



Kensington Unitarians

The Newsletter

November 2008

What's On at Essex Church

Saturday 1st November, 11am-4pm
Engagement Groups Conference

Sunday 2nd November, 11.00am
"No-One Gets out of Here Alive!"
Led by Charles Miller

Sunday 2nd November, 12.45pm
Adult RE: "A Sharing Circle"

Sunday 9th November, 11.00am
"Theophilus Lindsey and the
First Unitarian Congregation"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 9th November, 12.45-2.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Sunday 9th November, 2.00-3.00pm
Nia Technique/Movement

Sunday 9th November, 3.30-5.00pm
"Songs and Silence for the Soul"

Thursday 13th November, 7-9.00pm
Creativity Group: "Nuno Feltmaking"

Saturday 15th November, 1.00pm
Theophilus Lindsey Pilgrimage
Meet at Bunhill Fields Cemetery

Sunday 16th November, 11.00am
"Unitarian Christianity"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker
and Rev. Jeff Gould

Sunday 16th November, 12.45-2.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Sunday 16th November, 2.00pm
Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture

Sunday 23rd November, 11.00am
"Worship Is..."
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 23rd November, 12.45-2.00pm
Kensington Community Singers

Thursday 27th November, 7-9.00pm
Reading Engagement Group:
"The Man Who Mistook His
Wife for a Hat" by Oliver Sacks

Sunday 30th November, 11.00am
"Taoist Way: The Unresisting Path"
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sunday 30th November, 12.45pm
Taoist Healing Sounds
Led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

A Message from our Minister...

Unintentionally Blank



Before starting ministry training I used to work at Essex Hall our General Assembly headquarters. One of the regular jobs there is the 'send out', when piles of information sheets are sent out to congregations. In one 'send out' there was a blank page and it confused some recipients who were concerned that they were missing some vital piece of information. So the next time a blank page had to be included it had printed on it the words 'Intentionally Blank'. These words stayed with me and led to the writing of the meditation piece below.

That description of feeling blank, be it intentional or otherwise, came back to me this week. It has been a difficult time for a number of people, the news of our world is gloomy, the church building project continues on its snail-like pace. In the face of all this I just wanted to sit still and do nothing. In some situations there are no words of wisdom to produce, no action that will make things better, nothing that will change life's sometimes harsh realities. Perhaps that's what we can do in such moments – just sit still and listen and wait, listen to ourselves and our inner messages, listen to one another and the message of our hearts.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Sometimes I am intentionally blank

... when I just cannot be bothered to speak another word.

... When someone says something that shocks and appals me but to challenge them would be too scary a thing to do.

... when I cannot think of a witty enough reply quickly enough.

... when I want to be rude.

Sometimes I am unintentionally blank

... when I cannot hear and so do not know what has been said

... when my eyesight cannot decipher the papers I am given

... when my body cannot perform the tasks that others expect of me

... when my fingers cannot grasp the documents and my mind cannot grasp the meaning.

*May we all strive to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses
and may we always be kind to those who are unintentionally blank.*

In this Month's Newsletter...

* Engagement Groups Conference * Kensington Community Singers – Moving to Sunday afternoons * GA Executive Committee Elections – Candidates Announced * Spring Pilgrimage to Transylvania * Gellionen Chapel Appeal * "How to Change a Life" – Swaziland sponsorship * Sharing Circle * Creativity Group: "Nuno Felt" * Reading Group: "The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat" * Taoist Healing Sounds * New Initiative for Essex Church Worship Associates * and much more...

Kensington Unitarians

At Essex Church (founded 1774), Notting Hill Gate

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

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

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



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

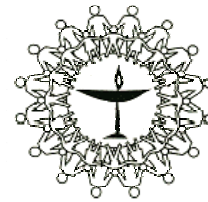
Office Telephone: 020 7221 6514

Email: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Web: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Sharing Circle

Sunday 2nd November, 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.

Kensington Community Singers

A Friendly Choir-for-All



PLEASE NOTE DAY/DATE CHANGE

The choir will now meet on **SUNDAYS** from 12.45-2.00pm, starting on November 9th, as an experiment.

Please call the church for more details.

We launched a new community choir here at Essex Church in the autumn of 2007. This choir is open to all - you don't need any qualifications except enthusiasm - and we're actively striving to welcome in local people alongside members of the congregation.

Kensington Community Singers will now meet on Sundays starting from 9th November. The new term started in September. 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 (£3/£6/£9 per session - a sliding scale according to income).

If you know anyone who might be interested - or can think of anywhere to pin up one of our advertisements - we will be printing some new flyers which you can pick up from the church foyer. Thank you.

Stewarding and Coffee



Stewarding:

2 nd November:	Caroline Blair
9 th November:	Angela Gasparetto
16 th November:	Devika Joshi
23 rd November:	Albert Dolan
30 th November:	Deborah Moran

Coffee:

2 nd November:	Juliet Edwards
9 th November:	Deborah Moran
16 th November:	Christine Joshi
23 rd November:	Angela Gasparetto
30 th November:	????

