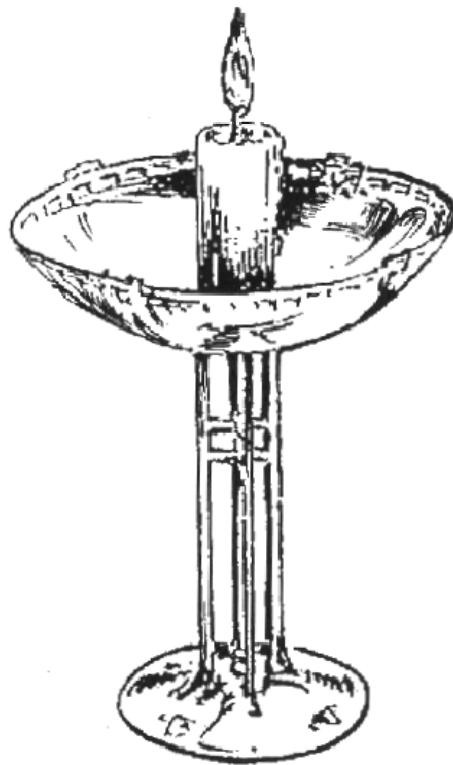


Kensington Unitarians



Annual Report 2007

Essex Church
112 Palace Gardens Terrace
London W8 4RT

info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk

Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2007

Name of Charity

Essex Unitarian Chapel and Minister's House and Other Charities, as shown, known locally as Kensington Unitarians, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Kensington, London W8 4RT.

Charitable Registration

The church is registered as Charity number 230789. The original governing instrument is a conveyance dated 7 January 1783 and modified by schemes dated 9 December 1884, 15 January 1973 and 18 April 1986, which last incorporated the remaining eight charities.

Trustees

Howard Hague (Chairperson), Caroline Blair (*from 1st May 2007*),
Juliet Edwards, Harold Lorenzelli, Roy Parnell, Patricia Walker-Hesson.

The Custodian Trustee is the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Incorporate.

Management Committee

Caroline Blair (*Chairperson*), Jane Blackall, Doris Campbell,
David Francis Darling, Albert Dolan (*from October 2007*), Juliet Edwards,
Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli, Patricia Walker-Hesson.

Minister

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Manse Flat, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

Treasurer

Juliet Edwards
6A Essex Road, Acton, London W3 9JA

Wardens

Jenny Moy and David Berridge
Warden's Flat, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

Secretary

Jane Blackall
20 Manchester Grove, London E14 3BG

Auditors and Accountants

Lindeyer Francis Ferguson
North House, 198 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1BE

Investment Advisers

Citi Quilter
4th Floor, The Pinnacle, 73 King Street, Manchester, M2 4NG

Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd.
25 King's Hill Avenue, King's Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA

Restriction on Funds

All Funds/Trusts under the control of the Trustees are for the benefit of the Church other than the Carlisle Fund (income may be expended at the sole discretion of the Minister) and Stock Bequest (income must be used for Church music).

Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2007

The Charity's Purpose and Objectives

Charitable Purpose and Policies

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

There have been no material changes in the policies since the last report.

Organisation

The running of the church is under the control of the management committee with the trustees having overall responsibility for finance and staff employment. Trustees are appointed by invitation with a maximum of 9 trustees to serve. They manage the charity by means of monthly meetings. The management committee is elected at the AGM with casual vacancies filled during the year.

Trustees

The trustees who have served during the year are listed, with other key personnel, on page 1.

Review of Activities

Details are given in the reports that follow.

Risks

The trustees have reviewed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and systems have been established to mitigate those risks. The major risk is generating enough income to finance the charity's occupation of the building.

Policy on Reserves

The trustees are now satisfied that they have achieved a reserve of three months running costs. We have completed the second year of the five year programme of repair and renovation that our thirty year old building requires. In the past year we have had the front garden terraced and re planted. The trustees are mindful of the need to continue to build further reserves through a variety of fund raising initiatives.

Investment Performance

The value of invested funds have increased a little in line with the markets generally. The trustees are holding funds for the long term and are optimistic that the values will improve further.

Approval

On behalf of the Trustees

Howard Hague, Chair of Trustees

Date: 8th April 2008

Treasurer's Report

2007 was the second year of our five year repair and renovation plan for our 30 year old building and we concentrated on the garden in front of the church which had been left as a "wildlife area" after the minister's flat was built above the church in 2002/3. We were very fortunate in finding out about an organisation called Groundwork which is a national charity working on landscaping projects with unemployed people. We had to make a payment of a little under £900 towards the costs of Groundwork drawing up a proposal of the work we required and submitting it to KCEL the environmental charity linked with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. When our plans were accepted we had to pay a little under £3,000 towards the total cost of the £20,000 which we received as a grant. The project included terracing, using railway sleepers, filling up with additional loads of soil and planting. The area between the street and the garden has been paved and the fencing painted. We were very lucky to have this work done and to be involved in a project which gives work experience to some keen and likeable people. There is still some snagging to be done re the paving but we are very pleased with the transformation of our front garden.

