup>th</sup> December - Ashura - Muslim

Ashura is a day of mourning for some Muslims, particularly the Shi'ite communities, because of the martyrdom of Husain, the second son of Ali and Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. The festival is celebrated by the Shi'ite communities in Iraq, Iran and the sub-continent of India.

✞ 1<sup>st</sup> January - The Circumcision  
or Naming of Jesus - Christian

The Christian Church celebrates the circumcision or naming of Jesus at eight days old in accordance with Jewish custom, as recorded in Luke 2:21.

☪ 5<sup>th</sup> January - Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh - Sikh

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, formed the order of the Khalsa on Vaisakhi (Baisakhi), and instituted the Five Ks. Important anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus are referred to as Gurpurbs, and are marked with an akhand path, an unbroken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.

✞ 6<sup>th</sup> January - Epiphany - Christian

The twelfth day of Christmas, celebrates the visit of the wise men, or magi, to the baby Jesus. It is particularly important in the Orthodox church, where the baptism of Jesus and his first miracle at Cana are remembered.

✞ 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> January - Christmas Eve and Day  
- Eastern Orthodox and Armenian Christian

Many Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches still use the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar. This means that they celebrate Christmas and other fixed festivals thirteen days after the Western churches, so the 6th and 7th January in the Orthodox calendar equates to 24th and 25th December in the Western calendar.

❁ 14<sup>th</sup> January - Makar Sankrant / Lohri - Hindu

Makar Sankrant / Lohri is a day for almsgiving and putting right disagreements and quarrels. The festival is called Lohri in Panjab, and Pongal in Tamil Nadu and celebrated with special food (Tamils eat a rice dish - pongal). Panjabi families (including some Sikhs) celebrate Lohri following the birth of a son.

❁ 16<sup>th</sup> January - Shinran Memorial Day - Buddhist

The day is celebrated by some Buddhists in the Mahayana tradition. Shinran Shonin (1173 - 1263 CE) founded Jodo Shin-shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

✞ 18<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> January - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has become ever more widely celebrated with the growing commitment to ecumenism among churches. Special services and other events are held. The 2010 theme is "You are witnesses to these things" (Luke 24:48).

❁ 25<sup>th</sup> January - Honen Memorial Day - Buddhist

Honen is one of the outstanding figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism, and the founder of Jodo-shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

☪ 27<sup>th</sup> January - Holocaust Memorial Day

A remembrance day for all those who suffered at the hands of the Nazis during World War 2 (1939-45). It aims to help ensure that no such atrocity happens again, by keeping fresh the memory of all who suffered and died at that time.

✨ 30<sup>th</sup> January - Tu B'Shevat - Jewish

Tu B'Shevat is a minor Jewish festival celebrating the New Year for trees. Jewish tradition marks the 15th of Shevat as the day when the sap in the trees begins to rise heralding the beginning of Spring. It is customary to plant trees and eat fruit from Israel.

## Just for Today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appal me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my 'luck' as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn, and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least things I don't want to do – just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticise not one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for today I will have a programme. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

**Kenneth L. Holmes**  
Sent in by Margaret Darling

## Essex Church Podcasts

Most weeks, the sermon from our Sunday service is recorded, and the audio is made available as a podcast. You can download individual mp3 files from the church website (we have been recording since July and at the time of writing there is already a back catalogue of 14 sermons online) or subscribe to the podcast to receive sermons automatically whenever they are released (the easiest way to do this is to search for 'Kensington Unitarians' or 'Essex Church' on iTunes or similar).

[www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/podcasts.html](http://www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/podcasts.html)

## How I Came to Essex Church



The first time I came to Essex Church I remember really distinctly – it was about 3 ½ years ago and I had been in the UK for about 4 months. I had done an internet search on Unitarian churches here in London, and after looking through the websites that came up, I was clearly drawn to the Kensington Unitarians site.

I was new to Unitarianism – having come across it as a faith 2 or 3 years before I had read about it, gone to a service once in Canada, but due to my life shifting and changing so much, I had never before invested the time/took the step to really explore it, to see if it was for me. Having been raised Roman Catholic (I was confirmed in Italy!) and then choosing to leave the Catholic church at the age of 16 due to the surprising realization that I just did not "believe", I explored different spiritual paths and philosophies independently, but 10 years down the line realized that I missed the ritual of attending a service and being a part of a spiritual community.