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.

Engagement Groups and Small Group Ministry Conference

“Sharing our Small Group Success Stories”

1st November, 11am-1pm, at Essex Church



Lindy Latham (*Bristol*), **Jim Robinson** (*Hampstead*),
Patricia Walker-Hesson (*Kensington*),
and **Rose Williams** (*Golders Green*).

If you are interested in finding out more about Engagement Groups and Small Group Ministry then this one -day conference is for you. Perhaps you are thinking about setting up a small group in your own congregation or fellowship and would like some pointers to help you get started; perhaps you are an experienced group facilitator who would like to meet up with other enthusiasts; or perhaps you are simply curious to find out more about the ‘engagement groups’ you have heard about.

The conference will begin with a recap of key Engagement Group and Small Group Ministry principles. We will consider some of the practicalities involved in setting up and maintaining a small group and discuss what might constitute best practice in group facilitation. Printed resources will also be available.

During the day there will be presentations of a number of ‘success stories’ – representatives of six southern congregations will report and reflect on their own experience with engagement groups and small group ministry – passing on hints and tips that they have picked up along the way. This event will also provide an opportunity for group leaders to connect via the regional engagement support network.

The conference is organised by Jim Robinson and Jane Blackall. Please contact Jim to let us know that you are planning to attend:

Telephone: 020 7435 3506 or
Email: maryjimrobinson@btconnect.com

There will be no cost to attend this conference – however, places will be limited, so please register in advance. Drinks will be provided. Please bring along a packed lunch or pick up something to eat in one of the nearby shops.

Engagement Support is a Panel of the General Assembly’s Education and Training Commission (ETC).

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

Simon John Barlow



It is with great sorrow that I have to write about the sudden death of the Reverend Simon John Barlow, who worked so successfully with Kensington Unitarians in 2004 as interim minister. Simon John died very unexpectedly of a brain haemorrhage on Thursday 16th October.

Simon John was a life-long Unitarian, originally a member of the Pendleton congregation, and was known and loved by many people in the denomination. An innovative and entertaining worship leader and an inspiring leader of religious education groups, Simon John specialised in short term ministries. He had been working recently with the congregations in Dean Row, Wilmslow, and Hale Barns. He had been actively involved in the Hucklow Summer School since its start back in 1995 and this year he had been one of the week’s theme speakers. Simon John was well known for his enthusiasm and creativity and his ability to convey that to others.

Our thoughts are particularly with Simon John’s mother Irene in this terrible time of loss and with our own congregation secretary Jane Blackall who was a beloved friend of Simon John’s. They had just booked their next year’s holiday together and this photo shows them on a beach in Iceland last year.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

GA Executive Committee Elections



We will be receiving information on candidates and ballot papers for the GA Executive Committee Elections in the near future. The GA EC elections are due to take place in November of this year.

The following persons are certified as having duly completed the nomination requirements and will appear on the ballot from which eight persons will be elected to the Executive Committee:

Joan Cook – *St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh, Scotland*

Jim Corrigall – *Golders Green Unitarians*

Elisabeth Dyson-Jones – *South East Wales Unitarian Society*

Dot Hewerdine – *Chorley Unitarian Chapel*

Andrew Pakula – *Newington Green Unitarian Church*

The Rev Dr Ann Peart – *Cross Street Chapel, Manchester*

Louise Rogers – *Newcastle under Lyme Unitarian Meeting House*

Sir Peter Soulsby – *Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel, Leicester*

Alison Thursfield –
Midland Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

The Rev Dr David Usher – *London District and South Eastern Provincial Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches*

Howard Wilkins – *Hinckley Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel*

Ballot papers will be sent out in early November. The voting period begins on 8th November and ends on 13th December. It is expected that the results will be announced approximately a week after the close of the voting period.

Unfortunately, the number of votes that congregations have been allocated by the GA was determined by the number of quota-paying members they had back in early 2007. This puts us in a rather difficult position, because our membership has grown significantly since then, but the GA has left it up to the committee of each congregation to decide how to distribute those votes amongst the members that they have now. Although it is not an ideal solution, we have decided that will simply allocate the votes to those people who were on our membership list at that time, with apologies to those members who have joined more recently. Please speak to Sarah or me if you have any questions about this process.

Jane Blackall

Nia Technique



Holistic Movement Sessions:

Sessions led by **Sonya Leite**

Sunday 9th November - 2.00-3.00pm

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).