The next item on our repair and renovation plan is to reconstruct the toilet area so that it gives disability access. We would like to refurbish the kitchen at the same time so we are looking at spending an estimated £50,000. This year we have been raising money in many ways. We decided that we would give 10% of the lettings income and the cash collection from the last Sunday of every month. We opened a Repairs and Building deposit account for the fund. We have had some very generous donations from individuals and several people, including our minister, have donated their fees for conducting services, weddings and namings. All the taxes recovered through Gift Aid went into the account. Other initiatives were our 30th birthday celebration, the photography exhibition, the Advent Fair, concerts given by our musicians and a skills auction. Everyone deserves a huge vote of thanks. By December we had raised over £9,000.

Thank you to all of you for your donations to the weekly church collection. It is also pleasing that the annual church membership payment has been readily accepted. Many thanks to those of you who have been able to Gift Aid your donations. We raised over £2,300 this year, which would otherwise have gone to the chancellor in taxes. Albert Dolan has kindly taken over the management of our Gift Aid. If you would like to know more about it please have a word with him.

Our Wardens, Jenny and David are managing the church lettings very efficiently and have increased our income this year. Jenny has also been very helpful to me personally as she now regularly works with me on the monthly banking spread sheets. Thanks to Jenny we also have an analysis of how the church spends its money and a projected budget for 2008.

We are fortunate to have the Lloyd Williamson School as our regular letting and we have recently renegotiated our contract with them for the next five years.

Financially we are in a much better position than we were in 2002/3. We have benefited from the interest rate on our CAF bank accounts being at around 5% for most of this year. We have been able to maintain a reserve of three months running costs (approx £8,500 a month) and we were able to deposit a further £6,000 towards the loan permitted by the Charity Commission when we built the minister's flat.

Juliet Edwards
Congregational Treasurer

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2007, comprising a statement of financial activities, balance sheet and accompanying notes.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for their year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 43 of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that:
 - proper accounting records are kept in accordance with section 41 of the Act; and
 - accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the requirements
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

John Francis FCA
LINDEYER FRANCIS FERGUSON
Chartered Accountants

8th April 2008
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

Income and expenditure	2007 Unrestricted Funds £	2007 Endowment Funds £	2007 Restricted Funds £	2007 Total Funds £	2006 Total Funds £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary income					
Grant income	20,000			20,000	-
Collections and donations	15,695	-	-	15,695	10,081
Income Tax on Gift Aid	2,346	-	-	2,346	1,266
Investment income					
Dividends and interest	3,914	-	4,801	8,715	6,730
Lettings	90,212	-	-	90,212	79,466
Total incoming resources	132,167	-	4,801	136,968	97,543
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of charitable activities					
Donations and grants	577	-	200	777	2,067
Ministry	34,355	-	-	34,355	34,448
Church running	20,115	-	-	20,115	15,395
Premises	38,787	-	-	38,787	29,612
Fixtures depreciation	-	7,804	-	7,804	7,804
Support costs:					
Accountancy costs	1,751	-	-	1,751	1,862
	95,585	7,804	200	103,589	91,188
Governance costs					
Independent Examiner	1,586	-	-	1,586	1,586
Legal and Professional fees	316	-	-	316	3,913
	1,902	-	-	1,902	5,499
Total resources expended	97,487	7,804	200	105,491	96,687
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	34,680	(7,804)	4,601	31,477	856
Transfers between funds	(2,659)	7,260	(4,601)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses	32,021	(544)	-	31,477	856
Unrealised gains (losses) on investments	-	198	(9,482)	(9,284)	14,636
Net movement in funds	32,021	(346)	(9,482)	22,193	15,492
Balances brought forward	30,648	1,401,892	117,487	1,550,027	1,534,535
Balances carried forward	62,669	1,401,546	108,005	1,572,220	1,550,027

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2007

	Notes	2007 Unrestricted Funds £	2007 Endowment Funds £	2007 Restricted Funds £	2007 Total Funds £	2006 Total Funds £
Fixed assets						
Tangible assets	3	-	1,361,732	-	1,361,732	1,369,536
Listed investments	4	-	13,442	107,711	121,153	130,437
		-	1,375,174	107,711	1,482,885	1,499,973
Current assets						
Cash held for rent deposit	5	26,571	-	-	26,571	46,454
Debtors and prepayments		6,027	-	-	6,027	5,453
Due from Stockbroker		-	-	296	296	291
Cash at bank and on deposit		65,693	26,372	(2)	92,063	53,215
		98,291	26,372	294	124,957	105,413
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year						
Creditors and accruals		9,051	-	-	9,051	8,905
Rent deposit		26,571	-	-	26,571	46,454
		35,622	-	-	35,622	55,359
Net current assets		62,669	26,372	294	89,335	50,054
Net Assets		62,669	1,401,546	108,005	1,572,220	1,550,027
Capital and reserves						
Endowment funds	6	-	1,401,546	-	1,401,546	1,401,892
Restricted funds		-	-	108,005	108,005	117,487
General funds		62,669	-	-	62,669	30,648
		62,669	1,401,546	108,005	1,572,220	1,550,027

Approved by the trustees on 8th April 2008 and signed on their behalf by:

S Tinker (Minister)

H Hague (Chairman)

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

1 Accounting policies

a) Basis of preparation

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting by Charities. The accounts also comply with the requirements of the Charities Act and relevant Accounting and Reporting Standards.

b) Grant income

Grant income is recognised on a receivable basis.

c) Collections and donations

All congregational giving and donations are included on a cash received basis.

d) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Freehold property is included at the balance sheet at an historic valuation plus the cost of subsequent improvements. The trustees consider that the market value of the property is not less than the amount at which it is stated in the balance sheet. Fixtures, fittings and works of art are depreciated at 10% on cost per annum.

e) Resources expended

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis.

f) Investments

The investments are held in a variety of investment funds see note 4 and these are valued at the market value in the balance sheet. All movements in the valuations of the investments are taken to the statement of financial activities as they arise.

g) Pension costs

The charity contributes to the Ministers Pension Fund. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by the charity to the fund totalling £2,225 (2006: £2,143).

