



Kensington Unitarians

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Annual Report 2011



Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2011

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 7th January 1783 and modified by schemes dated 9th December 1884, 15th January 1973 and 18th April 1986, which last incorporated the remaining eight charities.

Trustees

Howard Hague (*Chairperson*), Caroline Blair, David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Harold Lorenzelli, Roy Parnell.

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

Management Committee

Caroline Blair (*Chairperson*), Maire Collins (from 2nd March 2011 to 15th May 2011), David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli, Jo Ridgers (from 2nd March 2011).

Minister

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

Treasurer

Juliet Edwards (resigned 31st December 2011)
6A Essex Road, Acton, London W3 9JA
Caroline Blair (appointed 1st January 2012)
40 Killowen Avenue, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4QT

Warden

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

Secretary

Jane Blackall
20 Manchester Grove, London E14 3BG

Independent Examiners 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

Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2011

The Charity's Purpose and Objectives:

Charitable Purpose and Policies

The purpose of the charity is to perpetuate public worship and to celebrate divine service every Sunday in the Unitarian manner.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have had due regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

Aims and Activities of the Charity

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. We advance Unitarianism in West London for the benefit of the public through: the holding of open Sunday services; celebrating rites of passage and multi-faith festivals; sharing our experience and learning from each other in religious education and social activities. We welcome spiritual seekers and offer companionship on life's journey (including visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved) and producing and distributing Unitarian literature. The church also provides meeting spaces to other spiritual and social groups that are in accord with our liberal and spiritual ethos.

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 number 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. New trustees are given copies of the church accounts and previous Annual Reports along with a Charity Commission booklet explaining the responsibilities of trustees and a verbal explanation of how the church is organised. Training needs will be assessed as we seek to appoint new trustees in the year ahead.

Trustees

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

Review of Activities

During 2011 the trustees continued to work towards key objectives identified during previous AGMs. In particular these objectives included:

- The on-going maintenance and improvement of our church building and its facilities and renting space to other groups whose activities are in accord with our Unitarian ethos
- The on-going commitment to maintain a high standard in public liberal religious worship and in making our congregation visible to the wider world through high quality publicity materials and notice boards
- Encouraging families with children into our community by running weekly children's activities on Sunday mornings
- Widen the number of people actively involved in congregational life by offering opportunities for people to attend a wide range of small group activities and to volunteer for a range of roles to support the life of the church.

These objectives will continue to shape the trustees' future plans with a continuing emphasis on maintaining and improving facilities within our building, seeking professional advice about the continuing roof problems, and ensuring that our liberal religious activities are well publicised.

Risks

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

Policy on Reserves

Having received in 2011 the second part of a generous legacy, the church has ensured that funds are readily available for roof repairs as needed, and maintained a minimum reserve of three months' running costs.

Restrictions 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).

Investment Performance

Having received a generous legacy in 2010/11 the trustees have been mindful of the need for wise investment and have taken a cautious approach during volatile and uncertain economic times. In the year ahead longer term investments will be made, whilst still ensuring sufficient funds are readily available. Such investments will continue to be made in line with the investment policies of the Unitarian & Free Christian General Assembly.

Approval on behalf of the Trustees:

Howard Hague, Chair of Trustees

Date: 17th April 2012

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2011, comprising a statement of financial activities, balance sheet and accompanying notes.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the 1993 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 no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below:

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 1993 Acthave not been met; or
- (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

17 April 2012
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011**

	2011 Unrestricted Funds £	2011 Endowment Funds £	2011 Restricted Funds £	2011 Total Funds £	2010 Total Funds £
Income and expenditure					
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary income					
Grant income	-	-	-	-	1,500
Collections and donations	12,356	-	810	13,166	12,308
Legacy	-	-	-	-	428,979
Income Tax on Gift Aid	3,244	-	-	3,244	1,073
Investment income					
Dividend income	199	-	4,422	4,621	4,329
Bank interest received	5,052	-	-	5,052	2,048
Lettings	117,993	-	-	117,993	116,225
Other incoming resources	280	-	-	280	-
Total incoming resources	<u>139,124</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,232</u>	<u>144,356</u>	<u>566,462</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of charitable activities					
Donations	1,643	-	-	1,643	868
Projects	879	-	2,511	3,390	45,040
Ministry	52,004	-	100	52,104	43,621
Church running	35,442	-	-	35,442	29,312
Premises	27,520	-	-	27,520	27,628
Fixtures depreciation	79	9,275	-	9,354	8,379
Support costs:					
Other fees paid to the auditors:					
Accountancy costs	1,776	-	-	1,776	1,971
	<u>119,343</u>	<u>9,275</u>	<u>2,611</u>	<u>131,229</u>	<u>156,819</u>
Governance costs					
Independent Examiner	2,040	-	-	2,040	-
Audit fee	-	-	-	-	2,640
	<u>2,040</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,040</u>	<u>2,640</u>
Total resources expended	<u>121,383</u>	<u>9,275</u>	<u>2,611</u>	<u>133,269</u>	<u>159,459</u>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	<u>17,741</u>	<u>(9,275)</u>	<u>2,621</u>	<u>11,087</u>	<u>407,003</u>
Transfers between funds	3,046	-	(3,046)	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses	<u>20,787</u>	<u>(9,275)</u>	<u>(425)</u>	<u>11,087</u>	<u>407,003</u>
Realised gains on disposal of assets	-	-	-	-	551
Unrealised gains/(losses) on revaluation of investments	-	(710)	(3,967)	(4,677)	5,525
Net movement in funds	<u>20,787</u>	<u>(9,985)</u>	<u>(4,392)</u>	<u>6,410</u>	<u>413,079</u>
Balances brought forward	492,071	1,384,519	89,440	1,966,030	1,552,951
Balances carried forward	<u>512,858</u>	<u>1,374,534</u>	<u>85,048</u>	<u>1,972,440</u>	<u>1,966,030</u>

**ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2010**

	Notes	2011 Unrestricted Funds £	2011 Endowment Funds £	2011 Restricted Funds £	2011 Total Funds £	2010 Total Funds £
Fixed assets						
Tangible assets	3	-	1,335,658	-	1,335,658	1,340,215
Listed investments	4	-	11,338	84,585	95,923	100,600
		-	1,346,996	84,585	1,431,581	1,440,815
Current assets						
Cash held for rent deposit	5	25,190	-	-	25,190	25,190
Debtors and prepayments		3,720	-	-	3,720	7,045
Other debtors		4,427	-	-	4,427	219,131
Due from Stockbroker		-	-	358	358	363
Cash at bank and on deposit		513,470	27,538	105	541,113	308,624
		546,807	27,538	463	574,808	560,353
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year						
Creditors and accruals		8,759	-	-	8,759	9,948
Rent deposit		25,190	-	-	25,190	25,190
		33,949	-	-	33,949	35,138
Net current assets		512,858	27,538	463	540,859	525,215
Net Assets		512,858	1,374,534	85,048	1,972,440	1,966,030
Capital and reserves						
Endowment funds	6	-	1,374,534	-	1,374,534	1,384,519
Restricted funds		-	-	85,048	85,048	89,440
General funds		512,858	-	-	512,858	492,071
		512,858	1,374,534	85,048	1,972,440	1,966,030

Approved by the trustees on 17 April 2012 and signed on their behalf by:

S M Tinker (Minister)

H Hague (Chairman)

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

1 Accounting policies

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of investments which are included at market value. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" published in 2005 and applicable accounting 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) Legacies

Legacies are recognised on a receivable basis, once the conditions for the receipt have been satisfied and the amount can be measured with certainty.

e) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Fixed assets (excluding investments and the freehold property) are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. The costs of minor additions, or those costing below £400 are not capitalised.

Fixtures, fittings and works of art are depreciated at rates of 10% or 20% on cost per annum, depending on the estimated useful life of the asset. Computer equipment is depreciated on a straight line basis over 3 years.

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.

f) Resources expended

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

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries.

Expenditure on **Projects** relates to the costs incurred by the church during the year on the Repairs & Buildings project, as detailed in note 6.

Expenditure on **Ministry** includes the Minister and congregation costs.

Expenditure on **Church Running** includes the warden staff costs and general administrative expenses.

Expenditure on **Premises** includes the general running costs of the property.

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

g) 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.

h) 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 £2,890 (2010: £2,509).

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

i) Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for any other purpose.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Endowment funds represent those assets which must be held permanently by the charity, principally the church building and the investments. The income arising on The Carlisle endowment fund can be spent at the discretion of the minister. The income arising on the other endowment funds can be used in accordance with the objects of the charity and is included as unrestricted income.

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 Running £	2011 Total £	2010 Total £
Minister	25,000	-	25,000	20,520
Warden and Outreach Officer	-	24,799	24,799	20,947
Social security costs	2,473	1,534	4,007	3,114
Minister pension contributions	2,890	-	2,890	2,509
Employee costs	30,363	26,333	56,696	47,090
Locum Preachers	908	-	908	610
Total staff costs	31,271	26,333	57,604	47,700
Average number of staff:				
31 December 2011	1	2	3	
31 December 2010	1	2	3	

The trustees are not remunerated. Fees are paid to trustees for officiating at services and preaching. During the year the following fees were paid to three trustees for such services: preaching fees £255 (2010 £280), choir fees £1,200 (2010 £1,760). One of the trustees was reimbursed £117 (2010 £29) for travelling expenses incurred on the business of the charity.

3 Fixed tangible assets

	Freehold Property £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
At 31st December 2010	1,322,709	80,770	1,403,479
Addition	-	4,797	4,797
Disposals		(817)	(817)
At 31st December 2011	1,322,709	84,750	1,407,459
Depreciation			
At 31st December 2010	-	63,264	63,264
Charge for the year	-	9,275	9,275
Written off on disposals	-	(738)	(738)
At 31st December 2011	-	71,801	71,801
Net Book Value			
At 31st December 2011	1,322,709	12,949	1,335,658
At 31st December 2010	1,322,709	17,506	1,340,215

The Freehold property relates to the Essex Church building in Palace Gardens Terrace.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

4 Listed investments	The Stock Bequest £	The Carlisle Fund £	Endowment funds £	Total £
Market value at 31 December 2010	88,552	8,010	4,038	100,600
Add: Additions at cost	-	-	-	-
Less: disposals at carrying value	-	-	-	-
Net gain/loss on revaluation	(3,967)	(478)	(232)	(4,677)
Market value at 31 December 2011	84,585	7,532	3,806	95,923

All of the investments are held in UK companies.