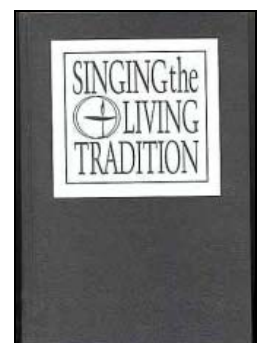
Nia is holistic movement for body and soul. It is an expressive movement practice promoting fitness, creativity and wellbeing. Fusing dance, yoga, tai chi and martial arts, Nia provides a holistic workout and leaves you feeling energised, relaxed and centred. It suits any level of fitness, age and experience, 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. Moving between simple choreography (form) and freedom of movement (freedance), Nia classes combine the grace and expressiveness of dance, the power and explosiveness of martial arts, and the wisdom and stillness of yoga and tai chi.

Sponsor a Hymn Book

A reminder about our "sponsor a hymn book" scheme:

For only £20, you can dedicate one of the new 'Singing the Living Tradition' hymn books to a person or cause that is dear to you. An inscribed bookplate will record your dedication. Make cheques payable to Essex Church and hand them with a note of your chosen dedication either to Sarah, our minister, or a committee member.



Backroom Bits and Pieces: News from the Management Committee



Every month the Essex Church management committee meets to discuss issues regarding the running of the church. Here are some issues that have been discussed in the last month.

1. The end is in sight (we hope) for the building work. We recognise that it has been stressful for Jenny and Sarah having builders on the premises for so long. We think that the new toilets and kitchen will look very nice when they are finished.
2. Incredibly, it looks as if the building work will be done within the budget we set for it. So thanks again to everyone who helped with the fundraising.
3. The recent wedding at the Church went well. It was the first wedding for three years. John Marrow attended as trainee registrar. We hope that there will be more weddings or other ceremonies at the church.
4. Howard and Gill Hague recently sponsored an issue of the Inquirer so that it could be in colour rather than black and white. We all felt that it made a big difference. It was suggested that the Church might sponsor one issue per year in colour.
5. The choir is being moved from Monday nights to Sunday afternoons from 9th November. Several people found Monday nights difficult. The choir has been doing well and proving enjoyable for those who attend, but there is plenty of room for more people.

Caroline Blair

The next meeting of the Essex Church Management Committee will take place at 7pm on 25th November.

Changes to Our Autumn Programme

Some Arts and Education Events Rescheduled

Due to unforeseen circumstances we have decided to postpone a number of arts and education events due to take place at Essex Church this autumn.

The Fabric of Diversity workshops will now be starting again on Sunday 7th and then Thursday 11th December.

The Evensong group will now be starting on Thursday evenings in the New Year. The first session will be on 1st January and further sessions will take place on 15th and 29th January, 5th and 19th February, 5th and 19th March, and the 2nd April. Please speak to Sarah to book your place.

Apologies for any inconvenience caused by these changes.

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



**Sundays 9th November and 14th December
from 3.30 to 5.00pm**

Suggested Donation: £2.00

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

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

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.



Multifaith Calendar

✠ 1st November – All Saints' Day – Christian

All Saints' Day was originally known as All Martyrs' Day, and is also called All Hallows'. The work and witness of all Christian saints is remembered with thanksgiving, recognising that not all are known or specially celebrated. Many churches stress All Saints' Day rather than Hallowe'en, which falls the day before, by holding events for children.

✠ 2nd November – All Souls' Day – Christian

On All Souls' Day those who have departed this life are remembered and prayers offered on their behalf. From the beginning Christians have prayed for the dead. In the year 998, All Souls 'the faithful departed' began to be remembered in the Church calendar on this day.

🌐 9th November

– Remembrance Sunday

The Sunday nearest to Armistice Day (11th November), when those who died in the two World Wars and subsequent wars are remembered.



🌐 12th November –

– Birthday of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru (1469)

Important anniversaries associated with the lives of the Gurus are referred to as Gurpurbs. They are marked with an akhand path, an uninterrupted reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, completed on the morning of the festival, kirtan (musical recitation of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib) and katha (lectures on Sikhism). The congregation will share a meal (langar) from the free kitchen, and the celebrations often include firework displays and illumination of the gurdwara.

🌐 24th November –

– Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (1675) – Sikh

In 1675, the ninth Guru was executed in public, in Delhi for upholding an individual's right to worship in the manner of his or her choice.

✠ 30th November – Advent Sunday – Christian

Advent is the time when Christians prepare for celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The four Sundays of Advent are often marked with the lighting of candles on an advent crown, culminating with the Christmas candle on 25th December, symbolising the light of Christ coming into the world.

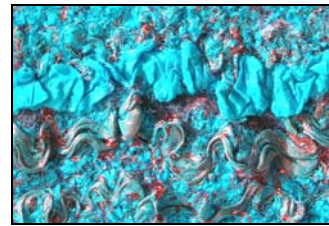
✠ 30th November – St Andrew's Day – Christian

Andrew was the first disciple to follow Jesus. He was present on the day of Pentecost, but little is known of his life afterwards, until he was crucified at Patras, in Greece. St Andrew is the Patron Saint of Scotland, and his day is celebrated by Scots around the world.