2 Employee costs

There was an average of three employees in the financial year. The significant volume of voluntary contribution to the life of the Church by members of the congregation is not quantified in these accounts.

	Ministry	Church	2007	2006
	£	Running	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Minister	18,287	-	18,287	17,490
Wardens and caretaker	-	12,712	12,712	7,685
Social security costs	1,678	322	2,000	1,848
Pension contributions	2,225	-	2,225	2,143
Employee costs	22,190	13,034	35,224	29,166
Locum Preachers	513	-	513	334
Total staff costs	22,703	13,034	35,737	29,500

The trustees are not remunerated. During the year one of the trustees was reimbursed £20 for travelling expenses incurred on the business of the charity.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

3 Fixed tangible assets	Freehold Property £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
Brought forward and carried forward	1,322,709	78,043	1,400,752
Depreciation			
Brought forward	-	31,216	31,216
Charge for the year	-	7,804	7,804
Carried forward	-	39,020	39,020
Net Book Value			
At 31st December 2007	1,322,709	39,023	1,361,732
At 31st December 2006	1,322,709	46,827	1,369,536

4 Listed investments	Cost £	Market Value December 2006 £	Unrealised Gain £	Market Value December 2007 £
<i>Restricted fund:</i>				
The Stock Bequest	32,484	117,193	(9,482)	107,711
<i>Endowments:</i>				
The Carlisle Fund	4,162	8,654	102	8,756
Other endowment funds	420	4,590	96	4,686
	37,066	130,437	(9,284)	121,153

5 Cash held for rent deposit

This balance represents a rental deposit received from Lucy Williamson under a revised Rent Security Deposit Deed dated August 2007. According to the revised terms of the Deed, the deposit represents half of the revised annual rent and must be held in an interest bearing account in the name of the trustees. All interest earned on this account is payable to Miss Williamson on written request.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

6 Analysis of funds	Brought forward £	Income & expenses £	Transfers £	Unrealised gain (loss) £	Carried forward £
Endowment Funds					
Permanent Endowment	1,350,947	(7,804)	7,260	-	1,350,403
Carlisle Capital Fund	8,654	-	-	102	8,756
Theophilus Lindsey	2,378	-	-	-	2,378
Percival North	535	-	-	-	535
Harriet Pearson	1,464	-	-	-	1,464
Thomas Scott	2,162	-	-	-	2,162
Mrs M L Whyte	2,825	-	-	-	2,825
Lindsey Hall	32,927	-	-	96	33,023
Total endowment funds	1,401,892	(7,804)	7,260	198	1,401,546
Restricted Funds					
A E Stock Bequest	117,487	4,472	(4,472)	(9,482)	108,005
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	-	129	(129)	-	-
Total restricted funds	117,487	4,601	(4,601)	(9,482)	108,005
Unrestricted Funds					
General Fund	28,248	28,585	(11,298)	-	45,535
Designated fund:					
The Garden Fund	2,400	(3,179)	779	-	-
Repairs & Building Fund	-	9,274	7,860	-	17,134
	30,648	34,680	(2,659)	-	62,669
Total Funds	1,550,027	31,477	-	(9,284)	1,572,220

With the permission of the Charity Commission, in 2003 the Trustees realised £33,000 of investments held in endowment funds, for expenditure on the Minister's flat. It is a condition of that permission that the Trustees set aside one sixth of that amount for each of the next six years (ending in 2009), in order to reinstate the value of the investments. The funds are held in a CAF deposit account. To date, £24,000 has been transferred into this account and the balance stands at £26,372 at 31 December 2007.

The designated fund for the Garden Project received a grant of £20,000 from KCEL an environmental charity linked to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The grant was paid directly to Groundwork who have undertaken the project to improve the exterior landscaping to the front of the property.

The trustees set up another 'designated fund' during the year, referred to above as the 'Repairs and Building Fund'. The initial aim of this fund is to set aside income to cover the costs of adding a Disability Access toilet.

Chairperson of Trustees' Report

The management committee (which now includes five trustees as members) met eight times in 2007. The trustees had their separate annual meeting on 1 May, during which Caroline Blair was elected as a new trustee. We are delighted to have her on board. The trustees are especially responsible for staffing, the building, finance and any legal matters. The six-month review meeting for our new wardens took place on 16 January 2007, and subsequently the management committee decided to confirm their appointments. I then wrote to Jenny and David to this effect on 3 February. The annual review for our minister took place on 27 March 2007, and this meeting was fully reported to the management committee. Salary increases for our wardens and minister were agreed in August and October respectively.