Where could I possibly fit in, though? Organized religion is something I really struggle with as a concept. Any dogmatic approach to faith and belief... I struggle with!! But, still, I sought a way and means to nurture my spirit and heart through a collective experience that allowed for my own thoughts and spiritual journey. And so my search brought me to Unitarianism, and, luckily, when I was ready, to Essex Church.

Why did this particular church draw me and why have I stayed? Because it is open and liberal. Because when I sent an email enquiring about coming to the church for the first time I received a warm, inviting and yet not pushy email in reply from Jane (thank you Jane!). Because of Sarah Tinker, our amazing minister who is kind, ministers with humour and a sense of humanity and is a fantastic leader of this community. Because I feel that there is space for me to be myself, nurture my own path alongside the path of many others. And because of the sense of community that Essex Church has due to all of the above.

I feel lucky as Essex Church was and is such a good fit for me. Even when my busy life takes me away for a month or two at a time, I always feel a connection with the church – through Sarah, Jane, friends that I have met and through the growing history that I have with the community. I think that it is a very special place.

**Angela Gasparetto**

## Youngsters' Social

After the service on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December



The second meeting of the pub lunch social group was held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009. We had a lovely roast dinner at the nearby Windsor Castle on Campden Hill Road which is one of London's most historic pubs. It used to have a clear view of the far off Windsor Castle from the upper windows, hence its name. We took full advantage of the garden on the fantastic sunny autumn day.

This meeting of 20s and 30s professionals and students will meet on the first Sunday every other month at a location within walking distance of the church. Please contact Natasha Drennan at [tash\\_drennan@hotmail.com](mailto:tash_drennan@hotmail.com) if you would like to join the group at our next event. Also, check out the Kensington Unitarians Facebook page for updates.

The next social on will be held on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at the 'Sun in Splendour' pub on Portobello Road following tea and coffee after service.

Natasha Drennan

## Kiddikicks Football

Monday Afternoons from 11<sup>th</sup> January



Kiddikicks offer fun football classes to local children in Notting Hill Gate at Essex Unitarian Church. The classes have been running for a while now and continue at our church on Monday afternoons in the New Year. The new term starts on January 11<sup>th</sup> and runs for 12 weeks. These fun football skills classes cater for children from 18 months up to age 5. Trials for new players are available. Call Kiddikicks HQ on 020 7937 7965 or drop them an email to [james@kiddikicks.co.uk](mailto:james@kiddikicks.co.uk). See their testimonials page and more at [www.kiddikicks.co.uk](http://www.kiddikicks.co.uk).

## 'Gifts of Light'

### Universal Spiritual Gathering

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 5.15-9.00pm  
Church of Christ Scientist - Palace Gardens Terrace

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE



We warmly invite you to join with people of all ages and many faiths/spiritual traditions in joyous Celebration of the One Light at the Heart of All. With candle-lighting, meditation, song, readings, music, prayer. Beginning with Seasonal Refreshments, and Supper after. Bring yourself, your children and friends - All are welcome.

Seasonal Refreshments/ Lantern Making: 5.00 – 6.30pm  
Spiritual Gathering at 6.30 – 8.15pm.

Vegetarian Supper served by the  
Hare Krishna Community at 8.15pm.

Suggested Donations for Spiritual Gathering / Supper: £5  
Toy Drive – Bring new toys or donate £5  
Contact: Rev Danielle Wilson - 07802 898 252

Let Sarah know if would like to be the Unitarian light bearer in this year's service and take part in a simple but beautiful ritual. A highly recommended evening.

## A Poem for Unitarians

(my title - WL)



Ah, snug lie those that slumber  
Beneath Conviction's roof.  
Their floors are sturdy lumber  
Their windows weatherproof.  
But I sleep cold forever  
And cold sleep all my kind  
For I was born to shiver  
In the draught from an open mind.