Creativity Engagement Group

“Nuno Feltmaking”

Thursday 13th November, 7.00-9.00pm



At the creativity group in November there will be an opportunity to try your hand at making Nuno felt. This technique fuses wool with other fine fabrics to result in a lightweight, often textured, fabric which tends to be much lighter than ordinary felt and drapes more easily.

It would be useful if you could bring along scraps of fabric to the session – preferably lightweight materials such as chiffon or silk or scrim – ideally with a loose enough weave that you can easily blow through them. However, some fabrics will be provided, so this is not essential. Wool tops in a variety of colours will also be available for everybody.

Many regulars at the creativity group will have some previous experience of making ordinary felt by hand but even if you have never tried to do so before it will be possible to take part in the session. All are welcome.



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.

Dec/Jan Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submitting items for the October issue is **Sunday 16th November**. Please send items (such as poems, artwork, quotes, articles, notices, etc...) to Jane Blackall or any committee member before this date.

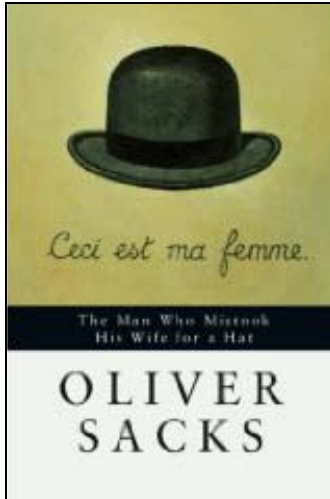
Thank you!!!

Reading Engagement Group

“The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat”

by Oliver Sacks

Thursday 27th November, 7.00-9.00pm



The reading engagement group's next conversation will be about “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat” by Oliver Sacks. This book was chosen by Jane Blackall and will be the focus of our next group on **Thursday 27th November**.

Information from Publishers Weekly:

“A neurologist who claims to be equally interested in disease and people, Sacks (Awakenings, etc.) explores neurological disorders with a novelist's skill and an appreciation of his patients as human beings. These cases, some of which have appeared in literary or medical publications, illustrate the tragedy of losing neurological faculties: memory, powers of visualization, word-recognition or the also-devastating fate of those suffering an excess of neurological functions causing such hyper states as chorea, tics, Tourette's syndrome and Parkinsonism. Still other patients experience organically based hallucinations, transports, visions, etc., usually deemed to be psychic in nature. The science of neurology, Sacks charges, stresses the abstract and computerized at the expense of judgment and emotional depths in his view, the most important human qualities. Therapy for brain-damaged patients (by medication, accommodation, music or art) should, he asserts, be designed to help restore the essentially personal quality of the individual.”

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 London event which you might be interested in...

The Brain, Consciousness and Controversies

Monday 10th November 2008 at 7:00 pm

The Royal Institution of Great Britain
21 Albemarle Street, London, W1S 4BS

Consciousness is one of the major unsolved puzzles in science today. How do the salty taste and crunchy texture of potato crisps, the unmistakable smell of cut grass, or the awfulness of a throbbing tooth pain, emerge from the physical brain?

Susan Greenfield and Christof Koch will briefly summarise what is known about the biology and neurology of consciousness, outline the limits to our knowledge and describe ongoing experiments in people and animals. The speakers will highlight two quite distinct theoretical approaches to the neuronal basis of consciousness. As will become apparent, even though both are neuroscientists there are many areas where they fundamentally disagree!

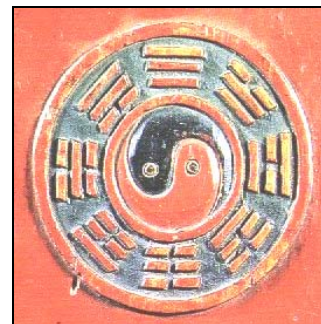
Cost: £8 standard, £6 concessions

For more information: www.rigb.org

...a new monthly activity at Essex Church later this summer...

Taoist Healing Sounds

Sunday 30th November, 12.45-2.00pm



Once a month after worship we will learn a Taoist system of healing sounds with accompanying movements and self-massage techniques.

No particular skill or fitness is needed – just the willingness to have a go at something different and to make some unusual sounds.

Rev. Sarah Tinker

Notice

This evening, the sturdy Levi's
I wore every day for over a year
& which seemed to the end
in perfect condition,
suddenly tore.
How or why I don't know,
but there it was: a big rip at the crotch.
A month ago my friend Nick
walked off a racquetball court,
showered,
got into this street clothes,
& halfway home collapsed & died.
Take heed, you who read this,
& drop to your knees now & again
like the poet Christopher Smart,
& kiss the earth & be joyful,
& make much of your time,
& be kindly to everyone,
even to those who do not deserve it.
For although you may not believe
it will happen,
you too will one day be gone,
I, whose Levi's ripped at the crotch
for no reason,
assure you that such is the case.
Pass it on.

