

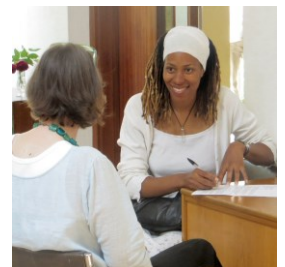
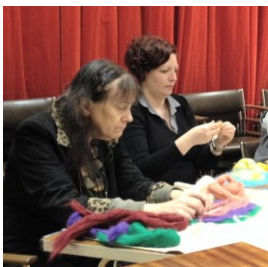


Kensington Unitarians

112 Palace Gardens Terrace, Notting Hill, London W8 4RT
t: 020 7221 6514 e: info@kensington-unitarians.org.uk w: www.kensington-unitarians.org.uk



Annual Report 2014



Essex Unitarian Church

Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2014

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, Carol Sheppard.

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

Management Committee

David Francis Darling (*Chairperson*), Caroline Blair (*Treasurer*), Natasha Drennan, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Howard Hague (*until January 2014*), Harold Lorenzelli, Carol Sheppard.

Minister

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

Treasurer

Caroline Blair
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 Limited
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 2014

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.

Trustees

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

Review of Activities

During 2014 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
- Our 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, notice boards and use of digital media
- Welcoming families into our community by running weekly children's activities on Sunday mornings
- Widening the number of people actively involved in congregational life by offering opportunities for people to attend a range of small group activities and to volunteer for various roles which support the life of the church.
- Encouraging congregation members to attend national Unitarian events in order to forge links with our wider movement

Future Aims and Objectives

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 the need for a new heating system for our worship space, and ensuring that our liberal religious activities are well publicised. As always we commit ourselves to welcoming warmly all who seek an open-minded and open-hearted spiritual community.

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

The church has invested most of the reserves in funds expected to give a reasonable rate of interest, while keeping accessible enough to cover three month's running costs, and to fund anything but very major repairs to the building.

Restrictions on Funds

All Funds/Trusts under the control of the Trustees are for the benefit of the Church other than Thomas Scott's Endowment (income may be expended at the sole discretion of the Minister) and Stock Bequest (income must be used for Church music). We are working towards merging the small trusts, except the Stock Bequest and the Lindsey Hall Trust, into the main Essex Church charity, in which case Thomas Scott's Endowment will be replaced by a sum from general church funds, agreed by the trustees, being set aside for the minister's discretionary use.

Investment Performance

Having consulted financial advisors attached to the Unitarian and Free Christian General Assembly, the church divided their financial reserves between short and long term investments, bearing in mind their duty to invest safely and sensibly.

Approval on behalf of the Trustees:

Howard Hague, Chair of Trustees

Sarah Tinker, Minister

Date: 14th June 2015

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

I report on the accounts of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2014, 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 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(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 Commission. 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 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 2011 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.

Samantha Wells FCA
LINDEYER FRANCIS FERGUSON LIMITED
Chartered Accountants

14th June 2015
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

Income and expenditure	2014 Unrestricted Funds £	2014 Endowment Funds £	2014 Restricted Funds £	2014 Total Funds £	2013 Total Funds £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Incoming resources from generated funds					
Voluntary income					
Collections and donations	14,692	-	100	14,792	11,668
Gift Aid on donations	-	-	-	-	1,936
Activities for generating funds					
Lettings	129,937	-	-	129,937	125,512
Investment income					
Dividend income	11,400	-	4,980	16,380	7,633
Bank interest	1,094	-	-	1,094	3,874
Other incoming resources	300	-	-	300	189
Total incoming resources	157,423	-	5,080	162,503	150,812
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Costs of generating funds	2	42,913	-	42,913	41,195
Costs of charitable activities	3	94,010	200	94,254	88,956
Governance costs					
Accountancy costs	3,180	-	-	3,180	2,004
Independent Examiner	2,280	-	-	2,280	2,040
	5,460	-	-	5,460	4,044
Total resources expended		142,383	200	142,627	134,195
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers		15,040	(200)	5,036	19,876
Transfers between funds		5,036	-	(5,036)	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses		20,076	(200)	-	19,876
Realised gains on disposal of assets		71	-	-	71
Unrealised gains/(losses) on revaluation of investments		4,630	782	927	6,339
Net movement in funds		24,777	582	927	26,286
Balances brought forward		546,998	1,367,348	111,928	2,026,274
Balances carried forward		571,775	1,367,930	112,855	2,052,560

**ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2014**

	Notes	2014 Unrestricted Funds £	2014 Endowment Funds £	2014 Restricted Funds £	2014 Total Funds £	2013 Total Funds £
Fixed assets						
Tangible assets	6	3,661	1,322,709	-	1,326,370	1,327,630
Listed investments	7	377,061	14,174	112,392	503,627	496,551
		<u>380,722</u>	<u>1,336,883</u>	<u>112,392</u>	<u>1,829,997</u>	<u>1,824,181</u>
Current assets						
Other debtors - Gift Aid		1,299	-	-	1,299	2,046
Trade debtors		5,525	-	-	5,525	3,370
Cash at bank and on deposit		195,513	31,047	463	227,023	211,053
Cash held for rent deposit	8	4,347	-	-	4,347	4,331
Cash held by Stockbroker		3,118	-	-	3,118	1,905
		<u>209,802</u>	<u>31,047</u>	<u>463</u>	<u>241,312</u>	<u>222,705</u>
Creditors : amounts falling due within one year						
Social security & pensions		3,801	-	-	3,801	5,287
Held as agent		10	-	-	10	229
Accruals and deferred income		10,591	-	-	10,591	10,765
Rent deposit		4,347	-	-	4,347	4,331
		<u>18,749</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>18,749</u>	<u>20,612</u>
Net current assets		191,053	31,047	463	222,563	202,093
Net Assets		<u>571,775</u>	<u>1,367,930</u>	<u>112,855</u>	<u>2,052,560</u>	<u>2,026,274</u>
Capital and reserves						
	7					
Endowment funds		-	1,367,930	-	1,367,930	1,367,348
Restricted funds		-	-	112,855	112,855	111,928
General funds		571,775	-	-	571,775	546,998
		<u>571,775</u>	<u>1,367,930</u>	<u>112,855</u>	<u>2,052,560</u>	<u>2,026,274</u>

Approved by the trustees on 14th June 2015 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 2014

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 policy is a departure from the charity SORP (2005), which requires the use of either cost less depreciation or revaluation as appropriate for fixed assets. The trustees believe it offers a more true and fair view, and 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.

Resources expended are analysed between the following headings:

Costs of generating funds - represents the direct costs of running the church for lettings, including the warden, and the costs incurred to support this.

Charitable activities - representing the direct costs of the church, including the Minister and Outreach officer, and the costs incurred to support these.

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

Support costs have been allocated across the the costs of generating funds and the costs of charitable activities based on an estimated use of the church and building spaces.

g) Investments

The investments are held in a variety of investment funds see note 7 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 £6,833 (2013: £2,954). The charity also operates a defined contribution scheme for the benefit of the other employees. Contributions payable are charged to the profit and loss account in the year they are payable. The charge for 2014 was £4,453.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

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.

	2014 Unrestricted Funds £	2014 Endowment Funds £	2014 Restricted Funds £	2014 Total Funds £	2013 Total Funds £
2 Cost of generating funds					
Staff costs	15,904	-	-	15,904	17,094
Support costs (Note 4)	27,009	-	-	27,009	24,101
	<u>42,913</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>42,913</u>	<u>41,195</u>
3 Costs of charitable activities					
Staff costs	46,776	-	-	46,776	46,819
Staff courses & training	1,491	-	-	1,491	5,011
Congregational costs	17,973	-	-	17,973	14,749
Music	11,079	-	-	11,079	9,032
Donations, grants & projects	3,186	200	44	3,430	1,294
Support costs (Note 4)	13,505	-	-	13,505	12,051
	<u>94,010</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>94,254</u>	<u>88,956</u>
4 Support costs					
Insurance	2,636	-	-	2,636	2,691
Utilities	7,772	-	-	7,772	9,468
Cleaning	6,114	-	-	6,114	5,514
Repairs and maintenance	13,278	-	-	13,278	8,859
Office costs	8,854	-	-	8,854	8,032
Depreciation	1,860	-	-	1,860	1,588
	<u>40,514</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>40,514</u>	<u>36,152</u>

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

5 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 £	2014 Total £	2013 Total £
Minister	23,944	-	23,944	25,975
Outreach Officer	12,368	-	12,368	12,645
Warden	-	13,149	13,149	14,981
Social security costs	1,576	357	1,933	4,234
Pension contributions	8,888	2,398	11,286	6,078
Employee costs	46,776	15,904	62,680	63,913
Locum Preachers	1,020	-	1,020	943
Total staff costs	47,796	15,904	63,700	64,856
Average number of staff:				
31 December 2014	2	1	3	
31 December 2013	2	1	3	

No employee earned over £60,000 during the year.

