



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

December 2008 / January 2009

What's On at Essex Church

Sunday 7th December, 11.00am
"Advent"

Led by Rev. John Harley

Sunday 7th December, 12.45pm
Adult RE: "A Sharing Circle"

Thursday 11th December, 2-5.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 11th December, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: "Glass Painting"

Sunday 14th December, 11.00am
"Christmas Carol Service"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 14th December, 12.30-2.00pm
Congregational Christmas Lunch

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

Thursday 18th December, 2-5.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Sunday 21st December, 11.00am
"In the Dark Times"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 24th December, 5.00pm
Candlelit Christmas Eve Service

Wednesday 24th December, 7.00pm
Christmas Eve Restaurant Outing

Sunday 28th December, 11.00am
"Letting Go, Holding On"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Wednesday 31st December, 6.00pm
New Year's Eve Gathering

Thursday 1st January, 2-5.00pm
Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 1st January, 7-9.00pm
Adult RE: "Evensong II" (*closed group*)

Sunday 4th January, 11.00am
Service led by David Francis Darling

Sunday 4th January, 12.45pm
Sharing Circle *led by Jo Ridgers*

More Listings on Back Page...

A Message from our Minister...

Priceless Gifts

As the government encourages us to spend our way out of the economic downturn and retailers seek new ways to tempt us to make purchases, environmentalists continue to sound their alternative message: our resources are finite and it is possible for human beings to live a more sustainable existence here on

planet earth. With TV adverts telling us of cut-price gifts, I wonder about the priceless gifts, the gifts that cannot be bought or sold in the market place.

Years ago I remember a minister speaking in a Christmas service about gifts and stating that 'the greatest gift we bring is our presence'. The minister had been relating this short statement particularly to children, using it to point out that youngsters are often bought ever more expensive toys when perhaps what they yearn for is more time and attention from the adults they love. But the idea that our presence is a gift does not just relate to children. We bring something priceless, and unique, to every aspect of our lives, just by being there, by turning up, by paying attention. We have gifts to offer the world and they will not make a dent in our savings accounts.

In the last three years the membership of this congregation at Essex Church has doubled. That numerical growth is worth celebrating. But just as valuable is people's commitment as members. As we move towards the close of 2008, I would like to thank everybody for their commitment - for turning up on Sunday mornings for worship, for running or attending group activities and social events, for serving drinks and washing up, for bringing food to share. Thank you for your priceless presence in this community and for the gifts your presence brings.

Just as our building is used by many different groups, this newsletter is read by many people who are not Unitarians. Even within Unitarianism people have many different responses to the Christian festival of Christmas. Whatever your religious beliefs, I hope that the seasonal message of light shining in the darkness cheers your spirits and brings you illumination. And if you live anywhere near Essex Church, do feel welcomed to join us at the many events and activities happening in December and January.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



In this Month's Newsletter...

* Reports on "God in Daily Life" and the recent Engagement Groups Conference by Caroline Blair *
"The Only Legal Prejudice" by Kassandra Britton * Christmas and New Year Social Events
* LDPA Quarterly: "Media Ministry" * "How I came to Essex Church" by Daffyd Young-Finch *
"A Memorable Lindsey Weekend" by Howard Hague * "Gifts of Light" Spiritual Gathering
* Relaunch of "The Fabric of Diversity" Community Arts Project this December * 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*

Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

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



**Sundays 14th December and 11th January
from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

Suggested Donation: £2.00

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

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

Kensington Community Singers: A Friendly Choir-for-All



**Sunday afternoons from 12.45-2.00pm
New term starts on Sunday 11th January 2009**

Our community choir is open to all - you don't need any qualifications except enthusiasm - everyone is welcome!

The sessions are great fun. Jen Hazel, our choir leader, has been teaching us a wide selection of songs and we are aiming towards a performance. Donations to cover the cost of running the choir are invited (now £2/£4/£6 per choir session - a sliding scale according to your income).

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

7 th December:	Christine Joshi
14 th December:	Jo Tye
21 st December:	Caroline Blair
28 th December:	John Hands
4 th January:	Louisa Bird
11 th January:	Howard Hague
18 th January:	Heidi Ferid
25 th January:	Devika Joshi

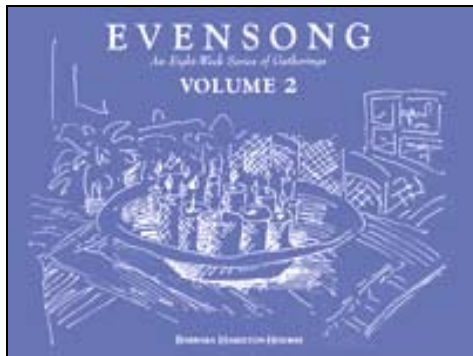
Coffee:

7 th December:	Julia Alden
14 th December:	John Marrow
21 st December:	Louisa Bird
28 th December:	Heidi Ferid
4 th January:	Angela Gasparetto
11 th January:	Gill Hague
18 th January:	John Hands
25 th January:	Christine Joshi

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.

Adult RE: Evensong II

PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE



Starts Thursday 1st January 2009, 7-9.00pm

(closed after first session: eight meetings in total)

Advance registration for the course is required

A new Evensong course starts on 1st January running for 8 sessions mostly on alternate Thursday evenings from 7 to 9pm. This course offers participants the chance to share their life experiences, emotions, and doubts with others in an atmosphere of attentive listening and non-judgement.

We ran the first series of these gatherings back in 2007 and people found it a very helpful format in which to explore their beliefs and get to know one another better. This new series explores topics such as childhood memory, stories, prayer and spiritual practice, generosity, hospitality, beliefs and actions.

The course is a particularly good way for people who are new to the congregation to get a bit more involved and the sessions are well structured around a particular theme, with a gentle worshipful feel to them. If you would like to know more, do ask someone who attended the last Evensong, for more information.

'Evensong' will be facilitated by Jane Blackall and Sarah Tinker. It is open to anyone who can commit to attending at least 5 of the 8 sessions and there will be places for up to 10 people to attend. So do check your diaries and let Jane or Sarah know if you would like a place on the course.

The first session will take place on New Year's Day. We are planning to make it extra special by meeting a little earlier than usual so that we can all eat together before the session starts. Please bring along some food or drink to share and meet us in the library at **6pm on Thursday 1st January 2009.**

Dates for 'Evensong II':

1st, 15th and 29th January

5th and 19th February

5th and 19th March

concluding on 2nd April 2009

"Gifts of Light"

Universal Spiritual Gathering



**Friday 12th December, 5.15pm
at Essex Church**

We warmly invite you to join with people of all ages and many faiths/spiritual traditions in joyous Celebration of the Light at the Heart of All. With candle-lighting, meditation, song, readings, music, prayer. The evening will begin with Seasonal Refreshments and there will Supper afterwards.