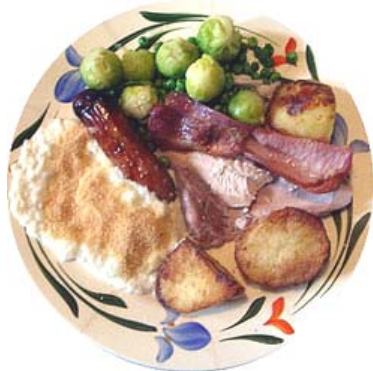


Steve Kowit

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

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 this special occasion. Look out for someone wielding a sign-up sheet... there will also be further information about the arrangements for our various Christmas events in next month's newsletter.

Gellionen Chapel

Lewis Rees, the Lay Person in Charge at Gellionen Chapel, near Pontardawe, had to turn his congregation away when they arrived for the morning service on Sunday 9th March 2008. Vandals seriously damaged the historic chapel located on a Swansea Valley mountainside.

The vandals threw paint at the walls, destroyed pews, pushed out a 12ft tall window and smashed the pulpit which is more than 200 years old. In addition to breaking the pews and throwing paint around, the vandals also pushed out one of four 12ft tall feature windows. A chapel has stood on the site for hundreds of years and parts of the building date back to 1692.

A Message from the GA President

Friends,

I know you will remember how shocked and unbelieving we all were earlier this year at the news of the utter devastation wreaked by vandals at the remote Unitarian Chapel on Gellionen Mountain in West Glamorgan.

As you can imagine, obtaining insurance assessments and accurate estimates for refurbishment has proved an involved and lengthy process for this small Unitarian community to undertake. I do know that some Unitarian groups and individuals were quick to respond with donations towards restoration, but the time has now come for a more organised national response. If each Unitarian community which has not so far contributed could over the next few months, run a special fundraising event or take a retiring collection at a well-attended service of worship, the collective result would provide a huge boost to the spirits of the Gellionen congregation and their leader Lewis Rees, who face such an enormous reconstruction task.

This is a rallying call for all Unitarians to demonstrate their support for maintaining this ancient and important sanctuary of Unitarian witness. I know you can be relied upon to respond generously. Please make out your cheques to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and post to: Gellionen Appeal c/o Mary-Jean Hennis, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex St, London, WC2R 3HY

If you would like further information then please contact Lewis Rees, the Lay Person in Charge at Gellionen Chapel via email at lewis_rees@yahoo.com

Joyce Ashworth

*President, General Assembly of
Unitarian & Free Christian Churches*



“There is a common misunderstanding about belief among Unitarian Universalists – too often I hear these words: ‘Unitarian Universalists can believe in whatever they want’. It’s

not true, of course, but for someone who has lived a lifetime of hidden, shame-filled doubt, the light-filled-freedom of Unitarian Universalism must feel a lot like anything is possible.

I’m personally not interested in a religion that allows us to believe in anything we want. I want a great deal more from my religion. So while I cherish the openness of our religion and the way we encourage each other to an infinite possibilities of beliefs and doubts, I also need my religion to call me – even demand from me – my best self; I want to practice a religion that reveals the profundity in the web of life and gives me solace during trauma.”

Rev. Joel Miller, UU Minister

GA Email Discussion Lists



The Unitarian General Assembly (GA) has several email discussion lists which anyone can subscribe to. On a discussion list, a subscriber uses the mailing list to send messages to all the other subscribers, who may answer in similar fashion. Thus, actual discussion and information exchanges can happen.

The current GA email discussion lists are:

Youth – Discussion and sharing of information and networking about youth programmes and events

Worship – Forum for the discussion and sharing of information and networking about worship

Religious Education – Discussion and sharing of information and networking about Adult, children, young people and intergenerational religious education

Please remember you will need to subscribe to each list individually if you want to participate in that particular email lists discussion.

Go to the GA email lists start page and subscribe:
www.unitarian.org.uk/email_lists_requests.htm

...an event organised by the Art and Spirituality Network...

“The Great Web”

A Contemplative Day Reflecting on our Relationships with the World Around Us



**Led by Linda Murgatroyd and Rob Burton
Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design**

Saturday 29th November 2008, 10am - 4.00pm

This workshop offers an opportunity to step aside from your usual position and to reflect creatively on your place in the Web of Life.

How does the Spirit inform our relationship with the natural world? How are we nurtured and challenged by it? Through poetry, talks, silence, and simple ‘hands-on’ activities you will have the opportunity to explore aspects of your relationship with the world around you from some new perspectives.

The cost of attending this workshop is £25. All materials are provided and no prior experience is needed. There will be opportunities to work privately and to share with others.