Our main tenant, The Lloyd Williamson School, wrote to me in March 2007, requesting the return of the Rent Security Deposit which they have with the church. Having first taking legal advice, the management committee and trustees decided to offer to return half the deposit (equivalent to six months' rent). However, because a four-year rent review was due in August 2007, we felt it made sense to link the two matters together. A meeting with Lucy Williamson was held on 11 May, and a 12% rent increase was agreed, covering the period 2007-2011. As from August 2007 the School's rent went up from £11,250 to £12,600 per quarter. The necessary papers were drawn up by our solicitors, and a further meeting was held with Lucy on 9 August to finalise everything, and to return to her the balance from the new six months' rent deposit. The original documents are now deposited with our solicitors, Clyde & Co. The School occupies part of the church basement area on a 15 year lease, covering 2003 to 2018.

In my 2006 report, I noted that 2007 would mark the thirtieth birthday of our present and much loved Essex Church building, the first service having taking place on 24 July 1977. We duly marked the occasion with a party and celebration which took place on 27 July 2007. This was written up in the August/September newsletter, and I had previously set the scene in the June/July issue. Inevitably in a building that is thirty years old a few cracks begin to show, and we continue to have concerns about the roof and water ingress. A comprehensive and very useful site inspection took place with our architect and wardens on 4 September. We are also actively considering the matter of safe working access to the roof. Earlier in the year security grilles were added to the bedroom window in the warden's flat and to the church office window, and other work was done in the warden's flat. It is fully intended to put in hand the matter of disabled access to the church toilets and also upgrade the kitchen during 2008, and a major fund-raising campaign is now under way to help pay for these necessary but expensive alterations. Reference is made in other reports to the major work done on the front garden during the autumn by the Groundwork team. Once the plants have grown, this will substantially improve the appearance of our building from the road and to passers-by.

A training event for church officers and trustees was held at Unitarian Headquarters on 22 September 2007, and a number of our members were able to attend. We now have a copy of the congregational manual *Help is at Hand*, and this will be a very useful source of reference in the future. I would like to thank all the people who make the life of our church community possible: our dedicated minister Sarah, our hard-working wardens Jenny and David, the members of the management committee and trustees, and all the other volunteers who act as stewards and who provide refreshments on Sundays. In 2008 we will mark the bicentenary of the death of Rev Theophilus Lindsey, founder of Essex Street Chapel. Finally we should record that a fine profile of our minister and the church appeared in *The Unitarian* for April 2007.

Howard Hague
Chairperson of Trustees

Minister's Report

As I look back over the life of our congregation in 2007 certain images come to mind. People dancing at a party, singing in candlelight, painting with their fingers, enjoying glorious music, gardening together in the sunshine, sharing a buffet lunch, talking and listening intently to one another, sticking up photographs, laughing as they wash up together. These images speak of our community here. They say that Essex Church is a worthwhile place to be and that Kensington Unitarians are a group of people who know how to have a good time and how to share life's joys and struggles with one another.

2007 had many high points for our congregation. One was the 30th birthday celebration for our church building, which brought a lovely group of people together for a party in July. Caroline Blair spent time rummaging amongst the archives to discover photographs and old newsletters that made for fascinating viewing when enlarged and stuck up for all to see. Another pleasing development was hearing that we had secured a £20,000 grant through our local council. The grant was to help us improve our church front garden and the award recognised that our small garden with its benches and paved area provides a useful resource for passers by and a welcome area of greenery in an urban environment. In the year ahead we will be developing the planting plan and looking forward to helping our garden grow.

Worship in 2007 was enhanced as always by our professional singers and pianists who link in so well with our worship themes, with particular thanks to Harold Lorenzelli who organises our music so efficiently. We were also delighted to welcome members from our newly formed community choir, Kensington Community Singers, who gave their debut performance at our Advent Service. Thank you to new member Jen Hazel who so ably leads the choir. Various congregation members led worship during the year as well as taking on preaching engagements throughout the London District, for congregations that do not have ministerial support. In the summer we welcomed Daniel Hughes as our ministry student. Daniel has very quickly established himself as both a member of our community and as an inspiring worship and small group leader. We will be sorry to see him go when it is time for him to move on.

Our wardens Jenny Moy and David Berridge have continued to make progress with our building improvements and have increased our lettings income. Their quiet and good humoured presence has done much to enhance the atmosphere in our church building and our weekly staff meetings would be the envy of many an organisation! Making our building available for use by such a variety of groups and individuals is I think a useful part of our ministry in the world and is also a good way to spread the word about Unitarianism. Our secretary Jane Blackall has done a great deal throughout the year to ensure that we communicate effectively with the world, not least of which by producing our newsletter, which is praised by all, and running our website. In 2007 we joined with other London congregations in forming the London Spirituality Network (LSN), with a website to advertise our events and small groups. This has proved to be an effective way of reaching new people and we are grateful to Dr Andy Pakula, whose brainchild LSN was.

I am also grateful to Jane for ensuring that we have a wide ranging programme of small group activities taking place here at Essex Church and for co-facilitating many of them. A successful new development was our Science and Religion Engagement group which ran for 6 monthly sessions, led by a different congregation member each month. Another interesting adult RE course which attracted some different people to attend was Conversations with the Bible in which we concentrated on the Hebrew Scriptures. Several activities focussed on environmental issues and we watched together Al Gore's documentary 'An Inconvenient Truth'. We are always seeking new ideas for groups and activities and invite members to suggest themes or to offer to lead a group.