Phyllis McGinley, from  
'The Province of the Heart'  
Submitted by Will Lyons

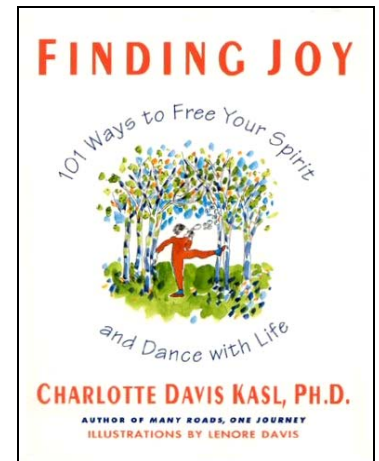


# The Spiritual Bookshelf

## #10: 'Finding Joy' by Charlotte Davis Kasl

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

Over the years I have spent far too much time idly browsing through the enormous array of books available on Amazon and other online bookshops... and then far too much money speculatively purchasing many of those titles that I have been drawn to. Of course, this is a fairly high-risk shopping strategy, and I have ended up with quite a few disappointing books this way. But in the end I think it has all been worth it for the sake of a few life-changing works I have come across and which I might never otherwise have encountered.



'Finding Joy' by Charlotte Kasl is one of those treasures that I have found in this manner.

In its characteristically gentle and unassuming way it has subtly infiltrated my world-view in the eight years since I first bought it. The book is full of encouraging and wise words written in Dr Kasl's very down-to-earth, often playful, manner. I was charmed by these two apparently contradictory sections which follow each other in the list of '101 ways to free your spirit and dance with life':

**48. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing badly.** *Many people block themselves from undertaking new endeavours – from learning a language to taking up a sport or music lessons – because they are afraid of being clumsy and mediocre. I suggest that clumsy and mediocre can be wonderful compared with burying one's dreams and shrinking one's life. It is excellent for the spirit to be a beginner at something. Being a beginner keeps us humble, helps us understand children, and can bring tremendous pleasure if we stop judging ourselves and just enjoy. Better to be a run-of-the-mill piano player than go to the grave regretting you never tried. When you let yourself do something badly you don't have to get caught up advancing or pressuring yourself. So consider doing what you have always wanted to do – take piano lessons, learn to fish, try woodworking, take a class in Spanish, try aerobics, join a hiking group, plant a garden, take up golf. Whether you do it well, do it so-or-so, or do it badly, let yourself experience the magic of knowing that when you practice something regularly, you will always improve, and you will send messages of happiness through your whole body.*

**49. If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well.** *While there are times to be happy with a mediocre job, there is something wonderful about staying with a project until it is absolutely the best you can do. Creating beautiful woodwork, precise stitchery, a beautiful painting, or a poem, or practicing something until it is all yours – natural, flowing, refined – gives a wonderful feeling. It can take hundreds of thousands of times practicing a tennis stroke, or playing a certain phrase of music, but when you get it – Ah! It's a form of bliss – you feel alive, connected, at one with the muses. When we stretch our mind, expand our capacity, we start to believe that anything is possible.*

Something else that meant a lot to me was a section entitled "first aid for difficult times" which begins with the following lines:

*"On the path toward joy we sometimes meet with intense pain and depression. Sometimes a person is simply trying to get through a day and just cope. If things are tough for you right now, hang in there! People care, I care. Many people have moved beyond depression and despair – including me."*

I have a copy of the book on cassette, which I sometimes listen to when I am feeling low, and it is surprisingly comforting to hear those kind words spoken out loud at those times when I feel quite disconnected from others. Even though I don't know Charlotte Kasl personally – and we are most unlikely ever to meet – I feel touched and comforted to hear her say that she cares.

Dr Kasl is a practicing psychotherapist – previously a professional pianist, apparently – and also a lecturer, workshop leader, and Reiki healer. She has a long-time involvement with social activism and feminism and has written extensively on addiction, relationships, sexuality, and healing. Influences from Buddhism and Sufism are apparent in her work which is also clearly grounded in her own Quaker tradition. For me, she comes across as a reassuringly sensible and trustworthy woman... but she also seems to have a silly streak, which appeals to me very much. A couple of her other books have been given slightly cheesy titles for publication – but I would urge you not to let this put you off – 'If the Buddha Dated' and 'If the Buddha Married' have more helpful sub-titles which explain that they are about finding love, and maintaining enduring love, on the spiritual path.