**Bring yourself, your children and friends!
All are welcome**

Seasonal Refreshments: 5.15 – 6.45pm

Spiritual Gathering: 6.45 – 8.15pm

Vegetarian Supper served by the
Hare Krishna Community: 8.15pm

Donations Accepted – Supper £4.00

There will be a toy drive for disadvantaged children 18months – 16 years. Bring toys on the night, or kindly contact Kathryn (telephone below).

Service hosts:

Danielle Wilson 07802 898 252

Pamela Ramsden 07966 478 980

Kathryn Reynolds 07976 739 286

In loving connection with the Interfaith Seminary:

Admin: Lindsay Jarrett

T: 08444 457 004

E: admin@theinterfaithseminary.com

www.theinterfaithseminary.com

The next inter-faith worship gathering will be held on Friday 9th January 2009 here at Essex Church, 6.45 to 8.15pm. We Unitarians will be involved with this service and all are welcome to attend.



Nia Technique



Holistic Movement Sessions:

Sessions led by Sonya Leite

Sunday 11th January - 2.00-3.00pm

- Please note: There is no class in December -

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 to take part will be £7.00 per session (£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.

...a forthcoming Unitarian event in the London District...

"Media Ministry" LDPA Winter Quarterly Meeting



Essex Hall, 24th January 2009, 1.30-4.00pm

One of our district-wide goals is to have a pro-active media profile. Ministers in the district are already working together to develop their media skills, but each and every one of us is a potential spokesperson for Unitarianism.

The next quarterly meeting will feature Wayne Brittenden, journalist, film-maker and former media consultant to the General Assembly. The service will be led by Rev. Linda Hart, minister of Richmond and Putney Unitarians.

Info: dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk / 01732 465248

Global Climate Day of Action

Sunday 6th December 2008, 12 noon

Assemble: 12 noon at Hyde Park Corner, (Marble Arch tube)

The Campaign against Climate Change organises a national and global day of action each year at the time when the parties to the current Kyoto Agreement meet to review progress and plan their agenda for the year ahead. There will be a march through central London to coincide with talks in Poznan which are preliminary to discussions about a post-Kyoto arrangement in Copenhagen in 2009.

The key demands for the March in December are:

1. No 3rd runway/expansion at Heathrow, an end to runaway aviation growth.
2. No New Coal - no new coal-fired power station at Kingsnorth / expansion in coal burning for power.
3. No to agro-fuels destabilising climate, causing deforestation and contributing to the global food crisis.
4. Yes to massive investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, low carbon transport and ambitious annual caps on UK emissions.

Come with your own banners, costumes etc on one of these themes and join up with others pushing that theme... An after party will be held at the Synergy Centre in Oval, London, on the evening of the march.

For more information see: www.campaigncc.org

The Role of Small Groups:

A Report from the Recent Engagement Groups Conference

On 1st November our Church hosted a one-day conference, led by Hampstead's Rev Jim Robinson, about engagement groups and small group ministry. Small groups can be very valuable to a church: they allow people to get to know each other better, they make new members of the church feel more included and they can even be a way of drawing new members into the church, as they attend the small group first and then want to know more about the church itself. It is always a good experience to share successes and challenges with people from other churches, and it was fascinating to hear what other churches offer.



People brought very different ideas and experiences to the conference. Rev Lindy Latham, from Bristol, described the running of a multi-generation, multi-activity group ('Bright Lights') that was entirely community-focused; on the whole the non-church people who attended her (very lively sounding) group did not show much interest in coming to the church as well, but in terms of community outreach it sounded first class. She also raised a potential problem that most people who have had dealings with small groups will recognize, which was the fear that the group might simply cease to happen if she was not there; and we considered how far it is possible to 'wean' a group from its founder. Andy Pakula described the wonderful poetry and meditation (and eating) group at Newington Green; Golders Green contributed some circle dancing (and we did indeed get up and dance, not just think about it); Patricia Walker-Hesson introduced Richmond's Stitches and Stories group as well as our own creativity and book groups. (Hampstead's own book group meets at the local pub, which sounded rather cheerful; but I decided on reflection that their local pub must be a good deal quieter than ours. At least we have cake). I spoke about the 'God in Daily Life' group that has just finished at our church as an example of a closed, time-limited group. We discussed the special place of Engagement Groups, which may involve any activity but are more structured and spiritually focused (and possibly not best suited to a pub).

We also spoke to people whose church was not thriving, and who struggled to maintain a tiny membership and were not sure how to go about starting small groups as well. I can only hope that they did pick up some useful thoughts from the day; it certainly made people like me realize how lucky we are with our positive, enthusiastic members and how spoilt for choice we are where small group activities are concerned.

Finally, I would like to remind people that many of the activities are listed on the London Spirituality Network site (www.ukspirituality.org); I challenge anyone to look through this site and not see something that appeals to them.

Caroline Blair

Thank You



I want to say a big thank you to the 45 people who filled in the Believing and Belonging questionnaires that formed the basis of the research for my Masters dissertation back in the early summer, as well as to those who came to the evening discussion sessions. The results have just been announced and I am delighted to have received a distinction, both for the dissertation and for the degree. I could not have achieved this without your support and encouragement. Thank you as well to the congregation management committee for giving me a month off work to complete the writing up. The research was a study of our congregation and people's religious beliefs and sense of belonging, a consideration of where Essex Church fits within the wider picture of 21st century faith communities. The sociology of religion may not be everybody's cup of tea but if you would like to know more, there will be a copy of the dissertation in the church library soon for people to read.

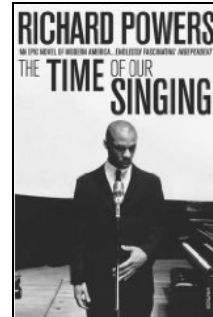
To say thank you in a more tangible form I will be providing celebratory drinks to accompany our meal after the Carol Service on Sunday 14th December and I look forward to pouring a drink for you there.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



Reading Engagement Group
“The Time of Our Singing”
 by Richard Powers

Thursday 22nd January, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group’s next conversation will be about “The Time of Our Singing” by Richard Powers. This book was chosen by Michaela von Britzke and will be the focus of our next group on **Thursday 22nd January**.

Information from Amazon UK:

“This is a book to take your breath away, so powerful that its ideas and imagination fire the reader’s mind. Powers has taken a mixed-race couple, a black woman and a German Jewish immigrant, to tell the story of race in America. The man is a physicist obsessed with the definition of time and the woman is a singer. Music and time, the twin themes of the novel, allow him to return again and again to a subject or a scene, to take a jump into the past or the future. The end meets the beginning with a small black boy lost in the crowd near the statue of Abraham Lincoln during Marian Anderson’s concert in 1939 and, in the closing pages, the same small boy disappears into the millions attending a meeting led by Farrakhan. In between there is the obscene illegality of mixed marriages, the savage cruelty and inequality leading to the civil rights movement, the rise of black power and the subsequent imprisonment of the Panthers and, described with shattering immediacy, there are the bloody race riots. David and Delia believe that ‘the bird and the fish can marry’ but this act of faith leaves their children labelled ‘mulatto’ or ‘mule’, the butt of discrimination and gibes from black and white. One son embraces classical music and defends his right to plunder what is beautiful in the European heritage while another tries to understand each and every kind of music so that all people might sing. ‘Time’, argues Powers, ‘doesn’t flow but is. In such a world, all the things that we ever will be or were, we are. In such a world who we are must be all things.’ No concessions are made to the reader who must wrestle with long explanations of quantum physics and subtle descriptions of harmony and dissonance. The triumph of this writing is that the novel’s traditional form is woven so tightly with the philosophical ideas that every page is a welcome discovery and a joy.”