Programme:

9.45am	Arrivals, registration, coffee
10.15am	‘Becoming a Redwood’
12.15pm	Shared reflections
12.45pm	Buffet Lunch
1.45pm	‘The Transforming Web’
3.30pm	Endings
4.00pm	Tea and departures

Please wear old clothes or bring an apron. Please bring some vegetarian food to contribute to a shared lunch.

For further information:

www.artandspirituality.net or 020 8946 8365

Spring/Pentecost Pilgrimage to Transylvania & Budapest

A message from Rev. Linda Hart: During the spring of 2009 we are planning to organize a group pilgrimage to Eastern Europe to experience the historic roots of Unitarianism. We will share in the lives of our co-religionists in Eastern Europe, discuss the origins of our denomination with Unitarian ministers, and visit a number of significant historical Unitarian sites, including:



- Torda - where the first act of religious tolerance was signed in 1568
- The rock in Kolozsvár that Francis David spoke from when he “converted the whole town's population to Unitarianism.”
- Meszko – the “Alabaster Village” served by Ferenc Balazs and made famous in the book of the same name.
- Gyulafehérvár – where a 1000 year-old church houses the tomb of John Sigismund, the only Unitarian King in history.
- Deva – the hilltop ruins of the prison where Francis David was martyred.
- Optional pre-trip extension with arrival in Bucharest.

Beginning in Kolozsvár (Cluj), Romania and ending in the lovely Hungarian capital city of Budapest, the trip will also include a stay in a Unitarian village, and visits to numerous historic village & town churches. Travellers will discover the warmth and loving hospitality of Transylvanian Unitarian families during a home stay in a Unitarian village and experience rural village life

The trip is open to all, young and not so young. Through this trip we hope to foster new understanding of our historical roots and build deeper relationships with our co-religionists. The tour logistics will be coordinated by the UU Partner Church Council Pilgrimage Service which has more than a decade of experience facilitating the visits of North American UUs to Eastern & Central Europe.

Dates of travel are 22nd May to 1st June 2009. Cost will be £875 plus a non-refundable £75 registration fee.

To register, go to: <http://www.uupcc.org/trips.html> and scroll down to the “register online for any UUPCC Pilgrimage” button and click. Select the “Spring Pilgrimage” and begin filling in the information. Local contact for the trip is Rev Linda Hart. For a fuller itinerary and other inquiries, please contact her at revlahart@gmail.com.



Leaves

The leaves have almost completely covered the backyard, and there are leaves to fall. The wind whistles through its thin teeth and no one seems to mind. For weeks we have watched from windows, seen colours changing, but nor talked about it. One night, when we went to gather another load of wood, we heard the dead leaves crunch beneath our feet. Now a light snow has begun to touch the trees and the woodpile, first fingerprinting them, then blurring, blending everything in. Someday, I may get around to saying what I've been thinking for months.

William Virgil Davis

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. By spending almost none of the pocket money we gave her, Iona has already paid to sponsor two children for a year. But there are many more who could benefit. Sarah suggested that the Church could take this on as a project; many churches in Britain do have a special church, school or orphanage in the developing world that they support, and I would guess that the sponsoring church feels that they gain some benefit as well as the people they sponsor.

In December we hope that Iona will be able to visit this Church and tell us personally a bit about the work she did. Until then, we are asking members of the Church to consider the idea of sponsoring a child (or part-sponsoring if appropriate); we are particularly keen to hear from anyone who would feel able to sponsor a child for a few years as Iona has already witnessed the worry of a child whose sponsorship is running out. We will be launching an official appeal in December, but if anyone wants to jump on board early, or to ask any questions, please make yourself known. Thank you in advance to anyone who does offer to help; this congregation has always been generous with time and money when there is a need, so we are confident that between us something can be achieved.

Jim and Caroline Blair

Remembering...

Words for November by Simon John Barlow

The following piece was written by Rev. Simon John Barlow for the newsletter back in November 2004 while he was interim minister here at Essex Church.



Friends, at the beginning of November, a couple of years ago, I was on holiday in the north of Majorca. One glorious day of blue sky and warm zephyrs, most of the businesses were closed, and for much of the morning there was a joyous stream of families crossing the road between the old town and the cemetery. The families were laden down with picnic baskets, rugs, chairs, toys and bouquets of flowers, especially riotous gladioli.

Each family group gradually settled down on and around the graves of their loved ones, talking to and about their dearly deceased, eating, drinking, laughing, crying, playing. It was All Souls day, many people had been in Church the day before, recalling the saints of the Church, and this day they were remembering their own. It remains the greatest feast of remembrance I've ever been party to.

For me, November, from the Celtic festival of Samhain (Fire of Peace) on the 31st October, through All Saints day, All Souls day (in Mexico 'the Day of the Dead'), Bonfire Night, Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday to Thanksgiving Day in the USA (or starting with Thanksgiving Day in October if one is Canadian) is about exploring the different aspects and qualities of remembering. For the pagan Celts, Samhain is the end of one year; similarly in the Hindu calendar November brings Diwali, the beginning of the new year; both festivals require full remembering, before embarking on the new.