Here are some more wise words from Charlotte Kasl to finish:

*"Imagine a love inside of you so expansive that you feel an invisible cord of light connecting you to all people. Imagine diverse groups of people all over the world gathering in small groups to take turns telling the story of their lives to each other. Imagine, as we listen to each other, the walls of separateness melting away and our hearts opening to each other. Imagine knowing that you are not alone with your hopes, dreams, fears and joys. So reach out, listen, learn, be gentle with yourself. Remember that ultimately your personal joy is tied to the joy of all people and all life on the earth."*

Jane Blackall

## How We Came to Essex Church



My story is similar to many I've read in this Newsletter these past few months. I grew up attending a Methodist church, and never really questioned my faith or religiosity for some years.

Marrying an agnostic was probably the turning point for me - it made me really question what I believe, and why I believed it.

However it must be said that I had long questioned 'religiosity' as opposed to faith. I came to the conclusion that I am basically Quaker at heart, and attended a couple of local meetings. However, it seems that early training leaves deep roots, as I did want some structure to the worship service after all. By chance I heard someone discussing Unitarians - I had never heard of them before! He said that it was basically like Quakers but with talking, and having looked into it further on the internet I found this to be true.

So I came along with Alexandra one Sunday morning, and liked the experience. Shortly thereafter I went to the "New U" classes run by Sarah, and learned a lot more. I enjoy the informal style of service, and James and Alexandra are very happy here. Even Thomas comes along happily and doesn't feel out of place. The only drawback for us is the location, as we're north of Stratford and have to make a little trek to be here. But it's worth it.

**Sheila Prellberg**



When I first came along with Sheila to Essex Church I was very sceptical, as I had only heard very little about Unitarianism before. But I had made a commitment to myself to support my wife's religious needs when we got married, and she had gotten quite excited about this group after attending some induction classes. And I must say that I was positively surprised. I found that I liked the form

of service and enjoyed the artistic and intellectual stimulation very much. In jest I could say that I was even somewhat disappointed because I couldn't find anything to criticize!

Most importantly, perhaps, my children look forward to coming to the services, even despite the long tube ride. It is my impression that coming to Essex Church on Sundays educates them, but doesn't indoctrinate, which is very important to me. I don't expect that my own agnosticism is affected too much (I describe myself as agnostic because being an atheist would take more effort, and I am just too lazy for that). Having said this, I somewhat surprised myself by actually lighting a candle of joy and concern during a recent service.

**Thomas Prellberg**

## Sometimes



Sometimes things don't go, after all, from bad to worse. Some years, muscadell faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail, sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes step back from war; elect an honest man; decide they care enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor. Some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best efforts do not go amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to. The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow that seemed hard frozen: may it happen for you.

**Sheenagh Pugh**

*Note: The author herself gives permission for the poem to be used by charities but prefers not to have her name mentioned as she has come to hate the poem and being associated with it. Yet it remains a very popular poem and turns up from time to time on London Transport's Poetry on the Underground*



**'Conversation in the Park' by Heidi Ferid**  
See [www.heidiferidart.co.uk](http://www.heidiferidart.co.uk) for more of Heidi's work.

# Recent Course: Building Your Own Theology (BYOT)

One session of BYOT asks participants to discuss their views of human nature. The course notes state that “Unitarians have generally held an optimistic view of human nature in reaction against an orthodoxy that stressed innate evil (i.e. original sin). The traumas of 20th century history have called that optimism into serious question.”

Here are two participants’ thoughts about human nature – both stressed that these statements are ‘works in progress’.

“I think humans are highly intelligent and imaginative animals who are born neither good nor evil and are neither blank slates nor pre-programmed biological machines. I think most detailed accounts of human nature are pure speculation but that it’s still worthwhile trying to put together the puzzle, piece by piece.”