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 £375 (2013: £315), choir fees £1,930 (2013: £1,645). One trustee was reimbursed for conference fee £345 and legal fee £10 and another £160 for stationery and other supplies (2013: £84 for office supplies) incurred on behalf of the charity.

6 Fixed tangible assets

Cost or valuation	Freehold Property £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
At 1st January 2014	1,322,709	87,550	1,410,259
Additions	-	600	600
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31st December 2014	1,322,709	88,150	1,410,859
Depreciation			
At 1st January 2014	-	82,629	82,629
Charge for the year	-	1,860	1,860
Written off on disposals	-	-	-
At 31st December 2014	-	84,489	84,489
Net Book Value			
At 31st December 2014	1,322,709	3,661	1,326,370
At 31st December 2013	1,322,709	4,921	1,327,630

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 2014

7 Listed investments	General Fund	The Stock Bequest	The Carlisle Fund	Endowment Funds	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Market value at 1 January 2014	371,694	111,465	8,738	4,654	496,551
Add: Additions at cost	52,341	-	-	-	52,341
Less: disposals at carrying value	(51,604)	-	-	-	(51,604)
Net gain/loss on revaluation	4,630	927	504	278	6,339
Market value at 31 December 2014	<u>377,061</u>	<u>112,392</u>	<u>9,242</u>	<u>4,932</u>	<u>503,627</u>

Non-UK investments total £128,485 as at the year end. UK investments total £375,142.

8 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 represented half of the revised annual rent in the prior period, and approximately one month's rent for the current period, 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.

9 Analysis of funds

	Brought forward	Net movement	Movement on investments	Carried forward
	£	£	£	£
Endowment Funds				
* Permanent Endowment	1,316,255	-	-	1,316,255
Carlisle Capital Fund	8,738	(200)	504	9,042
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	32,991	-	278	33,269
Total endowment funds	<u>1,367,348</u>	<u>(200)</u>	<u>782</u>	<u>1,367,930</u>

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.

ESSEX UNITARIAN CHURCH

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

9 Analysis of funds (cont.)

	Brought forward £	Net movement £	Movement on investments £	Carried forward £
Restricted Funds				
A E Stock Bequest	111,928	-	927	112,855
Total restricted funds	<u>111,928</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>927</u>	<u>112,855</u>
Restricted funds:				
AE Stock Bequest: These funds were a bequest for the use of the choir.				
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	546,998	20,076	4,701	571,775
	<u>546,998</u>	<u>20,076</u>	<u>4,701</u>	<u>571,775</u>
Total Funds	<u>2,026,274</u>	<u>19,876</u>	<u>6,410</u>	<u>2,052,560</u>

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

	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Net movement £
Endowment Funds				
Permanent Endowment	-	(200)	-	(200)
Restricted Funds				
A E Stock Bequest	4,719	-	(4,719)	-
Carlisle Fund Income Fund	261	-	(261)	-
Africa Education Project	100	(44)	(56)	-
	<u>5,080</u>	<u>(44)</u>	<u>(5,036)</u>	<u>-</u>
Unrestricted Funds				
General Fund	157,423	(142,383)	5,036	20,076
	<u>162,503</u>	<u>(142,627)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19,876</u>

Treasurer's Report

I am glad to be able to report that over the course of 2014 our finances continued to be stable and healthy. We benefit very much from the many groups who hire church premises, especially the Lloyd Williamson School, and as always we are grateful to Jenny, the warden, for the efficient way she manages this. We are also very grateful to members of the congregation who donate, either regularly on Sundays or from time to time, and thank those who are able and willing to gift-aid their donations.