Included in the market value of the investments are holdings of Charifund Income Units (£64,822) and Shroders Charity Equity Fund Units (£15,954).

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.

6 Analysis of funds

	Brought forward £	Net movement £	Movement on investments £	Carried forward £
Endowment Funds				
* Permanent Endowment	1,334,770	(9,275)	-	1,325,495
Carlisle Capital Fund	8,010	-	(478)	7,532
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	32,375	-	(232)	32,143
Total endowment funds	1,384,519	(9,275)	(710)	1,374,534

Endowment Funds:

The endowments listed above comprise the original charity, known from 1793 as the Essex Unitarian Chapel and Minister's House, together with a number of other charities founded between the 19th and 20th centuries. These have been brought together by a number of Schemes of the Charity Commissioners, the most recent dated 18 April 1986. Under the terms of the Scheme, these charities are administered as a single charitable body. The smaller charities are accounted for as Endowment Funds, with the exception of the Stock bequest (for the Choir Fund).

- * The permanent endowment fund consists of the estimated value of the property from which the charity operates and is not a readily convertible asset.

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, £30,600 has been transferred into this account and the balance stands at £36,689 at 31 December 2011.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

6 Analysis of funds (cont.)

	Brought forward £	Net movement £	Movement on investments £	Carried forward £
Restricted Funds				
A E Stock Bequest	89,015	-	(3,967)	85,048
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	-	-	-	-
Africa Education Project	-	-	-	-
Community Arts Project	425	(425)	-	-
The Big Voice Bursary	-	-	-	-
Total restricted funds	89,440	(425)	(3,967)	85,048

Restricted funds:

Africa Education Project: a fund set up in 2008 to receive donations and money raised through fund raising efforts to help support educational projects in Africa, as agreed by the management committee.

Community Arts Project: a fund set up in 2008 to support the provision of arts activities for the benefit of Unitarians and the wider community, receiving individual donations and grants from funding bodies, this project was completed during 2011.

The Big Voice Bursary: a fund set up in 2011 to support the London youth project "Big Voice London", this project was completed during 2011.

Unrestricted Funds

General Fund	492,071	20,787	-	512,858
Designated funds:				
Repairs & Building Fund	-	-	-	-
	492,071	20,787	-	512,858
Total Funds	1,966,030	11,087	(4,677)	1,972,440

Designated funds:

During 2007 the trustees set up a 'designated fund', 'Repairs and Buildings Fund', to set aside income to cover the costs of adding a Disability Access toilet which together with work relating to the kitchen was completed in 2009. The balance on the fund was utilised to pay for rewiring and ceiling work to the Lindsey Hall and foyer during 2010.

Net movement in funds, included in the above, are as follows:

	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Net movement £
Endowment Funds				
Permanent Endowment	-	(9,275)	-	(9,275)
Restricted Funds				
A E Stock Bequest	4,056	-	(4,056)	-
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	366	(100)	(266)	-
Africa Education Project	450	(1,000)	550	-
Community Arts Project	-	(511)	86	(425)
The Big Voice Bursary	360	(1,000)	640	-
	5,232	(2,611)	(3,046)	(425)
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	139,124	(120,504)	2,167	20,787
Designated funds:	-	(879)	879	-
	144,356	(133,269)	-	11,087

INVESTMENTS SCHEDULE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

	Cost £	Income £	Mkt Value 31.12.10 £	Purchased £	Disposals at MV £	Sale Proceeds £	Gains (Losses) Unrealised £	Realised £	Mkt Value 31.12.11 £
4178 COIF Income Units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
400 COIF Income Units	420	178	4,038			(232)			3,806
5,633 Charifund Income Units	15,311	3,250	64,822			(3,417)			61,405
£10,000 6.75% Treasury 2004	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7895 UK Govt 4.25% Stocks 2027	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
735 Ishares Ii Plc Ishares FTSE All Stocks Gilts	8,114	237	7,776			932			8,708
6,172.8 Shroders Charity Equity Func	7,000	569	15,954			(1,482)			14,472
1,794 Charibond Income Units	2,000	116	2,205			95			2,300
562 COIF Income Units	2,162	250	5,805			(573)			5,232
1000 Traidcraft Plc Interest received Interest received	-	20	-						-
		5,052							
Total holdings for all funds	35,007	9,672	100,600	-	-	(4,677)	-	-	95,923
Allocated to:									
General Fund	-	5,072	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Restricted									
The Stock Bequest	30,425	4,056	88,552	-	-	(3,967)	-	-	84,585
Endowments:									
The Carlisle Fund	4,162	366	8,010	-	-	(478)	-	-	7,532
General fund from endowment	420	178	4,038	-	-	(232)	-	-	3,806
	35,007	9,672	100,600	-	-	(4,677)	-	-	95,923

Treasurer's Report

This year we have had our financial position examined once more. Last year because of receiving the generous legacy from Patricia Walker-Hesson the accounts had to be audited. The money has remained in our CAF Bank account where it has been earning interest. We plan to invest it at a better rate still in 2012, whilst ensuring we have sufficient reserves to pay for necessary repairs, not least of which to our church roof. In 2011 we have been able to cover repairs from our lettings income. There is an increase in our lettings income this year, thanks to Jenny's hard work. We are also fortunate to continue to have a good relationship with the Lloyd Williamson School which gives us our largest rental income.