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 book group take turns in choosing books so we read a wide variety of material.

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

“Secularism”

Sunday 7th December, 3-5.00pm
 London Inter Faith Centre

Join us for an event looking at the nature and role and place of various forms of secularism within a many and non-faith society.

“A Christian Perspective”

The Revd Fergus Capie
 Director, London Inter Faith Centre

“A Hindu Perspective”

Mr Jay Lakhani
 Director, Hindu Academy UK

“A Humanist Perspective”

Mr Andrew Copson
 Director, British Humanist Association

Following three brief key-note presentations there will be time both for questions and discussion and also opportunity to consider how best to continue to raise the profile of this type of conversation within this more inter faith context.

For more information, or to reserve a place, call 020 7604 3053 or email info@londoninterfaith.org.uk.

Creativity Engagement Groups in December and January

“Glass Painting”

Thursday 11th December, 7.00-9.00pm



Those who came to the previous creativity group glass painting session will confirm that it can be ridiculously easy: just choose a stencil, stick it on the glass and colour it in; at the end it looks surprisingly attractive and even quite professional. When the light shines through, it looks just like a stained glass window.

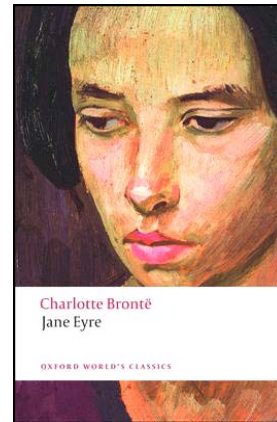
Of course more artistic people are very welcome to paint freehand: glass paints are a pleasant and easy medium to work in and blend together well.

This month I will bring along some plain candle holders (feel free to bring any glassware of your own if you prefer), a selection of Christmassy stencils and a good range of paints and brushes. It would be helpful if we could have some idea of how many people will be coming along so I can provide materials accordingly. There will be a charge of £4 a head to cover the cost of materials.

Caroline Blair

“Design a Book Cover”

Thursday 8th January, 7.00-9.00pm



When I was a teenager I bought a copy of Jane Eyre, which I was passionate about at the time. I found it very distressing that the cover picture of Jane showed her wearing a blue dress when anyone who had read the book would know that she always wore grey!

Perhaps other people have had a similar experience or have thought, “I wouldn’t have put that on the cover of this book”. Maybe you bought a book just because you liked the cover.

I thought we could have an evening where we had a go at designing a book cover. You might even like to parody a title, so Shakespeare’s “Measure for Measure” could show a market trader with a speech bubble saying “I’m not blooming going metric”!

Preparation before hand could involve considering your choice of book(s), assembling photos, magazine pictures and other materials that you might like to include. We will provide paper, pens, pencils, scissors, glue and extra magazines. Come and give it a go.

Juliet Edwards

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.

February Newsletter Deadline



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

Thank you!!!



“Fill your heart like a vessel with the Christmas spirit. Take the time to let your vision clear and your concern deepen. Allow your heart to overflow with all the authentic gifts that this season has to offer. The blessings and the wealth of Christmas can overflow from each of our hearts, if we take the time to fill our hearts first.”

Donna Morrison-Reed

Candlelit Christmas Eve

Service on Wednesday 24th December, 5.00pm



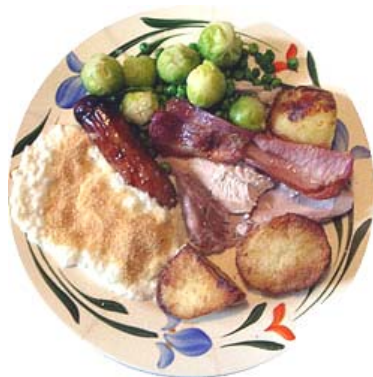
We will be having our traditional Candlelit Service at 5pm on Christmas Eve, followed by tea, and perhaps a mince pie.

If you would like to be involved in this service or any of the other services over the Christmas period then please do contact Sarah, our minister, to let her know.

...a date for your diary – forthcoming Essex Church social events...

Congregational Christmas Lunch

Sunday 14th December, 12.30pm



We will be holding our traditional potluck Christmas Lunch after the congregational Christmas Carol service on Sunday 14th December.

Please think about what food or drink you could bring to share for the occasion. Heidi Ferid will be coordinating the lunch and would like people to phone or text to let her know what you are planning to offer. Her number is 07855 842070.

Christmas Eve Restaurant Outing

Wednesday 24th December, 7.00pm

After the service on Christmas Eve, at 7pm, a group from the church is planning to go to the Mediterranean Kitchen on Kensington Church Street for dinner. Juliet Edwards is coordinating and will book a table in early December so please contact her if you would like to be counted in.

Abracadabra

From 'The Devil's Dictionary'

By *Abracadabra* we signify
An infinite number of things.
'Tis the answer to What? and How? and Why?
And Whence? and Whither?—a word whereby
The Truth (with the comfort it brings)
Is open to all who grope in night,
Crying for Wisdom's holy light.

Whether the word is a verb or a noun
Is knowledge beyond my reach.
I only know that 'tis handed down.
From sage to sage,
From age to age—
An immortal part of speech!

Of an ancient man the tale is told
That he lived to be ten centuries old,
In a cave on a mountain side.
(True, he finally died.)
The fame of his wisdom filled the land,
For his head was bald, and you'll understand
His beard was long and white
And his eyes uncommonly bright.

Philosophers gathered from far and near
To sit at his feet and hear and hear,
Though he never was heard
To utter a word
But "*Abracadabra, abracadab,*
Abracada, abracad,
Abraca, abrac, abra, ab!"
Twas all he had,
Twas all they wanted to hear, and each
Made copious notes of the mystical speech,
Which they published next
A trickle of text
In a meadow of commentary.
Mighty big books were these,
In a number, as leaves of trees;
In learning, remarkably—very!

He's dead,
As I said,
And the books of the sages have perished,
But his wisdom is sacredly cherished.
In *Abracadabra* it solemnly rings,
Like an ancient bell that forever swings.
O, I love to hear
That word make clear
Humanity's General Sense of Things.

Ambrose Bierce
American author & satirist (1842-1914)

Submitted by Will Lyons

The Alister Hardy Society

The London group of the Alister Hardy Society holds regular meetings here at Essex Church and their secretary John Franklin has asked us to publicise some of their talks for 2009, which are open to everyone at a small charge.

Thursday 29th January, 3.00pm

“Interpreting Religious Experience: The Approach of Ibn 'Arabi within the Sufi Tradition”

Talk given by Jane Clark

Thursday 26th March, 3.00pm

“Can science accommodate psychic and spiritual experience?”