Because of the healthy state of our finances, we have been able to continue to give one collection a month to charities, chosen usually to alternate between Unitarian charities – Simple Gifts, Send a Child to Hucklow – and others, chosen by members of the congregation. We have also been able to arrange an occasional emergency collection, e.g. the collection for Ebola. The congregation are invariably generous to our chosen charities. We have also continued to support our two sponsored orphans, Patience and Fortunate Zeeman, in SOS Children's Villages in Mbabane, Swaziland, and I am pleased to say that they are healthy and doing well at school.

Our two non-ministerial staff members, Jenny the warden and Jane the outreach officer, are now safely registered in a pension scheme, only 14 months after we first applied (fortunately back-dated).

Most of the church assets are invested in long-term investment schemes, with enough working capital in the bank to ensure that we can deal with sudden building crises.

Caroline Blair
Congregational Treasurer

Chairperson of the Congregation's Report

As you will see in the Annual Report, 2014 has been another busy year for our church community. Not only have we been able to provide nurturing and challenging worship on a Sunday morning, but there is also the monthly alternative worship on Thursday evenings, as well as regular workshops that have involved members of the wider District and those seekers who may not yet be ready to join us on a Sunday morning.

I would also like to thank all those reliable committed people who week by week support our community of Kensington Unitarians in so many ways: those who greet people as they come into our services, a very important ministry especially for people who may be coming through our doors for the first time, the stewards, readers and tea and coffee makers. As always, I would like to thank Harold and Margaret and the wonderful group of musicians who add so much to our Sunday worship.

Like any good organisation we wouldn't function without those who work behind the scenes. We are fortunate in having our excellent cleaner Gitana who works late on a Saturday evening to have the place ready for us on a Sunday morning. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Mark, the gardener who kept the gardens looking loved and cared for until his move to Scotland last autumn and to Fraser for keeping the fabric of the building together.

We are very fortunate that we are able to employ a small staff team, Jenny, who not only oversees the building but also arranges the letting of rooms that allows us to remain solvent and who helps Caroline with her work as Treasurer, Jane, who spends much more than her paid hours ensuring that the Church is well known, the quality of our literature is of a high standard and we have groups and events that help people to grow in their spiritual lives, and of course, Sarah who ministers to and with us with such care, compassion and wisdom. On behalf of the whole congregation I offer them sincere thanks.

After eleven years membership of Essex Church I have moved on to pastures new and so want to thank all of you for your love and support over that time and to wish Juliet well as she takes on the role of Chairperson of the congregation.

As you move into a new year you should be proud of what you have achieved and continue to work together to provide a welcoming, inclusive, compassionate and stimulating community to all who walk through the doors.

David Francis Darling
Chairperson of the Congregation

Minister's Report

One of the features of a healthy congregation is said to be an ability to function happily and efficiently without its minister. In January 2014 I was fortunate to be given three weeks away to visit a Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation in South Carolina. This proved to be a fascinating opportunity. Imagine a land where police control the traffic queues forming outside church car parks on a Sunday morning! Not at the UU church it had to be said, yet even there religion plays an important role in members' lives. I found some interesting similarities and differences between our congregations. They were just as warm, welcoming and friendly as Kensington Unitarians. We sing with much greater gusto here and our Sunday services are more focused, and shorter. They have more members than us, with 40 or more children enrolled in their RE programme with six separate class groups. Parents are keen to give their children a liberal religious education to counter-balance the prevailing culture of the Southern States. On returning to London I found that all was fine in my absence, proving that ours is indeed a healthy congregation!

At Christmas time I'd intended to send a card of thanks to all who had volunteered during the year and discovered that added up to 44 names. Some of those cards were sent but then my dear mum became suddenly ill and died and all card sending was forgotten. I became the one who was ministered to, by so many kindly people in the congregation who took over various tasks and quietly helped me out. So let me now thank everybody in our community for all you do to create and maintain this church and all its activities. By turning up for worship and for other events, for spotting something that needs attention and getting on with it, for making suggestions about possible ways forward, for signing rotas and making a commitment, for financial support and just as importantly the support of your time and your talents – these are some of the 101 ways we build community together here at Essex Church.