If you look at the Statement of Financial Activities you will see that dividend income is up a little due to a change in investments made last year by William Featherstone and Rev. Jim McClelland who oversee our investments for us. Thank you to the entire congregation for your generous weekly giving and also for paying your membership fee which we have kept to £40 in this time of recession. Collections and Donations increased partly due to a generous donation towards a bursary for Jane Blackall. Others of you gave towards SOS children's village and to Big Voice. We also received an increased amount of income tax on Gift Aid which was largely due to having a "catch up" year – we didn't submit a claim the previous year.

Whenever there was a fifth Sunday in the month we donated the collection to a charity:

Mind
Parkinson's Disease Research

Jennie Blair requested £1,000 to enable her to visit South Africa to promote the work of Big Voice, a project that encourages young people to engage with the legal system. The July collection was used towards this project and the remainder given as a one-off bursary.

We are committed to make an annual donation of £1,000 to SOS children's village in Swaziland to pay for the education of twin girls. 2011 was the third of the five years we have promised and the October collection was used towards this.

We were very pleased to offer a bursary to Jane Blackall to enable her to start on a part-time B.A. course (in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics) at Heythrop College. We have said that we will look favourably on supporting Jane for further years of study. Jane has worked tirelessly for Essex Church for many years and although she is now a part time member of staff she still does more than she is paid for, so we are glad to offer her our support.

And, finally, I have come to the end of my eight years as church treasurer. Thank you to all of you who have given me help and support. It's been a great way to get to know people – all the musicians, the visiting preachers - for whom, particularly at the beginning, I wrote cheques – and the stewards and coffee makers. Thank you to Jenny Moy who has helped me with the monthly banking and suffered with me when the reconciliations didn't work out. Thank you to Caroline Blair who has taken on the task of treasurer and to David Darling, who by becoming chair of the committee freed Caroline to do so.

Juliet Edwards
Congregational Treasurer

Chairperson of the Congregation's Report

2011 was my final year as chair of the congregation. I used to joke that I was a minister without portfolio, because in a community full of reliable, committed people, the chair probably has the least to do. My thanks as always to Sarah for her enthusiastic and sensitive leadership, and to Jenny and Jane for keeping the show on the road with a combination of efficiency and creativity that has been a pleasure to watch. Thanks also to Juliet for all her years as treasurer; because of Juliet and Jenny's hard work, I am taking over the church accounts in excellent shape. (It is the accounts that are in excellent shape, not me, I should add). We are aware that this was probably Howard's last full year as Chair of the trustees and librarian, and wish him well for the future. And finally, thanks to everyone who has contributed time, money, or general enthusiasm to the church over the year: those who have kindly signed for the rota duties, those who have served on the committee, the cleaners and maintenance workers, those who have provided us with lovely music, the Sunday school teachers, in fact the whole valued team without whom the church would just be a building and not a community.

Caroline Blair
Chairperson of the Congregation

Minister's Report

At the heart of our congregation's activities are our Sunday services. Each week we provide liberal religious worship and fellowship that is open to all. By law our church doors must remain open during this public worship and that image of an open door is especially pertinent for a busy building such as ours. It's likely that we receive more visitors than most other Unitarian and Free Christian congregations, located as we are in the centre of our capital city. This is both a blessing and a challenge for us as we seek to maintain a steady core of members here to welcome those who come our way. In the midst of a dynamic and diverse society how important it is to offer a place of sanctuary, a place of spiritual inquiry, a place where conformity is not required but rather, an openness and a deep sense of respect can be found. I am proud of our welcoming community – as I see our greeters, stewards and coffee makers reaching out to newcomers each Sunday, starting conversation, asking gentle questions, helping people to gain a sense of who we Kensington Unitarians are and what we offer to the world and what it is they themselves are seeking.

Each year I thank all the volunteers who have helped with the myriad tasks that need doing in a church community. This year my especial thanks go to Juliet Edwards who has worked so hard as our treasurer for the last eight years and who can surely feel proud of the way our finances have improved during her sensible stewardship. All charitable bodies require trustees and we have been well served by our trustees and management committee during the year – a wise and good humoured group that steer our work and take care of our resources. Volunteering is a good way to become more involved in our community and I appreciate all those who have stepped forward in this way during 2011. I encourage everyone to think of ways to become more involved in the year ahead – let me know if you have new ideas to explore or activities that you would like to make happen.