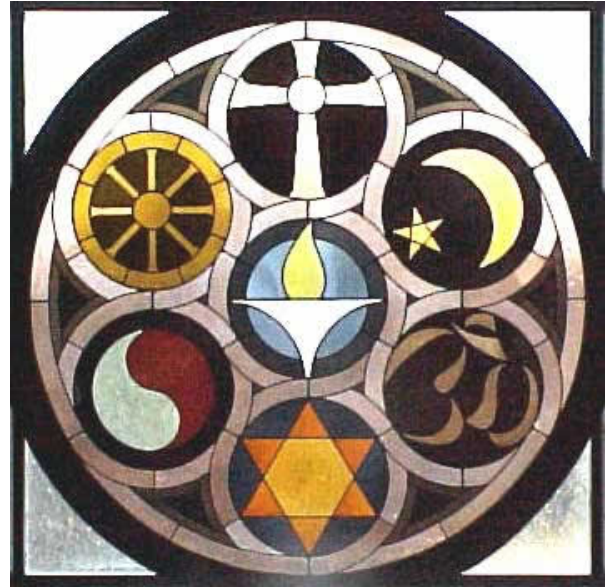
**Nicolas Holzapfel**

“Humans are the most wonderful, intricate and awesome as well as the most base and lowly beings I know of in this world. They have the greatest potential both to do good and evil. In the interaction between them, they set into motion / create the most powerful forces.”

**Johanna Poorta**

Another BYOT session asked people to write down their Ethical Commandments. The subsequent discussion showed just how difficult it is to make hard and fast rules for modern life. Here are some of the ‘commandments’ that we discussed.

- Live simply that others might simply live.
- Try to avoid hurt and harm whenever possible.
- Use your political vote at every opportunity.
- Leave the world in no worse a state than when you entered it.
- Treat others as you would want them to treat you.
- Pursue truth and love with all your heart, soul and mind.
- Love your neighbour as yourself.
- Think before you send that email.
- Do not criticise someone before you have made every effort to understand their position.
- Love your enemy.
- Judge yourself as you judge others.
- Know that you do not know.
- It’s not how much you make or take that matters, but rather what you give.
- Responsibility is not transferable; we each must be responsible for our own actions.



## Building My Own Theology

So, here I am, ¾ of the way through the “Build Your Own Theology” course. I really didn’t know what to expect when I signed up and was a bit nervous about sharing my thoughts, beliefs and even more so, my uncertainties.

I found myself, however, in a group of people, being sensitively facilitated to explore, question, challenge and think about my own theology, not just as it stands now, but in how my past “religious” experiences had impacted on the thoughts and beliefs I hold today.

Through a range of different and often artistically creative exercises designed to make me think about various questions, from considering what “Ultimate reality” is and which ethical codes I adhere to, to mapping out my “Spiritual” journey, I’ve gained a greater insight into my own human nature and “spiritual” identity.

I’ve found sharing my findings with others, during pair and small group exercises really affirming. Listening to others experiences and ideas has been really rich and inspiring, often sparking off new ideas, wonderings and questions in me for further exploration at another time.

My own theology seems to be something that’s slowly unfolding now. Having the focused 1 ¾ hours each week, is helping me to become clearer and have more conviction about what I do think and believe, as well as what doesn’t hold true for me, whether it’s a religious belief I’ve outgrown, or something that’s never really made sense to me.

I’m glad, not only that I’ve taken the opportunity to do the course, but that a course like this exists. It really, “Does what it says on the tin”, it enables you to Build Your Own Theology!

**Jeannene Powell**



## 'This I Believe'



We're going to ask everyone involved with the congregation here at Essex Church if they would like to write a statement of their beliefs, with the possibility of perhaps publishing them all in a booklet some time next year. A group that studied the Building Your Own Theology course back in the 1980s did just that and published their statements in a booklet called 'Kensington Quest'. You can find a copy of this on our Kensington Unitarians website (in the section headed 'Publications') and it makes fascinating reading. Several people who attended that course are still part of our community today. Will they stick by their original statements, or have their beliefs changed?

You might also find it interesting to look at a website called 'This I Believe', which contains over 60,000 short statements of belief ([www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org)) and an associated podcast. The organisers of this website give various guidelines to potential writers - such as be brief, specific, positive, perhaps stick to one key belief rather than covering everything, be personal - perhaps tell a story to bring your statement to life.

People might also like to look at a book donated to our library by Will Lyons recently 'What We Believe but Cannot Prove: Today's leading thinkers on science in the age of uncertainty' edited by John Brockman.