Another feature of 2014 was the larger than usual number of visiting worship leaders we had. It's always interesting to see our own congregation from a visitor's viewpoint, especially as they remind me that amongst Unitarian congregations we are indeed fortunate. We're fortunate to have a building that can be used flexibly and which earns us a living, and to have a congregation with energy and enthusiasm. We're also fortunate to have so many congregation members who lead worship or get involved in other ways. If anyone reading this Report has ideas for worship themes that we might explore or a favourite reading then do let us know. Our musicians are happy to meet requests for music or hymns that people would like to hear and as always I thank our regular musicians for their commitment, especially Harold Lorenzelli for organising such a professional programme for us and to Margaret Marshall for her warm encouragement of our singing prowess in her monthly open access classes. Our professional pianists Peter Crockford and Sandra Smith also deserve our thanks for their skilful guiding of our music in worship every week of the year.

As you will read in Jenny Moy's Warden's Report, our building continues to bring us much needed income and less needed headaches as we puzzle over how best to maintain its fabric. But a church is more than bricks and mortar and when I see the large numbers of people using our space I am proud of what this community is providing here in the midst of London. We might wish for a waterproof roof and soundproof rooms and lots more cupboards but in the meantime we are enabling people to get together and to take part in activities that are important to them. I thank Jenny for her calm yet firm approach with all these groups, ensuring that those who can pay do so, enabling us then to provide cheap or even free meeting space for those who need it. Jenny and I both are indebted to Gitana our cleaner who knows far more about buildings than we ever will and whose work ethic keeps our building looking so clean despite its heavy use.

In 2014 Jane Blackall our Outreach Officer designed a year-long programme of courses, 'Spiritual Life Skills'. It's pleasing to note that this idea has now been taken up by several other congregations. In 2014 Jeannene Powell and I ran a Spirituality and Sexuality and course for women, which has now developed into an ongoing women's group. I'm grateful to everyone who gets involved in running small group activities. Especial thanks as always to Jane for her great ideas and the determination that sees at least some of them come to fruition, but also for keeping up with the regular tasks maintaining our website, newsletter and noticeboards. Our consistently high standards in these areas are a credit to us and they only happen because of Jane.

In 2014 it was a pleasure to have Sam Boyero with us as leader of our Kids' Club. Her warmth and sense of fun have been much appreciated by children, parents and all of us here at the church. Sam found our community because a friend had suggested us as a possible place to hold a child naming ceremony for her son. Ours is a beautiful worship space for ceremonies and my hope is to develop its further use as a place in which to mark the important moments of people's lives.

Much of ministry happens in conversations and I have appreciated all of you who shared important issues with me over the last year. Please let me know if you would like to talk something over. But the ministry of a church must involve all of us and I thank all of you for your quiet ministry to one another – through phone calls, conversations over coffee, arranging to visit people, helping with chores – much of which I probably don't get to hear about. Thank you also to all our loyal committee members who meet ten times a year to oversee the work of our community. You are an essential part of our community and I appreciate your support. Especial thanks to David Darling for all he has contributed during his time as a congregation member and as chair of our management committee. We shall miss his warmth, good sense and spiritual depth and look forward to seeing him again from time to time.

During the year I continued with my national roles serving as chair of the Interview Panel and as a member of the Ministry Strategy Group, with a particular interest in ministry training. I attended our General Assembly's Annual Meetings and a Vision Day, two Ministerial Fellowship conferences and a retreat, and saw a spiritual director fortnightly. It's pleasing to know that members of our congregation are involved in national and district events such as Hucklow Summer School, the Youth Programme and FUSE as they connect us with our wider liberal, religious community. In the year ahead let's work together to tell the world that Kensington Unitarians are here, offering an open-hearted and open-minded welcome to all.

Rev. Sarah Tinker
Minister with Kensington Unitarians

Chairperson of Trustees' Report

Most current church business is handled by the management committee and the officers, the trustees being required mainly for legal and contractual matters. The trustees as of May 2015 are: Caroline Blair, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid, Howard Hague, Harold Lorenzelli and Roy Parnell. Sadly David Darling has stepped down on his leaving the church. As indicated in last year's report, Gill and I left London early in 2014 and moved to Leicestershire for family reasons. Towards the end of the year I indicated to Sarah and the committee that, although I was very happy to remain a trustee and offer any advice where I could, it was probably better that I stood down as chairperson and allowed someone more 'local' to take on this role. I understand that this is now receiving attention. At the same time I think it is worth asking whether any of the other current committee members would also consider becoming trustees (the church's governing document, the 1986 Charity Commission Scheme, provides for a maximum of nine trustees).