Talk given by Dr Bernard Carr



“Religion is the mooring of the soul. Spirituality is its lodestone. Religion is, at best, external. Spirituality is the internal distillation of this externalized witness to the divine. Spirituality is what galvanizes us to do more than go through the motions. It spurs us to fill up the lack we feel within us. It is the desire for wholeness that evades us. It is the burning need to find the more.

The very purpose of religion is to enable us to step off into the uncharted emptiness that is the spiritual life, freely but not untethered. We have under our feet the promise of the tradition that formed us and the disciplines that shaped our souls. We can then wander through the pantheon of spiritual traditions freely, going deeper and deeper into every question from every direction. In the end, then, we become more, not less, of what we ourselves know to be our own religious identity.

It isn't so much that people leave religion, I think, as it is that, like Olympic runners on a mission they come to a moment in life when they go beyond the system to the very source of light. It is the plight of the mystic to enter the universe of God alone where no charts or maps or signs exist to guide us and assure us of the way. It is a serious and disturbing moment, one after which we are never quite the same.”

Joan Chittister

The Only Legal Prejudice



I am writing here about my obesity and what it means to me. I am a compulsive overeater. This means I overeat for similar reasons to an anorexic person starving. I eat because I would find my feelings too unbearable to cope with if I did not. Unfortunately, eating like this makes me obese and being obese in an obese-prejudice society is horrible. People who have no medical or dietetic training think that they can tell me how to lose weight. People have actually come up to me when they see me eating something that is not good for me, like a biscuit, and say to me something like, “Are you sure you should be eating that?” Not only is this rude of them, but it is counter-productive, because although they are well-meaning, it leaves me feeling sad and lonely, so I eat to suppress these feelings.

I know my eating is a crutch for deeper problems of depression, anxiety, loneliness and self-loathing. I may be huge on the outside but because of my problems, inside I feel minute, about half an inch in height. I do not know any other obese people but I wonder if they eat because of having similar feelings.

Obesity is, I think, the only legal prejudice. People are not breaking the law when they taunt obese people in the street. The government thinks it has the right to withdraw certain treatments from obese people. Yet this does not apply to those with chronic alcoholism, for example.

I am very grateful to Kensington Unitarians for always putting a few chairs without arms in the church each Sunday. The fact that this is done discreetly is kind and I really appreciate this. However, I am still too scared to stay for coffee after the service because when I have done this in the past and I have eaten a couple of biscuits, people have commented that I should not eat them. At other times, the person I am with has eaten a biscuit, looked at me pointedly and said that they should not really be eating this. I don't want to sound as if I am moaning but I do want to explain why I do not stay for coffee. It would really help if we could all avoid telling one another how to live our lives.

Kassandra Britton

Conifers

When I first encountered them the conifers on the Lickey Hills
Squatted upon the ground like gypsies over campfires;
A few could still be seen pulling a dark horse or two
Behind their gold and scarlet caravans: but I
Not knowing Romany, and like my parents suspicious of them
Coolly eyed them from a respectable distance. Meanwhile
Stretched upon moss and fir-cones I read 'Macbeth' 'Romeo'
And 'The Merchant' whilst Cologne and Hamburg burned;
I read, 'Lycidas' and 'Hyperion', Shelley, Byron, Hopkins whilst
The panzers battered Arnhem; and 'Tintern Abbey' when
The Belson pictures jerked across pale cinema screens.

Meanwhile the crouching conifers
Grew to pubescent stature and I – though faster- with them,
The foresters came back and showed their scars to gasping children;
I earned my keep in my father's radio and electric shop
And like Hiawatha wrestled with his derision. Later in 'forty-seven
Snow fell upon the hills and crusted them like Christmas icing.
Like spitfires we shot down through clouds of mist on homemade
Toboggans, Whilst Europe's Destitute stonily picked their way
Through ruins, my dreams were of renewal and restoration
Theirs of bleak survival in shattered cities, and food enough to feed their children.
The conifers grew into telephone poles, newspaper pulp
And imitation antique furniture. Sometimes revisiting them I
Marvel at their mist-scarfed peaks. Their fates are sealed and others
Soon will follow. My fate too is sealed, but I remain unsure
That others soon like me will surely follow.

John Hands
Preston, Herts, April 2008



“Five Ways to Wellbeing” from www.neweconomics.org

Jane Blackall says: I heard a feature about this initiative on Radio Four's "All in the Mind" and thought it might be of interest to our readers...

“These ‘five ways to wellbeing’ are rooted in a wealth of evidence, and show that there are simple, positive actions that people can take to improve their well-being. For too long we’ve measured the health of the nation by how much we are consuming rather than the things that really matter, which is how things are really going for people. Building social networks and investing in our time and effort into things that we can do for ourselves are just as important, if not more so, when times are hard”

Connect... With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active... Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice... Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are on a train, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning... Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

Give... Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

“God in Daily Life” - Our Recent Engagement Group



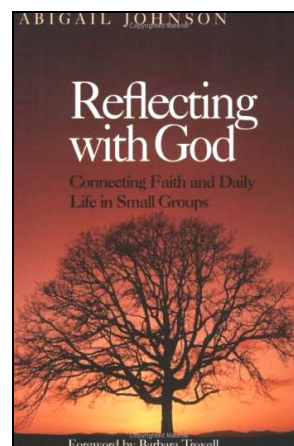
“God in Daily Life” was the title of a six-session engagement group run by Jane Blackall and Jenny Moy (our warden) on Monday afternoons. It was very much a reflective group. Those of us who have done any ‘work-based’ training will know that there is a general assumption that people have a concentration span of approximately two minutes, so training sessions tend to be a hyperactive jumble of power-point presentations, video clips, role-play exercises, feed-back sessions etc. So it takes some getting used to, to settle into a course whose sole activities are talking, listening and thinking. Engagement Group talking and listening are special skills anyway; because there is a covenant that no one will interrupt or talk over anyone, and because there is a pause for thinking time after someone speaks, listening really did mean just that; the normal ‘listening’ activity of planning the much better thing you intend to say yourself just withers away.

Each week (after the first week) one or two members of the group gave a substantial talk about something of importance to them, and how this reflected on their spiritual picture of life. We were given an outline structure for such a reflection, which we could use or not as we chose. This moved from describing an incident or aspect of life to evaluating emotions, finding connections to other issues in the past or future and finally putting it into a spiritual context. Individual approaches varied from turning the experience into a prayer to asking the group to share their own feelings.

When we negotiated the covenants for the group we added one at the end which was that ‘no one should apologise for their contributions’, and though in reality no power on earth will stop people doing just that, at least we were able to point to the covenant and make people laugh about it. Because people chose to discuss quite personal and emotive subjects (though we were perfectly free to choose not to) the group seemed to grow close very quickly. There were tears several times, and times when all we wanted to do was hold hands and sit quietly for a few minutes.