We want people to have as wide a brief as possible for this task but here are some other possible guidelines. We suggest that you aim to write between 200-500 words. The 'Building Your Own Theology' course deals with some specific issues which you might want to consider, such as our own religious and spiritual experiences, human nature, God / Ultimate Reality, our religious heritage, liberal religion, ethics, the meaning of life and faith in action. Do get in touch if you want any guidance or if you want help in formulating your statement of belief.

**Rev Sarah Tinker**

## Betty Allen

We were sorry to hear of the death in August of Betty Allen who had been a life long Unitarian and a member of Essex Church for many years. These words are adapted from the Rev Jopie Boeke's eulogy at Betty's funeral.

Betty was born in Coventry, on 7 December, 1918. An only child, she was very close to her parents, who she spoke of often, with fondness and love. She helped her mother nurse her husband until he died and looked after her mother until she died. During the war she worked as a supervisor in a munitions factory. Later she and her mother had a house in Sydney Street in Chelsea where they let out rooms. After she sold the house, she worked as a warden in sheltered housing until her retirement. During that time she also was a professional support worker for older vulnerable people, providing assistance so they could stay in their own home as long as possible. After retirement she moved into Lygon House and stayed active working as a universal aunt, assisting many older people.

What I have mentioned so far are some of the facts of Betty's life. But her life was so much more! Ian, her "nephew that isn't" as she lovingly called him, has many fond memories of her, and Cynthia, who lived in the house in Chelsea some 40 years ago when she was a young woman, remembers how loving and understanding Betty was, always ready to listen and give advice when asked. They remained friends ever since. I remember Betty as an intelligent, self sufficient and self contained woman with a delightful sense of humour. A great story teller, she loved talking about her trip on the QE 2 to the US, and visits to Switzerland. She was well read and kept up with events in the world. She did the crosswords in the paper every day with little effort. She was a staunch royalist and held the queen in high regard. She loved animals and wild life, and created a little garden outside her flat, which became a nesting place for blackbirds which she fed daily. Although her health declined in her later years, she never complained and insisted on entertaining you with little sandwiches and of course offering you a drink, usually a Gin and Tonic! She was an accomplished seamstress and could be relied on to provide items for Sales of Work in the old Essex Church. She made some of her own dresses, and enjoyed knitting, embroidery and crochet. Someone once wrote: "The purpose of life is to be what we are and to become what we are capable of becoming." Betty's life was a splendid example of that philosophy.

## Next Building Project

The next building improvement project we are going to tackle here at Essex Church will be to renew the ceilings in the Lindsey Hall and entrance foyer and to have new lighting and re-wiring fitted at the same time. This work may be starting as early as January, so it might be advisable to bring your hard hats when coming to church. Our hope is that the actual work will take less than a fortnight to complete and that it will still be possible for our normal activities to take place. January is a quiet time of year for our user groups so if that is not possible then, we may wait until the summer to get the job done. There will be a lot to do afterwards to bring the rooms back into good decorative order but won't it be lovely to have clean, modern ceilings and reliable lighting that switches on and doesn't buzz. Once the project has been discussed by the committee there will be more information for you to look at when you're at church.

## Myth and Mystery: Christmas for Unitarians

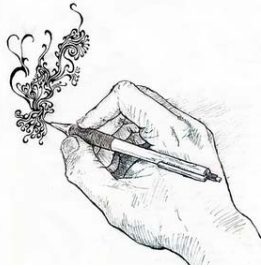


**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December, 7-9.00pm**  
**Led by Rev Sarah Tinker - here at Essex Church**

The story of Jesus' birth is considered as literal truth by some people and is dismissed as legend by rationalists. In this evening course we will take a different approach and explore the mythic qualities of the birth of the Christ Child and its possible resonance in our own lives.

Places are limited, so to book your place, phone the church office on 020 7221 6514 and leave your name and phone number for our minister Rev Sarah Tinker.

## 'The Joy of Drawing'



**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009, 1.00-2.00pm**

This short series of community arts workshops (the first of three took place back at the start of October) will be led by Heidi Ferid at Essex Church this autumn.