Recently our observant treasurer Caroline has noticed that the church's entry on the Land Registry still includes the names of several people who were trustees at the time the new church was built but are no longer with us or are no longer trustees. Fortunately the entry also includes the name of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, our custodian trustee. I have now been in touch with Unitarian HQ at Essex Hall about this, and the advice received is that the names of individual trustees should be removed from the entry, leaving just the B&FUA. Being an incorporated body, the B&FUA can hold property on behalf of individual congregations, as it does in many cases. The committee and trustees will be taking this matter forward.

Before leaving London last year, I did quite a lot of work on the archives, and the church now has a full set of trustees' minutes from September 1975 onwards, and also committee minutes from 1961 onwards. In addition there are good (though incomplete) holdings of annual reports and newsletters.

Howard Hague
Chairperson of Trustees

Outreach Officer's Report

In my role as outreach officer for the congregation 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 focus on adult religious education (RE) courses, workshops, and engagement groups.

Our major project for 2014 was a year-long series of 'Spiritual Life Skills' workshops. On eight occasions during the year we held longer and more in-depth workshops on Saturdays and Sundays, sometimes run by Sarah and myself, or other members of the congregation, and sometimes with help from external facilitators. The line-up was as follows:

- January – **'Exploring the Shadow'** with Sarah Tinker and Sonya Leite
- February – **'A Sense of the Sacred'** with Jane Blackall and Kate Buchanan
- March – **'Death Café'** with Clare Slaney
- April – **'Compassionate Communication'** with Jill and Richard Broadbent
- May – **'Our Living Stories'** with Veronica Needa's True Heart Theatre
- July – **'Enlivening Worship'** with Sarah Tinker and Jane Blackall
- September – **'Celebrating Life's Moments'** with Ant Howe and Sarah Tinker
- November – **'A Life of Prayer'** with Jef Jones and Jane Blackall

These workshops attracted members of our own congregation, Unitarians from other congregations across the district (and beyond), and also a number of non-Unitarian visitors, which is exactly what we had hoped to achieve.

We have a number of long-running once-a-month activities at the church: Our 'Heart and Soul' alternative spiritual gatherings have gone from strength to strength and take place on the first Thursday of each month with a variety of leaders; A Nia class for holistic movement and dance is led by Sonya Leite on the 2nd Sunday of each month and every Tuesday lunchtime; a 'Finding Your Voice' singing workshop is offered by Margaret Marshall from our choir, usually on the 4th Sunday; and small-group communion services continued throughout the year on the 2nd Sunday with a variety of members taking turns to lead them. Our monthly creativity group continued throughout the year, with projects on feltmaking, printmaking and craftivism (led by me) and photography (led by Roy Clark). We have also arranged occasional cultural outings including ones to philosophy and spirituality talks at *Alternatives*, an exhibition at the Barbican, a late-night opening at London Zoo, a walk up Horsenden Hill, and a concert at the proms.

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

My main denominational involvement outside the congregation in 2014 was with Hucklow Summer School as I was invited to give a theme talk on 'The Authentic Self' at the event. After two years away from the organising panel I agreed to return to the summer school team as administrator and will be helping to run the event again next year.

Jane Blackall
Outreach Officer (Arts and Education)

Warden's Report

We continue to make slow but steady progress on the longstanding problems with the church roof. The failed felting around Sarah's flat has been replaced with fibreglass, which we hope will be more durable and the roof of the outside shed has also been covered with this. Unfortunately, the installation process is surprisingly noisy and smelly (as a ply sub-roof needs to be laid first and the fibreglass strips are laid wet and emit volatiles as they dry). It also requires several full days without rain, so we didn't have much choice when to schedule it: on the worst day. I spent several hours in constant motion negotiating between the builders on the roof, music exams in the church and the restaurant next door, trying to co-ordinate activities so that the exam candidates could be heard playing, the lunchtime restaurant customers weren't put off their food and the builders still managed to finish by the end of the day. Despite these issues, we plan to get the leading on the back garden wall and the boarded around pipes down the left side of the church replaced with fibreglass in 2015 – hopefully in August when the building will be empty!