There is a limit to what I can write here because, if ever there was a group where the covenant of confidentiality was vital, this was it. Just two final points: first that the course was based on the book ‘Reflecting with God’ by Abigail Johnson; and second that much of the tranquillity of the group stemmed from the absolutely meticulous preparation by the two facilitators. As is so often the case, they did all the worrying for all of us, leaving the participants free just to turn up and let everything go.

Caroline Blair



The following prayer was written and read by Lindsay Stevens as part of her theological reflection in the group. Lindsay has kindly given her permission for us to share more widely through the newsletter.

Treatment Prayer - “to support seeing myself and my work as worthy”

I open my mind and my heart to the loving presence of you, my divine mother and father.

You made me, you are the source of my being, I am part of you both

And my mind reflects your infinite creativity

Which has given birth to all life and beauty.

I reflect your wholeness and perfection

And have an abundance of love and wisdom to share.

I allow love to flow from myself to others on my path

And I receive their love through my open heart with gratitude.

My perfect health in mind, body and spirit mirrors your

Total integrity.

I lovingly thank you for my perfection and your infinite love for me.

I hand over the care of my entire being to you, my sacred parents

And trust that all is well.





Multifaith Calendar



✠ 8th 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.

☸ 8th 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.

☾ 9th December – Eid-ul-Adha

/ The Festival of Sacrifice – Muslim

This major Muslim festival marks the end of the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Makkah). Animals are sacrificed by pilgrims at Mina, on the way back to Makkah from Mount Arafat, in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. Muslims around the world share in the celebrations, sacrificing an animal if they can afford it, the meat being distributed to the poor and shared with family and friends.

♁ 21st December - Winter Solstice – Wiccan/Pagan

Winter Solstice has been celebrated in cultures the world over for thousands of years. This start of the solar year is a celebration of Light and the rebirth of the Sun. In old Europe, it was known as Yule, from the Norse, Jul, meaning wheel.

★ 22nd – 29th 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.

✠ 24th December – Christmas Eve – Christian

On Christmas Eve churches hold evening carol services and Midnight Masses to herald the arrival of Christmas Day and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

✠ 25th December – Christmas Day – Christian

Christmas Day celebrates the birth of Jesus who Christians believe to be the Son of God. Gifts are reminders of the offerings brought to the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

☾ 29th December – Muslim Al-Hijira – Muslim

Islamic New Year. Marks the migration of the Prophet Mohammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina.

☸ 5th January – Birthday of

Guru Gobind Singh – Sikh

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus. He instituted the Five Ks and established the Order of the Khalsa.

✠ 6th January – Epiphany – Christian

Celebrates the visit of the wise men (the magi) to the infant Jesus. In the East, where it originated, the Epiphany celebrates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. (Catholics and Episcopalians celebrate this separately: see Baptism of the Lord) Also known as Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day).

✠ 7th January - Christmas Day – Orthodox Christian

Most Orthodox churches use the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar. As a result, they celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches.

☾ 7th January – Ashura – Muslim

Islamic holy day observed on the 10th of the Islamic month of Muharram. Shi'ite Muslims regard it as a major festival marking the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Hussein.

♁ 14th January – Makar Sankrant – Hindu

Makar Sankrant is one of the most important festivals of the Hindu calendar and celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere.

✠ 18th January – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

First celebrated in 1908. The days of 18-25 January (regardless of the days of the week involved) were originally chosen because they covered the days between the feast of St Peter and the feast of St Paul. Some churches and regions use a different week.

♁ 26th January – Chinese New Year

This Chinese New Year is the year of the Ox.

☸ 27th January – Losar (start) – Buddhist

The most important holiday in Tibet, marking the Tibetan New Year. The celebration lasts three days from today.

★ 27th January – Holocaust Memorial Day – Jewish

The UK Holocaust Memorial Day was first held in January 2001. The date was chosen as the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

☸ 31st January – Vasant Panchami – Hindu

Festival dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning and Brahma's wife. The festival marks the beginning of Spring.



Beech Tree II



Each year
Your girth expands
Each year
Your branches thrust the sky
A little further from the earth.
We hurry past in multitude
Running
 Walking
 Rejoicing
 Sorrowing

Whilst you
Silently, imperceptibly
Grow and grow
Upholding nature.

John Hands

Copies of John and Heidi's latest book "Some Trees... and a Few Flowers" are available from Sarah Tinker for £5. All proceeds will go to our church building fund.

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches Presents

Crash, Bang, Wallop



**A day of games, fun and steel band playing
for Unikids (7-11 year olds) and
Uniteenz (12-17 year olds)**

Where?

Ilderton Primary School, Varcoe Road, SE16 3LA
(nearest station South Bermondsey)

When?

Sunday 7th December, 2-5pm

Led by Liz Hills, John Harley,
Mandy Richards and Lindon

For more information ring John Harley
on 07985 900 935 or email jharley@unitarian.org.uk

Our Warden's Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

I think I optimistically said in the last column that the building work would be finished by now. There has been progress – I'm writing this to the accompaniment of five men banging & drilling & tapping away up there – but I'm now beginning to wonder whether it'll be totally finished by the end of the year. So much for our plans to get it done during the quiet time in August!

On the plus side, after today we should have access to the kitchen again, and two working toilets with locks and hand-dryers – so that should take some of the stress out of waiting for the rest to be completed. Do come and take a look if you haven't yet – despite all my moaning about how long it's taking, I actually think we'll be really pleased with it in the end.

December is a quiet month for bookings as usual, though there are some Christmas events. The London Piano Circle are having a concert here on Tuesday 2nd. The following Tuesday (9th) the Lloyd Williamson School have their Christmas Concert in the afternoon, and in the evening there's a concert by Reem Kelani organised by Kensington & Chelsea Arts service. The Interfaith Festival of Light, with mulled wine & mince pies, is on Friday 12th December at 6.45pm – see their poster on the foyer noticeboard for more information.

We're planning to take advantage of the quiet time over Christmas/New Year to get the Church floor sanded and re-varnished – this should happen the first week of January. So hopefully someday, the whole building will look as smart as our shiny new kitchen and toilets!

Jenny Moy



A Memorable Lindsey Weekend



November this year marked two hundred years since the death in 1808 of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey, the founder of the original chapel in Essex Street, from which the present day Essex Church takes its name. The congregation moved from that site near the Strand in central London to its present location in Notting Hill Gate in 1887, leaving Essex Street to become in due course the national headquarters of our beloved Unitarian denomination, as it still is today.