We are fortunate here at Essex Church in the resources we have at our disposal. To have a building in central London is a privilege and a responsibility. It is to the credit of our trustees and our warden Jenny that our building is so well used. Such use takes a toll on our building yet how vital it is that our doors are open and people are welcomed in. This is a policy decision made by our trustees and carried out with good grace and efficiency by Jenny. Our eclectic user groups form part of our wider ministry to the world and help Essex Church to be known as a welcoming place for spiritual exploration. During 2011 we have also provided, without cost, meeting spaces for assorted Unitarian groups and committees as our General Assembly's headquarters at Essex Hall has reduced the availability of its meeting rooms. In any mention of our building I must also convey all our thanks to Gitana who cleans so well for us twice a week, including almost every Saturday night of the year.

Our building is one of our resources, our staff team is another. As I speak to ministerial colleagues around the country, both in our denomination and beyond, I know how fortunate I am to be minister to just one congregation and to live where I work. This gives a real focus to my ministry. Jenny our warden also lives on the premises and shares with me the joys and pains of living 'over' or 'under the shop': no commuting, but a constant awareness of the building and its many visitors. Jane our education and outreach officer continues to inspire me and others with her determination and bright ideas. Our monthly small group communion services have, I know, been a valuable development for many over the last year. Jane helps to plan our small groups programme, which once again has been notable for its variety. I've had a real sense during the past year of people's yearning to delve into matters spiritual and philosophical – how good it is that we can provide opportunities for such delving.

Another gift we Unitarians offer the world is our unique approach to rites of passage ceremonies and during the past year I have worked with an increasing number of people to create ceremonies that speak from the heart - funerals, weddings and services of dedication for children, as well as renewals of vows and blessings for new homes and for those embarking on journeys. It is a privilege to be with people as they mark life's transitions and I thank those who have shared the joys and the trials of their lives with me. As your minister I am available for you to consult on any matter. Please do ask. Sometimes people say they didn't want to bother me or they feared I was too busy, but my primary commitment is to be here for people. Other tasks can usually wait.

During 2011 I have continued my national involvement with our Interview Panel and the Ministry Strategy Group, concerned with all aspects of ministry in our denomination including training and continuing professional development. As a congregation Kensington Unitarians has always had a central involvement with our district and national movement and I am glad that our committee encourages new members to become involved in our wider movement, helping to fund attendance at assorted events.

A highlight of our community's year has been publishing our book *Kindred Pilgrim Souls*. It seems fitting to close this report with a description of Kensington Unitarians from that book:

“A community of Kindred Souls meets each week at Essex Church in Kensington, West London, to explore, reflect, converse, be still, share joys and sorrows, and support one another on life's journey.”

Thank you for the part each of you plays in this community and I look forward in coming years to finding ever more ways to let the world know that such a loving and welcoming community as ours exists.

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Minister with Kensington Unitarians

Outreach Officer's Report

In my role as outreach officer for the church I am responsible for our newsletter, website, podcasts, leaflets, posters, signage, and other occasional projects. I am also involved in planning the programme of church events with a particular interest in adult religious education (RE) courses, workshops, and engagement groups.

A particular highlight of 2011 was the publication of our congregational book, 'Kindred Pilgrim Souls', in April. In the early part of the year we assembled essays ('statements of belief') from 31 members and friends of Essex Church. We took a big box of the books along to the annual meetings of the Unitarian General Assembly in Swansea and sold them to fellow Unitarians from all over the country. We have had lots of positive responses including a favourable review in 'The Inquirer'. A couple of congregations have bought a set of the books to use for discussion groups. The original print run of 250 copies has now almost sold out and we intend to re-stock in the near future.

We have a number of long-running once-a-month activities at the church: A Nia class for holistic movement and dance is led by Sonya Leite on the 2nd Sunday of each month, and a 'Finding Your Voice' singing workshop is offered by Margaret Marshall from our choir on the 3rd Sunday. Small-group communions continued throughout the year with a variety of members taking turns to lead them. It was decided that we would wind up our long-running creativity group at the end of the year and look for other opportunities to do one-off art and craft projects. The walking group, which had previously met monthly, reduced its frequency and now arranges occasional outings. Our reading engagement group has been running since 2003 and, once again, tackled a diverse selection in 2011: *'The Enemy of the Good'*, *'The Pursuit of Love'*, *'Teaching a Stone to Talk'*, *'Goblin Market'*, *'Some Tame Gazelle'*, *'The Help'*, *'The Happiness Project'*, *'How to Be a Woman'*, *'Regeneration'*, and *'The Girl who Trod on the Loaf'*. By the end of the year we had read our 87th title. The reading group is quite small, but is supported by a core of about five regular members, who take their turn to nominate titles. Individual sessions are facilitated by whoever selected the book. In 2011 we have been trying to promote the group more proactively within the congregation. The reading group has a relaxed atmosphere and newcomers are always welcome to drop in and join at any time.