When I first arrived at Essex Church in 2005 a quick look at the accounts told me that there was work to be done to improve our financial situation after the big investment made in building a new minister's flat.. Thanks to our treasurer, Juliet Edwards, our finances are now in a much more positive state and a good start has been made on our next fundraising project, raising the £50,000 needed to create fully accessible toilets and a new kitchen. Our Silent Auction generated some useful funds and also gave people chance to help one another with ironing, house clearing, computer problems and photography, for example.

During 2007 we witnessed a gentle increase in the numbers attending worship each week, such that we need to buy more hymn books and make sure that there are enough chairs out each Sunday. Our membership numbers are increasing and there is a positive feeling in our congregation and in our building. There will always be more to do. The list of needed improvements to the fabric of our church seems to grow longer whenever I look at it; we all recognise the need to improve our provision for children and young families; we want to reach out to our local community more effectively; we plan to improve the signs and notices at the front of our building so that we are a visible presence in the area. These are just a few of the items on my personal wish list. There will always be more to do, but perhaps what we do may not be as important as how we do it. As a spiritual community we need to deal with the material world but we do not need to be caught up in it. Leaking roofs, creaking doors and blocked toilets will always be with us and they require action to be taken. But all our actions can be taken lovingly and with a lightness of touch ~ the quality of our relationships with one another ultimately matters far more than any 'to do' list. Thank you to everyone ~ our members and volunteers and visitors for helping to co-create a loving community here at Essex Church.

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Minister with Kensington Unitarians

Chairperson of the Congregation's Report

The life of a church can have its ups and downs, just as the life of an individual does. This last year has definitely felt like an 'up', and the Essex Church feels in a very positive position today.

Congregations on Sunday have grown noticeably larger, and we are delighted to see so many 'visitors' become 'regulars'. Courses and events have also been consistently (and rightly) popular.

It is impossible for me to thank individually everyone who has helped and sustained the church over the year through acts of kindness, support and enthusiasm. But particular thanks are due to Sarah. At the General Assembly this year people from other congregations virtually queued up to tell me how lucky we are with our minister.

Thanks also to Howard, nobly continuing to do all the donkey-work as Chair of Trustees; to Jane who prepares the truly excellent website, the equally excellent newsletter, and who additionally sets up and runs many of the activities; to Juliet for continuing to perform the difficult job of treasurer; to Harold for arranging for us to have wonderful music every Sunday, and to Margaret, Sandra and Peter, for their part in this; to Jen for teaching and motivating the Kensington Community Singers; to Christine for organising the tea and coffee rota with unfailing good humour and courtesy; to Albert for taking on the gift aid and membership list duties (and for commuting from outside London to do it); to Patricia for many months of minute-taking, even through serious illness; to Michaela for looking after the garden; to the Wardens, Jenny and David for making the management of the building run so smoothly; to our cleaner, Gitana; and to everyone else who has helped on the church committee, or with stewarding, coffee-making, or contributing to the church lunches, craft fair, the Community Singers, the children's programme or just to making the church feel positive and welcoming.

Special greetings and thanks, finally, to our Student Minister, Daniel for throwing himself into the life of the Church with a friendly enthusiasm that will obviously be an asset to whichever church gets him as their minister in the future.

I hope that everyone reading this gets the same positive feeling from our busy and welcoming community as I do.

Caroline Blair
Chairperson of the Congregation

Engagement Groups Report

Engagement Groups have a lot in common with other religious education groups and spirituality workshops that are on offer in our own and other churches. However, one important and distinctive feature of Engagement Groups is that they provide a structure and support to help enable us to carry out the very best practice in small group work. A facilitator training day, co-led by myself and the Rev. Jim Robinson of the Unitarian General Assembly's Engagement Support Panel, was held at Rosslyn Hill Chapel in November 2007. Caroline Blair and Rev Sarah Tinker also attended on our behalf.

Creativity Engagement Group

Our creativity engagement group has been running once a month since 2002. Attendance at this group seems to be fairly steady with attendance averaging at around seven people. During the spring of 2007, we took photographs on the theme of *"Doors and Windows"*, and put together an exhibition of the resulting pictures. We rounded off 2007 with our third Annual Advent Art and Craft Fair, which raised a splendid £1,169.25 for our church building accessibility fund. We have recently decided that we will not hold a craft fair in 2008 and hope that this will free up some time and energy for us to get involved in other projects. We also had a number of fun one-off sessions during the year at which we tried out various different craft activities: *"Knit a River – for Water Aid"*, *"Silk Painting"*, *"Introductory Beading – Making a Bracelet"*, *"The Goddess Within – Figures in Clay"*, *"Fimo Faces"*, *"Soul Dolls"*, *"Collage Consequences"*, *"Feltmaking for Flowers"*, *"Felt Flower Brooches"* and a *"Creative Potluck"* to finish the year. This group is co-facilitated by Jane Blackall and Patricia Walker-Hesson, however, all members take turns to lead sessions as they are able. We are always on the lookout for new art and crafts to try.

Reading Engagement Group

Our reading engagement group once again tackled a diverse and challenging selection of material in 2007: *"The Time Traveller's Wife"*, *"A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian"*, *"Gilead"*, *"A Beginner's Guide to Changing the World"*, *"Of Water and the Spirit"*, *"Saturday"*, *"My Sister's Keeper"*, *"His Dark Materials"*, *"Justine"* and *"Bee Season"*. Attendance has been fairly steady over the last year or so: we now have about seven regular members who take their turn to nominate books for the group to tackle and we are occasionally joined by visitors – occasionally international visitors – who have found out about us through the website. This group is co-facilitated by Jane Blackall and Patricia Walker-Hesson though individual sessions are usually led by whoever chose the book for that month. The group has a relaxed atmosphere and newcomers are always welcome.