On Saturday 15th November 2008 some thirty people from the London district and beyond gathered at the City Road entrance to the Bunhill Fields cemetery to take part in a 'pilgrimage' to Lindsey's grave, led by Alan Ruston, one of our leading historians. Alan pointed out various graves of

dissenting interest, including Richard Price (minister for many years at our Newington Green chapel, and pioneer in actuarial science), Daniel Williams (founder of the Dr Williams' Library, now in Gordon Square), Isaac Watts the hymnwriter, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake. The walk finished at Lindsey's tomb, which lies in a rather prominent position in the north-western corner of the cemetery. Here Alan told us something of Lindsey's remarkable story: how he resigned as a Church of England vicar in 1773 for reasons of conscience, finding he could no longer subscribe to its creeds, moved to London and founded the first avowedly Unitarian congregation in the country in 1774. Alan, standing next to Lindsey's tomb, commented that "If there is a sacred place for Unitarians, this is it". It is worth noting that Essex Street Chapel's third minister, the Rev Dr Thomas Belsham, is also buried in the same tomb as Lindsey and his wife Hannah. Lindsey, Belsham and Joseph Priestley are sometimes known as 'the three apostles' of modern Unitarianism. The Lindsey tomb is in a good state of preservation, with all the lettering clearly visible. If you find yourself in the City Road, EC1 and haven't been to Bunhill Fields before, I can recommend a visit. It is an oasis of calm in a busy area, with plenty of seats.

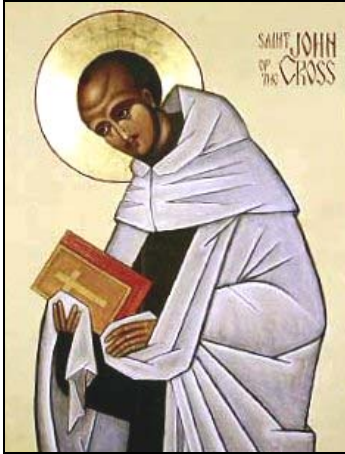
On Sunday 16th November the celebrations continued at Essex Church itself. The morning service, led jointly by our own minister and by the Rev Jeff Gould (visiting from the Bury church in Lancashire) was on the theme of Unitarian Christianity. The readings included an excerpt from one of Lindsey's letters about the opening of Essex Street Chapel on 17th April 1774, written the day after ("a larger and much more respectable audience than I could have expected, who behaved with great decency..."). After a simple lunch of soup, bread and cheese, provided by the congregation, the afternoon was devoted to the Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture, arranged by the Unitarian Christian Association, and given by Professor Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent. His lecture was entitled 'From Prayer Book to Personal Piety: the Contribution of Theophilus Lindsey to the Emergence of a Unitarian Identity', and proved to be both illuminating and enjoyable. These days we tend to forget just how radical Lindsey's views and writings were seen to be at the time. In claiming that the trinity was unscriptural, that God alone and not Jesus should be worshipped and in rejecting original sin, he was seen to be undermining the basis of Christianity, and came in for fierce criticism. The irony is that Lindsey himself was something of a reluctant dissenter, for he had hoped to reform the church from within, rather than helping to found a new religious movement. Another point made by Professor Ditchfield was the vital role played by Lindsey's wife Hannah, who gave him total support in both practical and religious matters, not least when his health started to decline. Sadly no portrait of her seems to exist.

Earlier this year members of the congregation put together a Lindsey worship pack at the request of the GA's Worship Panel, to help the wider denomination mark the bicentenary. Copies are still available. At the time I did wonder how relevant we would still find him to be. Now, towards the end of the year, I no longer have any doubts about this. Three cheers for Theophilus!

Howard Hague



O Living Flame of Love



O living flame of love
that tenderly wounds my soul
in its deepest centre! Since
now you are not oppressive,
now consummate! if it be your will:
tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!

O sweet cauterly,
O delightful wound!
O gentle hand! O delicate touch
that tastes of eternal life
and pays every debt!
In killing you changed death to life.

O lamps of fire!
in whose splendours
the deep caverns of feeling,
once obscure and blind,
now give forth, so rarely, so exquisitely,
both warmth and light to their Beloved.

How gently and lovingly
you wake in my heart,
where in secret you dwell alone;
and in your sweet breathing,
filled with good and glory,
how tenderly you swell my heart with love.

**Saint John of the Cross
Feast Day on 14th December**

To a Crippled Man I Spoke to in Wheathampstead

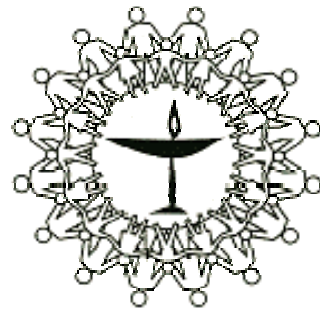


I never knew you
I shall never see you again
But as you leave I silently ask God to give you
The best he has given me, the essence of it
Loving-kindness for others
And for myself.

**John Hands
September 28th 2008**

Sharing Circle

**Sunday 7th December, 12.45-1.45pm
Sunday 4th January, 12.45-1.45pm**



Come and join us after the service, on the 1st Sunday of each month, for a sharing circle facilitated by Jo Ridgers. Bring a sandwich to eat and something for us to enjoy together - some music, a poem, a picture, a photograph, or a beautiful object - something that you would like to tell others more about. All are welcome.

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.



How to Change a Life



With the support of the Church, Iona recently spent from June to September working in Swaziland. In this desperately poor country, 40% of adults are HIV positive, and the life expectancy has fallen to not much over 30.

Many children are orphaned, and are being looked after by grandparents or brothers or sisters. There is no free schooling in Swaziland, and the outlook for children who cannot afford any education is bleak. It was at a centre for children who cannot afford to go to school that Iona was working. Here children were looked after and taught the very basics; the lucky few found a sponsor who would pay for them to go to school and receive a proper education.

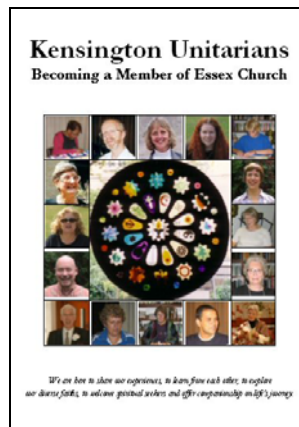
It costs £100 per child per year to send a child to school in Swaziland. Our church committee recently agreed to guarantee at least 10 children's education over the next few years and we are now keenly encouraging congregation members to support this scheme.

We would ask as many people as possible to write a cheque made payable to Essex Church, with 'Swaziland' written on the back, for whatever amount you can afford. If we raise over £1000 then more money can go to support these children's education by buying resources and other vital equipment.

Rev. Sarah Tinker



Essex Church Membership Forms



It's that time again... We will be sending out Essex Church membership forms early in the New Year. The subscription rate remains unchanged for 2009 at £36 per year for full membership. We ask all members to re-affirm their membership annually by filling in this form and returning it with their subscription to the minister.

Feel free to speak to Sarah for more details about the membership process or the benefits and responsibilities that membership entails.

“Out of the Darkness”

**A new cantata by Julian Marshall
with text by Gertrud Kolmar**

**To be premiered next March - in Winchester Cathedral (19th)
and St John's, Smith Square, London, SW1 (25th).**

Julian says: “Last November, I stumbled across the poetry and letters of Gertrud Kolmar and was at once struck by what a remarkable woman and poet she was. During World War II she lived in Berlin, taking care of her aging father until finally being deported to Auschwitz in 1943 where she was murdered. Yet, as her writings suggest, even in the darkest of circumstances she was able to meet her fate with a stoic equanimity. Her poems are strikingly full of life – colour, vibrancy, deep sensation - and ‘Aus den Dunkel’ (‘Out Of The Darkness’), is surely one of the most beautiful. Written in 1937, it evokes powerful dream-like images of crumbling and decay - serving as an eerie foretelling of the imminent tidal wave of horror about to hit the world. Deeply moved by this poem, I felt compelled to write a piece in service to her extraordinary capacity to stand powerfully in her experience of life whilst at the same time expressing this with exquisite perception.