In addition, there were a number of adult RE courses and one-off events during the year, including:

- 'Tapestry of Life'** – co-facilitated by Sarah & Jane, nine sessions exploring life issues from a spiritual perspective.
- 'Who Needs Sacraments?'** – workshop/lecture by Rev. Bill Darlison organised by LDPA Liberal Christian group.
- 'A Taste of Taizé'** – two sessions led by Sarah offering an introduction to Taizé-style worship.
- 'Tenebrae'** – a special Easter evening service led by Rev. Sarah Tinker and Tristan Jovanović.
- 'Tibetan Buddhism on Film'** – three sessions viewing and discussing films about Tibetan Buddhism.
- 'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life'** – six sessions exploring the recent book by Karen Armstrong.
- 'Music and Meditation'** – two sessions sharing favourite music and making use of the new church sound system.
- 'The Humane Virtues'** – six sessions exploring courage, fidelity, restraint, generosity, tolerance and forgiveness.
- 'Singing in Community'** – a two-day workshop organised by Veronica Needa and led by Jo McAndrews.
- 'Exploring Shapes and Colours'** – a Sunday afternoon practical art workshop led by Heidi Ferid.
- 'The Core of Religion'** – group outing to a lecture on compassion by Karen Armstrong at a Liberal Synagogue.

Many thanks to all those who have inspired, organised, led, and supported all these events by participating in them.

On a personal note, I would like to express my thanks to Sarah, Jenny, and the members of the church committee and the wider congregation for their support and many kindnesses during a particularly difficult year. I am also very grateful to the committee and a member of the congregation for generously offering a bursary which has enabled me to return to study and embark on a part-time BA in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics at nearby Heythrop College. I hope these studies will ultimately enhance what I am able to offer to the church and the wider denomination.

Jane Blackall
Outreach Officer (Arts and Education)

Warden's Report

2011 was a fairly quiet year in building terms with no major structural projects. The sound system in the Church was replaced with a more fully featured one. This means people can now play music through it from their MP3 players or from CDs. Many groups have taken advantage of this – not least a new Zumba dance exercise class on Monday lunchtimes. After some debate, we also opted for the option to be able to plug in an electric guitar. Harold agreed to this on condition it's never used in a service!

Other than that, the major improvement to the building has been extra shelving. The biggest expanse of this is in the back garden store – which suddenly now seems roomy when before it was very cluttered. Fraser also put a few shallow shelves in the kitchen cleaning cupboard for Gitana, which enables her to keep it much tidier; his most challenging project was shelves across the large curved cupboards in the Hall: enabling us to store yoga and music equipment above the folding tables and spare chairs – trying to cut chipboard to the right curve was very difficult apparently, but luckily for us he's a determined chap.

Fraser's DIY skills also came in handy in assembling a new set of planting troughs for the back garden. These look very elegant and, as Michaela has now filled them with moisture retaining compost and drought-resistant plants, keeping the back garden watered should be much less effort than it has been in the past. These plants were generously donated by Michaela who has done so much over the years to keep our garden looking beautiful.

Lettings-wise, things were very similar to 2010. There was a slight increase in lettings income but this mainly reflects the loss of income in January 2010 when the building was closed due to asbestos. £70,000 is probably close to the potential maximum as we're full at evenings and weekends now and can't take regular daytime bookings because of the music exams. Given the current economic climate, we didn't increase our hire charges in 2011. The most significant new booking was a local meditation group which meets in the Hall on Monday nights. We also welcomed Monkey Music, a pre-school music class, but were sad to say goodbye to Kiddikicks children's football. There has also been some occasional use of the library by local Chinese parents for after-school and half-term Mandarin lessons.

We were pleased to change electricity supplier to Goodenergy, which gets all of its energy from renewable sources. They're also able to send us one bill for all of our three meters, something which Total Gas and Power claimed to be unable to do, with the result that everything arrived in triplicate. Very irritating, especially when things started going wrong with our direct debits and we had three separate bills to pay by cheque every month. It's nice to feel we've done 'the right thing' and that it's made life much easier!

Jenny Moy
Essex Church Warden

Sunday School Report

In 2011 we had a small but enthusiastic Sunday School, most often comprising just two young people; sometimes none; and occasionally as many as five. We managed a wide variety of activities: handicrafts, baking, Bible stories, studying great Unitarians, planting seeds, making posters and discussing moral issues. Two members of the Sunday school attained respectively the bronze and silver chalice awards. We hope to welcome new children, whether regular or visitors, during 2012.

Jordan McCrindle
Sunday School Leader

Church Music Report

Music continues to play an integral part in weekly services at Essex Church. We continue to have regular quartets, duets and solos. Following suggestions from the congregation we have varied the musical diet somewhat by introducing a regular slot for instrumental music in addition to the vocal contribution to worship and this has been favourably received. The use of two regular pianists helps to provide a sense of stability to Sunday mornings and we are grateful for their expertise.

Harold Lorenzelli
Church Music Coordinator

Chairperson of Trustees' Report

The trustees met once during the year, on 8th June 2011, as they are required to do by our governing instrument, the Charity Commission Scheme for the church dated 18th April 1986, which provides for a maximum of nine trustees. The current trustees are Caroline Blair, David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid, Harold Lorenzelli, Roy Parnell and myself as chair. The current advice from the General Assembly is that the church trustees should be regarded as the holding trustees for the building, dealing primarily with any legal matters such as leases or contracts, and that the members of the management committee are regarded as the trustees of the congregation. As it happens most of the current trustees are members of the committee, which seems to work well. For many years the day-to-day running of the church and congregational matters in general have been the responsibility of the management committee.