In recalling the Bonfire Night rhyme, "Remember, remember, the fifth of November - gunpowder, treason and plot", I remember noisy, smoky nights of crackling flames, toffee apples, daring fireworks and dainty sparklers. I remember once impressing some friends' children by being able to sing an Oasis song - even if out of tune. I remember other friends' cats who get so traumatised it takes them a week or more to recover. I remember how scholarship now suggests that the whole festival may well have developed from a 'put up job' by the government of the day, to discredit loyal citizens who also wished to remain loyal to their faith, in that case Catholicism. I remember how sometimes it seems that not that much changes in human history.

Memories can bring a spectacular display of past times, a "second chance at happiness", and lead to explosions of grief and re-lived loss. However, if we fail to honour how we became who we are today, remember those who loved and guided us and those we love and nurture, I believe we are in a sense committing treason against our own lives and removing the foundations from which we are to grow and heal our beings and world.

Remembering is a slow and gathering process, sometimes best carried out in solitude and at other times by sharing our stories in safe, comfortable places. It is my aim in my month of ministry at Essex Church to provide some thoughts, resources, ways of meditating, exploring poetry and creativity that will aid you in your remembering; and it is my hope that we will share our spiritual resources, some of our stories, and create together safe, comfortable spaces that are both deeply profound and joyously uplifting for us to remember and renew our lives and community, in a feast of remembering at least as memorable as a sunny morning of companionship in Majorca.

Our Warden's Column

What's On in Our Busy Building...

Work continues on the kitchen/toilet renovation and hopefully will be finished by the end of the month. It's really beginning to take shape now, the green and grey colour-scheme feels very soothing, and hopefully everyone will feel it was worth all the patience and fundraising effort.

We're also continuing to develop our front garden, which had its refurbishment last year. The latest project has been to plant lots of bulbs. So hopefully next year you'll be able to see: winter aconite; crocuses; dwarf daffodils; grape hyacinth; narcissi; anemones; bluebells; tulips; irises and alliums.

I mentioned last month that we'd had several offers of a regular booking for Tuesday evenings. We decided to go with John Stirk (www.johnstirk.co.uk) who does osteopathy based yoga. He will start on 13th January next year.

We've also taken a late afternoon booking on Tuesdays from a group called Kiddikicks (www.kiddikicks.co.uk) who help under 5s develop their physical and social skills through football related exercises. We were a bit dubious at first about whether this was a suitable use for our building, but it's a small group of less than 10 children all of whom have a parent with them and the two group leaders make sure that everything stays calm and safe (if a little noisy at times).

November is quite busy with music exams, but some other interesting groups that will be meeting here are the Wrekin Trust, the Westminster Pastoral Foundation, our neighbours across the road Broadwalk Court, and the Radionics Association.

The monthly service by Interfaith Ministers is on the 21st this month rather than the 2nd Friday as usual. The Analytical Psychology Club have an interesting looking lecture 7.30-9pm on Thursday 21st November 'Gaia: a myth for our time' (£8, £6 concession - pay on the door). Their new series of weekly seminars on Jung start on the 29th October.

Jenny Moy



For All Saints' Day

I began to see them then in their places, the places where they had been Christ to me – the hallways and the houses, the churches and the chapels, the schoolrooms and the shopping malls, the bars and the ball fields, the retreats and the restaurants. I saw them in doorways, opening their arms to me when I was hurting; on park benches, sharing their hope with me when I was afraid; in sanctuaries, throwing out lines to me when I was drowning.

I saw them walking beside me on roads I had walked thinking I was surely all alone, and I heard them laughing with me on golden days where the sun still shines even now. I saw them with their arms around me and their tears falling mixed with mine, in places so dark there was barely enough light for our tears to glisten.

I remembered those places, and then I knew what it meant to be on holy ground — ground that had been made holy by the One who made it and by those who walk it and do the work of the Christ on it. We do not often see the place we are standing as holy ground. But the fault does not lie with the ground; it lies with us. We do not always see the saints among us, either, but that is because we do not see what it is we are looking at.

We do not always see that we should be moving about our days and lives and places with awe and reverence and wonder, with the same soft steps with which we enter the room of a sleeping child or the mysterious silence of a cathedral. There is no ground that is not holy ground. All the places of our lives are sanctuaries; some of them just happen to have steeples. And all of the people in our lives are saints; it is just that some of them have day jobs and most will never have feast days named for them.

Robert Benson



...some forthcoming events – dates for your diary this autumn...