Worship Engagement Group

This six-session Engagement Group was launched by Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall in September 2006 and continued into the spring of 2007. We met once a month to consider various aspects of worship: *"Structure of the Service"*, *"Music and Hymns"*, *"Readings and Delivery"*, *"Prayer and Meditation"*, *"Children and Storytelling"* and *"The Sermon/Address"*. Each session combined a sharing of likes and dislikes regarding the various aspects of the service, and an introduction to various worship resources, with an opportunity to try out some of the practical skills required for putting a service together. After the final regular meeting of the group, we held two supplementary events, which arose from issues raised in the sessions: one afternoon where we tried out new hymns, and another where we practiced delivering readings, and using the microphone in church.

'Evensong' Engagement Group

This eight-session Engagement Group, held from January to April 2007, was co-facilitated by Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall. The content was closely based on the published UUA course of the same name by Barbara Hamilton-Holway. 'Evensong' was run as a closed group: participants were required to sign up and commit to the group in advance to help provide the safe space necessary for personal sharing and deep listening. Themes included *"What do I want?"*, *"What keeps me going?"* and *"What am I called to do in the world?"*. The 'Evensong' engagement group had a worshipful, contemplative mood, and was highly praised by the twelve participants in an evaluation exercise at the end of the course.

Science and Religion Engagement Group

This six-session Engagement Group was launched in September 2007 and covered the following topics: *"Medical Ethics"*, *"Biodiversity and Interdependence"*, *"The Nature of Consciousness"*, *"The Dawkins Effect"*, *"Cosmology"* and *"The Psychology of Prejudice"*. Sarah Tinker organised the series and co-facilitated each session alongside a different volunteer from the congregation who offered to do some research and lead the conversation on a given topic: Sarah Tinker, Jane Blackall, Michaela von Britzke, Howard Hague, Will Lyons, and Caroline Blair, respectively. The idea of setting up this group was, in part, to provide an activity which would appeal to a different group of people than might normally be attracted to our programme of engagement groups. In this regard it seemed to be very effective as we were pleased to welcome a number of new faces.

At the moment there are only a few small group facilitators within our congregation who are regularly leading groups. If you would be interested in finding out more about facilitator training, or perhaps getting involved in other aspects of our engagement group programme, please speak to Jane Blackall or Sarah Tinker for more information.

Jane Blackall
Engagement Groups Facilitator

Wardens' Report

It's been a busy year for the building, with two big changes. The first, and most obvious, is the landscaping to the front of the building, carried out by Groundwork West London, who worked with us on the grant process and then put together a team of long term unemployed to work on the project itself. Key to the plan was terracing the bank to prevent the earth sliding to the bottom, and making conditions better for planting, as well as relaying the paving at the front of the church, and re-painting the railings.

The other change was a big increase in the number of groups using the building, particularly during the day. Until this year our three times a year booking by the Associated Music Board was our main daytime booking, but we now have both a daily Yoga group in the mornings, and a steady stream of other day time bookings. Many of these have been from TV production companies who use the church and hall for auditions. We are also regularly used by Kensington & Chelsea council for public outreach events. This increase in use has boosted lettings income to nearly £50,000 and we hope to maintain this level for the next year.

Our ageing building has held out fairly well this year, although we recently called out a plumber to fix the downstairs toilet. The biggest ongoing problem has been the leaks in the church roof. During the autumn we cleared the leaves on the roof once a week to try and keep the drains clear and prevent the damp problem in the church from getting worse, but even so during really heavy rainfall, water got through, staining the wall behind the altar. Clearing the gutters on the roof is a precarious activity, and the trustees are working with the architects on a safety harness system to make it safer.

Jenny has continued working with Juliet on the accounts, and Albert Dolan has recently taken over responsibility for Gift Aid, supplying us with some marvellous new automated spread sheets! Our cleaner Gitana continues to come on a Saturday night and does an excellent job. We are very grateful to her for coming late on Saturdays and working around the busy Saturday groups, to get the church ready for Sunday.

Looking ahead to the next year, there is the renovation of the toilets and the kitchen, as well as the continued growth of the new garden and the chance to redecorate the church once the damp problem has been solved.

Jenny Moy and David Berridge
Essex Church Wardens

Church Music Report

The Church continues to offer a varied diet of music to accompany morning worship. Though not always possible, an attempt is made to provide music which suits the occasion. This can be in the form of quartets, duets or solos from the pool of singers and accompanists who support the congregational hymns. We are lucky to be able to afford such support.

Recently the Kensington Community Singers have provided their own contribution to morning worship, a move which promotes involvement in the church of the local community as well as enriching our own musical experience.