During the summer of 2011 we engaged a firm of consulting engineers, Eastwood and Partners (who were recommended by colleagues at Upper Chapel in Sheffield), to inspect and give us advice on the ailing church roof, and they have produced a full and detailed report which we are now endeavouring to follow up. They recommend a step-by-step approach to solving the problem – in effect seeing what will work. At its July meeting the committee decided that our hard-working outreach officer, Jane Blackall, should be offered a permanent contract rather than the annual appointments previously used over a number of years. This was put in hand and Jane's new contract came into force on 1st September 2011. We are very lucky in our small 'staff team' who look after church matters for us, guided as ever by our minister, Sarah. Our thanks to all.

Howard Hague
Chairperson of Trustees

Essex Church Congregational Library and Archives: Librarian's Report

Although it may not be immediately apparent, our congregational library has expanded considerably over the last couple of years, with donations of books from the personal collections of Doris Campbell and Patricia Walker-Hesson, and also from other members of the congregation. We are very grateful for all these donations. In addition some books have been bought in from outside, e.g. from the UUA in Boston, USA and from the Lindsey Press and our own General Assembly in London. There were several reports and listings of these acquisitions in the church newsletters during the year, namely in the issues for December 2010/January 2011 (by Sarah), in February 2011 and also in February 2012.

The library is there for all members of the congregation to use. If you would like to borrow an item, just put the details in the loans book which should be found on the shelves in the library downstairs. The suggested loan period is one month.

Owing to our move away from London later in the year, the church will need to make other arrangements for looking after the library, and I will be discussing this with the management committee in due course. With regard to the church archives, I will be finishing my present part-time work at the end of June 2012, and I hope and intend that this will enable me to devote more time to sorting and listing the considerable amount of archive material that we have before we leave. Sarah and I try to respond to the occasional historical or archival enquiry that we receive.

Howard Hague
Honorary Librarian

Minutes of the AGM Held at Essex Church on Sunday 15th May 2011

Present: Paul Adeline, Gina Bayley, Jane Blackall (*minute-taker*), Caroline Blair (*chairperson*), Anthony Bunsee, Maire Collins, Joe Darling, Margaret Darling, Gordon Deaville, Natasha Drennan, Betty Evans, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Carole Grace, Gill Hague, Howard Hague, John Hands, Christine Joshi, Sonya Leite, Harold Lorenzelli, Samuel Reed, Jo Ridgers, Stephanie Saville, Susan Smith, Sarah Tinker, Mark Tribe, Diana Ward.

1. **Opening:** Opening words were spoken by Sarah Tinker, Caroline Blair, Howard Hague and Sam Reed.
2. **Welcome and Apologies:** Caroline Blair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Jennifer Blair, Jim Blair, David Darling, Juliet Edwards, Tristan Jovanović, Arthur Krebbers, Alice Lambert, Jordan McCrindle, Jenny Moy and Michaela von Britzke.

Sarah Tinker acknowledged the loss of church members Doris Campbell and Jo Cresswell in the last year. A moment of silence was held in their memory.
3. **Review of 2010 AGM Minutes:** The minutes were accepted as a correct record and signed by Caroline.
4. **Review of Reports:**
 - a. **Treasurer:**

Sarah Tinker commented that the church finances had been hugely improved by a generous legacy from Patricia Walker-Hesson and that we now have the responsibility of deciding how best to use it as projects such as fixing the leaking roof and wall could take a great deal of money. The committee will be looking at investment policy over the next year. Stephanie Saville, who had spoken in the service preceding the AGM about the way in which the Dublin congregation had supported education and about valuing ministers, asked whether the congregation might make a contribution to the education of members of the church (such as school, college, or ministry education). Mark Tribe asked if there was a sponsor system for ministers. Sarah explained that the Ministerial Students' Fund will be short of money over the next few years and would be looking for donations. Howard Hague pointed out that this legacy is a one-off and gives a false impression of normal church finances. Mark asked if the church breaks even. Sarah explained that the church breaks even and we have a contingency. Caroline added that the church should not 'act as if it has won the lottery'. Sarah praised our treasurer, Juliet Edwards, for her careful stewarding of our finances which have turned around over the last five or six years.
 - b. **Minister:**

Sarah had nothing to add to her written report and there were no questions.
 - c. **Warden:**

Sarah commented that Jenny Moy, our warden, works on lettings. Our building is full almost all the time, so we rarely take on new bookings, and our user groups feel they are part of a wider community.
 - d. **Engagement Groups and Secretary:**

Maire Collins and Howard Hague commented positively on Jane Blackall's work on the church website. Mark Tribe noted that he had been talking to a visitor who had found us via the internet and who had found the congregation to be welcoming. Sarah encouraged people to make suggestions for small groups.
 - e. **Chair of Congregation:**

Caroline stated that her main responsibility during this meeting was to thank everybody who helps out with things around the church such as volunteering for stewarding, coffee, greeting, and small groups.
 - f. **Sunday School:**

Sarah noted that the Sunday school is still very small at present but the regular attenders are working on the Chalice Award Scheme. The Prellberg family travel a very long way to be here every week in term-time. Sarah is hoping to do more advertising of rites of passage services and hopes this will bring more families with children through the building where they might become aware of the congregation and Sunday school.