For our two premiere concerts, we have a stellar cast of top professional musicians. These include mezzo soprano soloist Melanie Pappenheim (famous for her work with The Shout, Jocelyn Pook and Dr Who!), conductor Howard Moody (www.howardmoody.net), ‘cellists Sophie Harris and Lucy Railton and a hand picked professional choir of twelve.”

For more information: www.outofthedarknessproject.org

My Visit to London: 22 – 27 October 2008



It's always a joy to visit London, and my recent visit to your city was undoubtedly one of my most enjoyable times there. For two reasons... firstly, I had just attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU) at Essex Hall. This was an extremely successful meeting. We took stock, planned, made decisions, and worked well together in shaping the future of Unitarianism around the world, particularly focusing on new UU communities in Africa and South America. And it wasn't just work, there was some fun too; after hours, we renewed and enjoyed our collegial friendship with each other at some of London's fine restaurants. I reckon we're a jolly good team, we work well together and we enjoy each other's company!

No sooner was the meeting over when each of us hot-footed off to one or other Unitarian congregation in London. My joy was to have been chosen by Essex Church, to be the guest of your delightful minister, Sarah Tinker, for a few days. This was the second highlight of my London visit. Sarah made me feel very at home and I felt that too amongst you all as a congregation. Our time together at Sunday worship was a warming and inspiring time for me. We South African Unitarians sit at the foot of Africa, feeling rather lonely at times, for we have just one church in Cape Town, so I have always placed great value on our international Unitarian friendships which teach us, inspire us and fill us with joy. Being part of the international family of UUs around the world tells me that we too, internationally, are a jolly fine 'team'... keeping alive the flame of our liberal religion, as we do, in a confused and bewildered world, worshipping and working with other like-minded and free-thinking people such as you in Essex Church... and around the world.

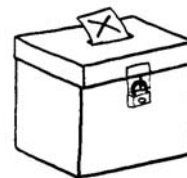
Do think about visiting us in Cape Town. It's South Africa's most popular city with lots to do and see... including us Unitarians!!... and perhaps we'll meet again at the ICUU Council meeting in Transylvania next year... note the dates: 1st to 5th September. All are welcome! Have a look at our website: www.icuu.net.

Love and blessings to you all.

Rev Gordon Oliver

*To read more about Unitarians in Cape Town
see the following website: www.unitarian.co.za*

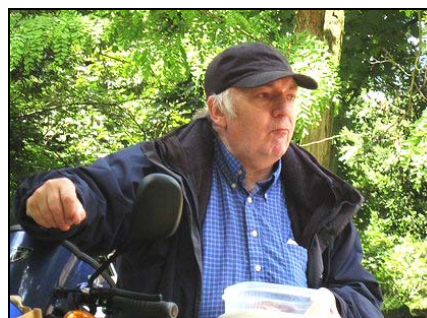
General Assembly Executive Committee Elections



DEADLINE – 13th December 2008

Don't forget!!! The deadline for receipt of your voting forms for election of the General Assembly's Executive Committee is noon on 13th December 2008... so do be sure to send your votes off in plenty of time to allow for delays in the post at this time of year.

How I Came to Essex Church



New member Daffyd Young-Finch was introduced to Essex Church by his friend Gordon Deaville. Daffyd says, "It took a few weeks of Gordon asking me before I came along to a service but now I really enjoy coming and it's rare for me to miss a Sunday. I'd only not come if it was dreadful weather or if I wasn't feeling too well.

It's good that I can get into the church on my mobility scooter, which I call Herbie. In fact I have two scooters a blue and a red one and they're both called Herbie! It's useful to be able to charge a scooter up during the service so there's enough power to get home. I like getting to know people here and helping out when I can. Essex Church is a friendly place. When I was young I was turned off church because I was forced to go every week. It was stuffed down my throat at too early an age.

I like the services here because there's not usually too much talking in them, there's variety rather than going on and on about something! It's interesting here on Sundays because we can have a laugh yet still tackle serious issues. Coming to Essex Church has given me things to think about. My hope is that we could start a social group here during the daytime so that we can meet up with people and share our news and get out and about a bit more."

New Year's Eve Gathering

An Evening of Sharing and Celebration



Wednesday 31st December, 6-9pm

On New Year's Eve there will be an informal gathering, organised by Heidi Ferid and John Hands, for sharing and celebration. We will remember the old year and look forward to the New Year, with poetry, music, food and good conversation.

Although the scheduled event is from 6-9pm it will be possible for people to stay longer if they are not worried about transport. It would be particularly appreciated if you could bring along some food or drink to share.

Please let Heidi know if you would like to contribute anything (words, music on CD, refreshments) to the event so that she can coordinate the evening.

Email: heidiferid@btinternet.com
Phone or text: 07855842070

An event organised by the Art and Spirituality Network

Making in the Spirit: The Transformative Power of Art



Wednesday 28th January 2009, 6.30-8.00pm
Central St. Martin's School of Art

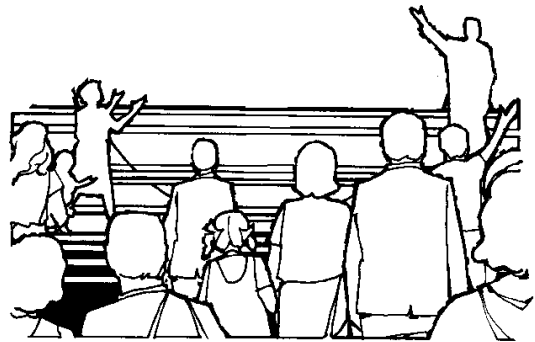
A season of events exploring and expressing creative processes will be kicked off with a talk entitled 'The transformative power of art - thoughts on the creative process' by Angela Schütz on Wednesday evening, 28th January, at Central St Martin's School of Art.

Angela Schütz, a practising artist, Quaker and psychosynthesis counsellor will talk about the creative process and its psychological and spiritual impact. Using examples from her own artwork she will be sharing her personal experience of creativity as well as drawing on her wider knowledge in this field.

This evening is an invitation to think about our own art practice, what we want from it and what we would like others to get from it. There will be time for reflection and to share thoughts and questions.

Website: www.artandspirituality.net
Email: artandspirituality@googlemail.com

Getting Involved With Worship



We had a brief but positive meeting in November about worship and a number of people expressed interest in getting more involved. Do get in touch if you would like to take part in services or in helping to get things ready for Sundays. I also asked people for some feedback - likes, dislikes, suggestions - write a note or send an email if you have ideas for ways in which we can develop Sunday services here at Essex Church. I look forward to hearing from you.