Harold Lorenzelli
Church Music Coordinator

Essex Church Congregational Library: Librarian's Report

The congregational library is available to all members of the congregation, and to others by arrangement with the minister. Please make full use of it. The more recent books are displayed on the literature table at the side of the church, with the main collection in the library downstairs. If you would like to borrow any title please fill in your details in the loans book provided. Books added to stock during 2007 are:

BOEKE, Richard	God is no thing: fresh ways of looking at theological questions. Horsham Unitarian Church, 2007.
BUEHRENS, John A.	Understanding the Bible: an introduction for sceptics, seekers and religious liberals. Boston, Beacon Press, 2003.
COURTNEY, Cathal	Towards beloved community: finding hope for religion and spirituality in postmodernity. Exposure Publishing, 2007.
DAWKINS, Richard	The God delusion. Black Swan, 2007.
DOEL, David Charles	The love that passes all understanding (reflections & meditations on fifty years of ministry). Dukinfield, Chapel Hill Press, 2006.
G.A. WORSHIP PANEL	With heart and mind: over forty mini-essays with prayers and meditations on a wide range of subjects. GA, 2007.
HEAD, Geoffrey	Far-off magic: the story of Unitarian commitment to providing holiday and convalescent homes. Great Hucklow, The Nightingale Centre, 2006.
HEWETT, Phillip	Racovia: an early liberal religious community (Racovian Catechism, Poland, of 1605). Blackstone Editions, 2004.
MARSHALL, Vernon	The larger view: Unitarians and world religions. London, Lindsey Press, 2007.
PICKETT, Helen & Eugene	For all that is our life: a meditation anthology. Boston, Skinner House Books, 2005.
SCHROEDER, Mary	A Halifax childhood. The Erskine Press, 2004.
SEARL, Edward	We pledge our hearts: a treasury of poems, quotations and readings to celebrate love and marriage. Skinner House, 2006.

A list of some recent additions appeared in the church newsletter for October 2007. However we are conscious that (other than in the various annual reports) there has not been a full catalogue of library titles available. To this end our church secretary Jane Blackall has been experimenting with a listing on the web at: www.librarything.com/catalog/essexchurch. This is very much a work in progress, and we hope to report more next time.

Howard Hague
Honorary Librarian

Minutes of the AGM Held at Essex Church on Sunday 13th May 2007

Present: Jane Blackall (*minutes*), Doris Campbell, Gordon Deaville, Albert Dolan, Juliet Edwards, Betty Evans, Heidi Ferid, Gill Hague, Howard Hague (*chair*), John Hands, Jen Hazel, Jill Inskip, Christine Joshi, Will Lyons, Sarah Tinker, Patricia Walker.

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Greetings:** Howard welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Caroline Blair, chair of the congregation, was on holiday and so he was standing in for her as chair for the AGM. Apologies had been received from: Caroline Blair, Carole Grace, Rachel Harland, Harold Lorenzelli, John Marrow, Stephanie Saville, Jo Tye and Michaela von Britzke. Opening words were spoken by Rev. Sarah Tinker, John Hands and Albert Dolan. Howard brought greetings from the LDPA.
2. **Review of 2006 AGM Minutes:** The minutes were accepted as a correct record and signed by Howard.
3. **Review of Reports:**

a. Treasurer:

Juliet informed the meeting that she intends to make this her last year as treasurer. She is giving a year's notice so that we can look for another volunteer treasurer from within the congregation. We may pay someone to take on elements of the task. Sarah clarified that we will always need a volunteer treasurer but that it may be possible to pay someone to take on the book-keeping aspects of the job. Juliet explained that the volunteer treasurer is required to make decisions about expenditure, open bank accounts, keep an eye on salaries, and oversee expenses and petty cash.

Howard mentioned that, some years ago, William Featherstone (former treasurer) had calculated that it cost £400 per week to run the church. Howard carried out a simple calculation based on the figures in this year's annual report and found that it now costs £1859 per week to run the church (including the salaries of employees). John asked whether there were any exceptional costs last year. Howard answered that it was fairly routine. Sarah added that we have balanced our books through our lettings income but noted that we would really like our income to be greater than our expenditure so that we can build up healthy reserves. Patricia commented that people would be shocked to hear the figure of nearly £2000 per week running costs – particularly in relation to what individuals contribute to the weekly collection – and that we should all keep mentioning it and keep it in our minds.

Heidi drew attention to the “building fund” which is being launched to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the church building this July. Howard announced that there will be a party to celebrate 30 years in the building on Friday 27th July. Jen asked if this would be a year-long capital campaign. Juliet said that we would be launching a fundraising campaign this summer, and it would probably run for two years, with building works to start in the summer of 2008. Jen suggested that we could consider “greening” of the building as part of the overall refurbishment programme, as a means of cutting our building running costs, and also as something that would be in line with our values. Sarah stated that she had been working hard with our wardens on this matter, and that energy bills had already been reduced a lot as a result, but the design of our building makes it difficult to make certain adaptations. Sarah invited ideas on this matter. John suggested inviting people to pay for replacing a lightbulb with a low-energy model. Sarah stated that many of the light fittings in the building are not able to take these bulbs but that they are being introduced wherever it is possible. Albert noted that the fluorescent bulbs which we have in some parts of the building are already quite energy efficient.

b. Chair of Trustees:

Howard announced that Caroline Blair was elected as a new trustee on the 1st May 2007. Howard also noted that there are still vacancies remaining – and that members with legal, financial or buildings expertise would be particularly welcome – so anybody who might be interested should put themselves forward.

Howard mentioned that training for trustees is becoming increasingly important, and there is going to be a launch of the General Assembly's new training pack for church leaders (the “Support for Organisational Leadership” project) at Essex Hall on 22nd September 2007, to which all are welcome.

Patricia queried the statement in the annual report regarding the confirmation of the wardens' employment. Howard confirmed that this had been put in writing.