Heidi says: "So many of us have been told that we 'can not draw', but this is just not true. Drawing is not only about observing and reproducing reality, it can be just as much about personal expression and mark making. We all can do it and find it enjoyable and interesting. Lines and marks will be our starting point and we will continue our exploration from there, above all I hope we will find out that drawing can be very enjoyable. We shall be using pencils, felt pens, and crayons. Some materials will be provided, but do bring your own if you want to."

## Songs and Silence for the Soul

**Chanting and Stillness at Essex Church**



**Sundays 13<sup>th</sup> December, 10<sup>th</sup> January,  
14<sup>th</sup> February from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

**Suggested Donation: £2.00**

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

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

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

## Accommodation Request



An American grandma who will be visiting family in London a few times a year is wondering if anyone in the congregation has room for a paying guest, ideally somewhere to the north of Goldhawk tube station, within easy bus or tube access to that area. Contact the Essex Church office (call 020 7221 6514 / email [info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk)) if you might be able to help.



## What's on this month:

(listings continued from front page)

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 11am  
**"Looking Back, Looking Forward"**  
 Led by Members of the Congregation

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January, 7-8.30pm  
**Workshop: "Getting Involved:  
 Growing Our Congregation"**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 11am  
**"Sing Your Faith"**  
 Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2-3pm  
**Nia Dance**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 3.30-5pm  
**'Songs and Silence for the Soul'**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 7-9.00pm  
**Management Committee Meeting**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 7-9pm  
**Creativity Group:**  
 'Design for Printmaking'

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January, 11am  
**"The Work That Reconnects"**  
 Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker  
 and Gina Heathersprite

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 7-8.30pm  
**Workshop: "Getting Involved:  
 Worship at Essex Church"**

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January, 11am  
**"Unitarian Women"**  
 Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January, 7-9pm  
**Reading Group:**  
 'Maurice' by E.M. Forster

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January, 11am  
**"Candlemas and Imbolc"**  
 Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

# Sunday Services at Essex Church

**6<sup>th</sup> December – "Journeying On"**  
 – Service led by Michaela von Britzke

Our very own Michaela will be leading the first service in December. She says: "The title of my service is "Journeying on... some discoveries from my 'Open Path' exploration". I will share some learnings from my Sufi teacher and from Sufi poets: ways towards living more lightly in an interconnected world...."

**13<sup>th</sup> December – "Carol Service"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Come and join us for a lovely traditional Carol Service, a mixture of carols and readings with a short address on Unitarian views of Christmas. Have you found yourself wondering why so many rational people need to regard the Biblical stories of Jesus' birth as literal truth rather than wondrous myth? We'll be taking a closer look in this service.

**20<sup>th</sup> December – "Winter Solstice"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Join us for a meditative approach to the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, and an important pagan festival. There'll be chance to take part in a simple ritual to bring light into some of life's darker places.

**27<sup>th</sup> December – "Poetry on the Underground"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this service we will be celebrating the scheme that started on the London Underground years ago and has now spread to transport systems around the world. Have you ever had a dull journey transformed by a particular poem? Let us know and you could read your favourites in this service.

**3<sup>rd</sup> January – "Looking Back, Looking Forward"**  
 – Congregational Service led by Caroline Blair

In this first service of 2010 we will be looking back and letting go of the old year, and looking forward and embracing the New Year. This service is being organised by Caroline Blair – please contact her for more information or to get involved.

**10<sup>th</sup> January – "Sing Your Faith"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This is the title of the new purple hymn book and our service will be an exploration and a celebration of hymn singing. Come and find out more about the history of hymns in Christianity and other faiths as well as some of the stories behind this new collection.

**17<sup>th</sup> January – "The Work That Reconnects"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Gina Heathersprite

We will be joined in this service by Gina, who is active in Permaculture and Transition Towns projects as well as in Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects. Macy's view of the earth as a living entity is inspirational and reflects the eco-theology often expressed by members here at Essex Church.

**24<sup>th</sup> January – "Unitarian Women"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The history of Unitarianism is filled with stories of women who went beyond the limitations of their times. This service will celebrate their achievements.

**31<sup>st</sup> January – "Candlemas and Imbolc"**  
 – Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The Christian festival of Candlemas has many interesting links with pagan customs and with the festival of Imbolc. In this service we will consider the message these festivals might have for us today.