Rev Sarah Tinker

"What do UUs Worship on Sunday Mornings?"

Each of us comes to this place with special needs and we form a body of worshippers called a congregation. For a brief time each week we focus and centre in upon ourselves as a group and the trivial bends before the ultimate. We are moved; we are touched by common concerns and common yearnings. And though we each maintain our individuality, together we merge into a single body where love dwells in our midst. In these moments, dwells the mystery, the breath of eternity and a Presence which is greater than the sum of the parts.

Worship

the act of human interaction
which feeds the soul.

Worship

the reason for the existence of
our precious and fragile religious institution.

Worship

the occasion when we gather to consider ideals
of greatest worth and in so doing we discover, as did
those of old, that we also are standing upon holy ground.

*Words from the website of the Netherlands
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (author unknown).*

Thai Massage



Jenny, our warden, is doing a Thai Massage course. The organisers were let down by their previous venue, so she has arranged for them to meet here at the church. A potential perk for members of the congregation is that the course will need demonstration and practice bodies.

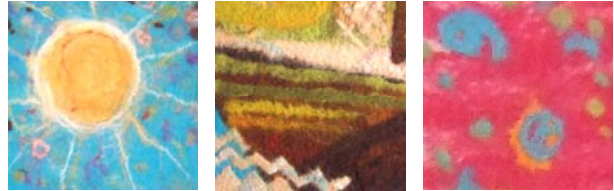
If you would be interested in volunteering for this, please contact Jenny via the church office, 020 7221 6514 or email wardens@kensington-unitarians.org.uk. Course dates are:

29th/30th November
20th/21st December
17th/18th January
21st/22nd February
21st/22nd March

Traditional Thai yoga massage is an ancient healing art with its roots in yoga philosophy. It is based on a concept of energy lines (the ten sen) running through the body along which important acupuncture points are located. The practitioner uses thumb, palm, elbow, knee and foot pressure along these lines and points, combined with applied yoga stretches to release blockages and stimulate the prana flow. The massage is intended as a physical application of loving kindness ('Metta' in the Pali language).

Thai yoga massage can help to balance the body's energy system, increase flexibility and mobility, stimulate the internal organs, relieve muscular and joint tension, enhance circulation, release emotional distress, relieve fatigue and headaches, release tension and toxins.

A full massage takes about an hour, and it would probably be possible to have one straight after the Sunday service on these dates, or after coffee.



“The Fabric of Diversity” Sharing our Stories through Fibre and Stitch

Sundays 7th December, 4th January, 1st February and
Thursdays between 11th December and 26th February
(excluding Christmas Day) from 2.00-5.00pm

Community Arts Project at Essex Church

A new community arts project will be taking place in Notting Hill Gate this winter. A series of textile art workshops will be held at Essex Church starting on the 7th December 2008. All are welcome - no prior knowledge or experience is required - and there will be a chance to get some basic instruction in felting at each session. It is not essential to commit to all of the sessions. However, you will probably benefit from planning to attend at least a few, so that you have enough time to make your own contribution to the project.

The intention is that we will make and decorate felt squares which represent our place in the local community and our varied connections in the wider world. At the end of the project these squares will be joined to make a large wall-hanging, which will be displayed as a public artwork, and an accompanying booklet will detail all the people who took part in its creation.

Please let us know if you are intending to come
as workshop places will be limited:

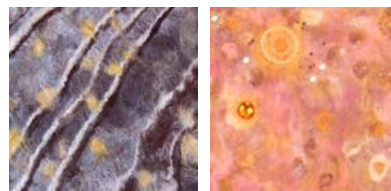
email arts@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

or leave a message with the church office: 020 7221 6514.

**There will be no charge to attend the sessions; however,
donations to help cover our costs are invited.**

*(suggested donation £3/£6/£9 per session
– a sliding scale according to your income)*

*This project has been generously supported by the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Arts Grant Scheme.*



What's On at Essex Church...

(listings continued from front page)

Sunday 4th January, 2-5.00pm

Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 8th January, 2-5.00pm

Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 8th January, 7-9.00pm

Creativity Engagement Group:
"Design a Book Cover" with Juliet

Sunday 11th January, 11.00am

"Many Paths, One Mountain"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 11th January, 12.45-2.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Sunday 11th January, 2.00-3.00pm

Nia Dance: Holistic Movement

Sunday 11th January, 3.30-5.00pm

"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Tuesday 13th January, 7.00-9.00pm

Management Committee Meeting

Thursday 15th January, 2-5.00pm

Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 15th January, 7-9.00pm

Adult RE: "Evensong II" *(closed group)*

Sunday 18th January, 11.00am

"Magic Moments"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and GA President Joyce Ashworth

Sunday 18th January, 12.45-2.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 22nd January, 2-5.00pm

Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 22nd January, 7-9.00pm

Reading Engagement Group:
"The Time Of Our Singing"

Sunday 25th January, 11.00am

"To Bear Witness"
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 25th January, 12.45-2.00pm

Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 29th January, 2-5.00pm

Community Arts Project:
"The Fabric of Diversity"

Thursday 29th January, 7-9.00pm

Adult RE: "Evensong II" *(closed group)*

Have a look at our website for more information about events and to download a copy of our spring programme.

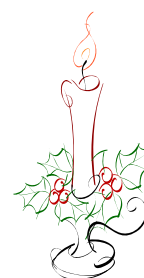
Sunday Services at Essex Church



7th December – "Advent: Finding Gold in this Time of Waiting"

Service led by Rev. John Harley

John Harley will be exploring the power of advent and leading us in some icon-gazing.



14th December – Christmas Carol Service

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This Christmas carol service will be followed by a congregational potluck lunch. Invite your friends along to join the singing and stay to eat afterwards. All are welcome.

21st December – "In the Dark Times"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

This service will mark the winter solstice and allow us time to consider what we can learn in these dark times.

28th December – "Letting Go, Holding On"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

As we move towards the new year, this service will explore these issues of holding on and letting go and the advice of spiritual leaders through the ages about these oh so human themes. If clutter clearing appeals to, or horrifies, you – come along and find out more.

4th January – Service led by David Francis Darling

Our first service of the New Year will be led by our very own David Francis Darling. This service will be followed by a sharing circle and a session of our community arts project "The Fabric of Diversity" so you might like to bring lunch and stay all day!

11th January – "Many Paths, One Mountain"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In recognition of next week's Baha'i World Religions Day this service will explore the Baha'i faith and message and link it with our Unitarian view of oneness.

18th January – "Magic Moments"

*Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker with
Joyce Ashworth, President of the Unitarian General Assembly*

There are moments in every life that are special – big or small, moments of delight, moments perhaps of transcendence, when things no longer seem quite so mundane. In this week's service we will explore these special times and consider their ability to help us view all life as special.

25th January – "To Bear Witness"

Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Holocaust Memorial Day asks us to remember those who have lost their lives through genocide. In this service we will bear witness to their suffering and recognise the work of those who try to avert such atrocities.