A London Weekend of Theophilus Lindsey Commemorations



REV. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

In November this year we will be marking the bicentenary of the death in 1808 of the Rev Theophilus Lindsey, the founder of the original Essex Street Chapel (from which the present-day Essex Church congregation is in part derived, and from which it takes its name). There are two special events:

Visit to Lindsey's Grave – Saturday 15th November

This could be described as a 'pilgrimage' to Lindsey's tomb in the fascinating Bunhill Fields Dissenters' Cemetery in the heart of London, where John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake are also buried. We will meet at the City Road eastern entrance to Bunhill Fields (London EC1) at 1pm, opposite Wesley's Chapel and Museum, the nearest tube station being Old Street, with Moorgate not too far away). From there Unitarian historian Alan Ruston will lead us through the cemetery, pointing out various dissenting graves of interest, including that of the Rev Richard Price, minister at our Newington Green church for many years, and the Rev Dr Daniel Williams, (of Dr Williams's Library in Gordon Square, one of the leading libraries of Protestant nonconformity). When we reach Lindsey's tomb in the north-western corner of the cemetery, our minister the Rev Sarah Tinker will lead us in a short ceremony to mark Lindsey's life and work. It is expected that the visit will finish about 3pm. If you are not familiar with Bunhill Fields, it is worth visiting this oasis of calm in the midst of the busy city. Let us hope for good weather!

Lecture on Lindsey at Essex Church – Sunday 16th November

On Sunday 16th November the Unitarian Christian Association is holding its annual Lance Garrard Memorial Lecture on Lindsey at Essex Unitarian Church, Kensington. It will be given by the leading Lindsey scholar, Professor Grayson Ditchfield of the University of Kent (who is also a trustee of Dr Williams's Library in London)*. The title will be: 'From Prayer Book to Personal Piety: the contribution of Theophilus Lindsey to the emergence of a Unitarian Identity.' The Lecture is advertised as a 2 for 2.30 pm start, and Kensington Unitarians are offering lunch beforehand for those attending. The morning service will focus on Lindsey too, as other Unitarian services throughout Britain are likely to do during November. Our minister Rev Sarah Tinker will be assisted in the service by Rev Jeff Gould, a visiting member of the UCA.

The General Assembly's Worship Panel has recently issued a Lindsey Worship Pack (the contents of which were in fact compiled by several members of Essex Church), and this has now been mounted as a PDF file on our website: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk/publications.html - do take a look!

(* Professor Ditchfield has been working for some years on an edition of the letters of Theophilus Lindsey; the first volume was published last November in the Church of England Record Society series.)

Howard Hague

Getting Involved With Worship – 'Worship Associates'



If you would like to get more involved with worship here at Essex Church we'll be having a meeting after worship on November 23rd to talk about a new scheme called 'Worship Associates'. This is a scheme where people take on some responsibility for our Sunday services, greeting visiting worship leaders, perhaps doing a reading or prayer, checking candle supplies, making suggestions for future worship themes - anything is possible. If you can't make this brief meeting at 12.30pm on Sunday, do let Sarah know if you would like to know more about this scheme.

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

The cool thing for teenagers in the South...

UNITEENS: Youth Group for 12-17 year olds



**On Sundays
2nd November and 7th December
from 5.00-7.30pm
at Unity Church, 279 Upper St, Islington**

Time to make friends, be creative,
enter into brilliant debates and have fun.

For more information contact John Harley
at jharley@unitarian.org.uk or 07985 900935

Sunday Services at Essex Church

**2nd November –
“No-One Gets Out of Here Alive!”**
Service led by Mr. Charles Miller

Charles Miller reflects on life and death, inspired by Halloween, and his reading of Tolstoy's War and Peace.

**9th November – “Theophilus Lindsey and
the First Unitarian Congregation”**
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

Next weekend marks the 200th anniversary of the death of Theophilus Lindsey, the first minister of Essex Church, the first English Unitarian congregation. What made him leave the church of England, who were his friends and why did government spies attend his services? Some of the answers will be revealed in this service but to find out the whole truth you will have to attend the following weekend's pilgrimage and lecture. Did you ever imagine that Unitarian history could be this exciting? This service will also recognise Remembrance Sunday.

16th November – “Unitarian Christianity”
Service led by Rev. Jeff Gould and Rev. Sarah Tinker

An officer of the Unitarian Christian Association and renowned for leading high quality worship up in the north Jeff Gould will be joining us for the Lindsey weekend of commemorations. In this service we will consider Unitarianism's Christian roots and its varied nature in the 21st century. The service will be followed by a shared lunch, and a lecture, to which all are invited.

23rd November – “Worship Is...”
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

In this service we will be exploring our human yearning to engage in worshipful activity with others. What are its essential components? What does it mean for us today? What do we want more, or less of in worship here at Essex Church? These are some of the questions we will consider in the service and in the short Worship Group meeting which will be held afterwards

**30th November – “The Taoist Way:
The Unresisting Path”**
Service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker

The ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism offers useful guidance for modern life. How to lead in a gentle manner, how to flow through life's dilemmas, when to act and when to remain still. This service links in with the Taoist Healing Sounds session that will be taking place after the service.