Carole Grace asked if there were any rituals like confirmation or coming-of-age. Gill Hague mentioned that a video had been shown at the GA annual meetings of a 'bridging' ceremony which is used on the national youth programme when young people move up from the 'inter' age group to the 'senior' group.

g. Chair of Trustees:

Howard Hague noted that he is still investigating the trust deeds which were not in the Essex Hall safe. However, Howard also reassured us that the charity commission scheme of 1986 confirms our right to this site, and shows the title number which is registered with the land registry.

h. Music:

General thanks were expressed to Harold for coordinating the music. Mark Tribe asked if other live performances of instruments have been considered. Harold noted that Benji from the choir sometimes also plays an instrument. Sarah asked that anyone who knows possible musicians to let her know.

i. Librarian:

Sonya Leite commented that it was hard to find the signing in / signing out book for the church library.

5. Acceptance of 2010 Reports and Accounts:

Heidi Ferid proposed, and Stephanie Saville seconded, the acceptance of the Annual Report and Accounts, and this was agreed.

6. Election of Management Committee

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

Caroline Blair, David Francis Darling, Juliet Edwards,
Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli, Jo Ridgers.

In the past year Doris Campbell has died, Louisa Bird has moved away, and Maire Collins is about to move also.

Stephanie Saville proposed, and Gina Bayley seconded, that all these names should be re-elected en bloc and this was agreed.

7. Congregational Growth

Sarah noted that we are 'only doing so-so' on numerical growth. A feature of London is that so many people come and go. Average Sunday attendance is still gently increasing. In congregations with fewer visitors it is easier to closely track and follow up newcomers. Sarah expressed her thanks to those who volunteer as 'greeters' and commented that there is a much improved atmosphere as people enter the church on Sundays. Sarah also noted the improvements to our noticeboards and the foyer area over the past year. Christine Joshi commented that asking visitors to introduce themselves in the service is very welcoming.

Susan Smith queried whether our slight haziness about membership numbers is contributing to the difficulties with growth. Sarah responded that our basic processes are good and we are more 'on the ball' than many congregations. Maire suggested that we should encourage people to become members straight away (rather than becoming a friend as a stepping stone to membership). Sarah emphasised that we do want people to become members and that the category of 'friend' was for people who for whatever reason cannot fully commit to membership. John Hands asked if we have any figures for Sunday attendance. Jane Blackall stated that average attendance is increasing by just one or two people per year. Diana Ward asked if the membership form was available on the internet and Jane confirmed that it is downloadable from the church website.

Mark Tribe asked whether the church advertises anywhere. Sarah responded that we don't other than through our national website. The denomination has done some advertising in the Big Issue and a few other publications. Jane Blackall suggested that the best way to attract new people was for each of us to encourage friends to visit and tell them of our good experience here.

Carole Grace noted that the church building is not very prominent or noticeable. Jane commented that we had been looking into getting an on-street banner but that we had confusing advice from the council planners and so these plans had stalled. John Hands suggested getting electronic adverts at the bus station. Sarah responded

that this would be very expensive and also noted that some people think that advertising church in this country actually has a negative impact. Maire Collins noted that the School of Economic Science had found that unless you spend many thousands on an advertising campaign it is 'almost pointless' and that we are much more likely to grow by word of mouth. Mark Tribe suggested that we ought to have something outside saying who we are and what we stand for. Sarah said that this was our long-term intention for the central panel of our on-street noticeboard and that we would have it in place before the next AGM.

Stephanie Saville asked what is happening about getting Unitarians a 'thought for the day' on national radio. Sarah replied that some members of the denomination are very keen on this and are working as hard as they can to try and make inroads. Some had proved themselves on local radio first.

8. Building Matters

Gordon Deaville asked about the building works which had taken place. Sarah detailed the many projects that had taken place over the last few years: replacing the kitchen, remodelling the toilets to provide one that was accessible, replacing ceilings and lights in the hall and foyer, renovating the library, and improving the garden.

9. Any Other Business

Sarah Tinker spoke about the 'Charter for Compassion' which our denomination, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, had just voted to sign up to at the recent GA annual meetings. Sarah said that she would like us to sign up to the charter as a congregation. The text was provided on the back of the agenda for the AGM for consideration by all those who were present and reads as follows:

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

There was some discussion about details of the charter's wording. Carole suggested that we would perhaps benefit from another service on the theme. Sarah asked if the meeting would vote on whether the congregation would take this on and go forward with the project in various ways. The meeting voted (with two abstentions) to affirm the charter for compassion.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned. The closing words were read by Sarah.

Minutes taken by Jane Blackall