Jen asked for clarification of the difference between the roles of the trustees and the management committee. Jane stated that, in practice, the personnel are almost the same but the trustees have to meet separately once a year. Juliet stated that the trustees are responsible for matters of employment, finance, and building. Howard mentioned that the chair of trustees must sign off the annual report and accounts. Jen summarised the situation by saying that the trustees have oversight whereas the management committee actually carry out the task to run the church.

c. Chair of Congregation:

Caroline was not present at the meeting so nothing was added to this report. Juliet wished to congratulate Caroline on having written such a positive report. Howard added that the report was “inspirational”.

d. Minister:

Sarah wished to underline her commitment to being accountable and informed the meeting that a review process had been established which would take place every year. Sarah said she appreciates it when people criticise, or call her up to let her know about things she has forgotten, as she considers it part of her ongoing training as a minister. Howard noted that Sarah would have been our minister for two years in September 2007. Will commented that if Sarah has only been a minister for two years she has certainly “hit the ground running” with us.

e. Secretary:

Jane acknowledged that certain projects, such as the wayside pulpit, have not yet been done. Patricia said that if anybody had a great interest in working on this it would be possible to share the task. Jen commented that there are some wayside pulpits available online, which could be adapted, and she will send the relevant information to Jane. Will commented that he is very impressed with the newsletter and with the various education groups. John also spoke positively of the newsletter. Sarah commented that our publicity materials are well-regarded within the denomination.

f. Music:

Howard drew attention to the fact that Harold Lorenzelli arranges for us to have a pianist and singers each week and commented that music is an important part of our witness. Doris queried whether we were going to try to appoint a permanent, paid, director of music. Sarah explained that the bequest doesn't cover what we spend on music and so to get a director of music would not necessarily be a good use of our money. Albert noted that Harold has been at the church for 30 years, Margaret had been here almost as long, and that their contributions are delightful. Jen also agreed that our music is wonderful. Jen wondered whether there might be a way to enable wider participation in church music. She had found that, in other churches, participation in music has been a way to bring people in and build community. Albert suggested that the new “community choir” initiative might be one way of enabling such involvement.

g. Engagement Groups:

Jane underlined the request for people to come up with suggestions for things they might help to offer in our various engagement groups. She would particularly welcome offers of assistance rather than “wouldn't it be nice if...”. Sarah added that, in terms of RE courses, she'd be happy to hear people say “wouldn't it be nice if...” as she considers it part of her job to try to provide such things.

h. Wardens:

Howard observed that, although Jenny Moy and David Berridge have only been with us for half of the year covered by the annual report, they have made a huge contribution to the running of our building. Patricia echoed that we are very glad to have them with us. Gill expressed her appreciation that the wardens had got on and brightened up the library during a quiet period. Juliet observed that the wardens notice things that need doing around the building and then take steps to get them done. Patricia asked Sarah to make sure Jenny and David get to hear our praise.

i. Librarian:

Howard encouraged people to make use of the church library. Howard stated that he has not yet produced a full list of library stock but that he hoped to do this at some point. Will offered to lend a hand with this task. John suggested that when people read an interesting book from the library they could say something about it in a slot during the Sunday service from time to time. Howard agreed and suggested it would be nice to include in the newsletter too.

Patricia proposed, and Juliet seconded, the acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts, and this was agreed.

Juliet then commented that, following discussion with William Featherstone, the phrase “custodian trustee” should be changed to “continuing trustee” on the first inside page of the annual report. There was some brief discussion as to whether this was correct. Howard felt that it might just be an alternative word – and that “custodian trustee” is used in the trust deed – so both versions were probably acceptable.

4. **Election of Management Committee**

Jane stated that all nine of the present members of the management committee had been put forward for re-election:

Jane Blackall, Caroline Blair, Doris Campbell,
David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid,
Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli, Patricia Walker.

Howard proposed, and Doris seconded, that all these names should be re-elected en bloc and this was agreed.

Sarah said that if anybody is interested in getting more involved they should come and talk about it afterwards.

5. **Any Other Business:** There was none.

6. **Votes of Thanks:** Were given by Rev. Sarah Tinker, who said:

"Our opening words at the start of the AGM concluded with these words: "Serving together, we are building our Unitarian community, we are bonding in unity and love, we are blessing each other." Community building requires effort and I'd like to pay tribute to everyone in our community here at Essex Church for the efforts they have made during the past year. Thank you for all that you do to keep this 'show on the road' as they say. Thank you to all those who have led worship and taken part in services; thank you for our superb music, thank you for our highly regarded newsletter and other publicity, thank you for taking such good care of our finances and thank you to all those who have been stewards and coffee makers and thank you for the rotas that have clarified who is doing what and when. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make our church friendly and beautiful, especially the creativity group's lovely seasonal wall-hangings. Thank you to everyone who gives their precious time to serve as committee members, officers and trustees. Thank you to everyone who makes financial contributions, which help to keep our church financially healthy and indeed help to pay my, and the wardens', wages. Thank you to everyone who comes here to worship on a Sunday, which is the central core of our work here at Essex Church. And a final thank you to our wardens who have made such a difference to our building, bringing calm and good humour."

Heidi Ferid added a vote of thanks to Sarah for all she had done for the community over the year.

7. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1.25pm. The closing words were read by Sarah.

Minutes taken by Jane Blackall