After the dramatic fall in music exam bookings in 2013 (down from 43 days in 2012 to 16 in 2013) they remained fairly steady at 15 days in 2014. However it seemed unnecessary to continue to reserve three days a week for them, so we have tentatively started taking regular bookings on Thursdays as well as Monday and Tuesday. The building is so busy on weekdays now, that it's not really sufficient for our cleaner Gitana to only come twice weekly and we've agreed that she'll pop in at other times if she's in the area, do what seems necessary and bill us for the extra hours on an ad hoc basis. Gitana has been cleaning the church longer than either I or Sarah have worked here and we really benefit from her deep knowledge of the building and dedication to keeping it looking its best.

Mark Ellis (David Darling's brother in law) who's been looking after our garden for the last few years, moved up to Scotland in December, so we'll need to work out some other arrangement in 2015. I'm open to retaking overall responsibility for the outside spaces, but it may be necessary to buy in extra help as needed for specific tasks.

An important development in my personal life has been starting an MA in Dance Anthropology at Roehampton University in September. This feels like a natural progression of my increasing interest in dance, body, spirituality, improvisation etc. since I moved back to London. In order to make time for this, I've reduced my working hours from 32 to 24 (though this will still be spread over the whole week) and the church kindly offered to support me financially by paying for one module a year.

Finally, this Christmas, Jane made a very beautiful lino-cut card of the church (for sale in aid of the Hucklow Summer School bursary fund) and this inspired me to finally implement a long-standing plan of sending cards to all our hirers. It seemed most appropriate just to thank them for their support in 2014 rather than mention Christmas specifically though – especially as we're lucky enough to have several other religions using our building for their services.

Jenny Moy
Essex Church Warden

Church Music Report

The church continues to offer a variety of musical offerings both secular and sacred as an integral act of our worship. The establishment of a regular instrumental session also appears to be working well. We are fortunate to be able to draw on the talents of our singers and pianists, with the welcome addition of new names to the pool of professionals on whom we rely to provide us with our morning music to enhance the spiritual dimension of our services. The piano continues to function well, though like ourselves, may soon need some restorative work.

Harold Lorenzelli
Church Music Coordinator

Minutes of the Essex Church AGM – 1st June 2014

1. Opening Words

2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

In attendance: Carolyn Appleby, Barbara Ballantyne, Gina Bayley, Elizabeth Beel, Jane Blackall (*minutes*), Kate Brown, Simone C, David Francis Darling (*chairperson*), Juliet Edwards, Betty Evans, Heidi Ferid-Hands, Carole Grace, Gill Hague, Howard Hague, Jill Inskip, Harold Lorenzelli, Ellen McHugh, Annette Percy, Stephanie Saville, Carol Sheppard, Sara Taylor, Rev. Sarah Tinker (*minister*), Liz Tuckwell.

Apologies: Caroline Blair, Natasha Drennan, Joe Darling, Margaret Darling, John Hands.

3. Review of 2013 AGM Minutes:

- a. **Matters Arising:** Sarah noted that Sonya Leite had asked us to find out if the church organ could be renovated. We had an initial investigation into this but we have not followed this up.
- b. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes were accepted as a true record and signed by David Darling as congregation chair.

4. Review of Reports:

a. Treasurer's Reports and Accounts

Caroline Blair, our treasurer, was leading the service for Richmond Unitarians this morning and unfortunately was not able to get back in time for the meeting. David commented that we are in a healthy position financially but we can't just sit back. The money we have got now is for the future and we're not likely to have such lump sums given to us on a regular basis. Juliet queried the distinction between UK and non-UK investments on page 10. Sarah explained that this was just a change in the way that we have to report on investments. Juliet also wished to give great credit to Jenny for her work to increase the income from lettings by 10% whilst making exceptions for those user groups who are struggling financially. David thanked Caroline for all she does in what is probably the most difficult voluntary role in our congregation.

b. Chairperson of Congregation's Report

David Darling reiterated his thanks to all those who take part in the life of the community, especially Sarah, Jane, Jenny, and all those who help out in the background.

c. Minister's Report

Sarah Tinker emphasised that "we've got a committee that likes to say yes and wants to hear your suggestions" and reminded everybody to let the committee know your thoughts and ideas. She noted that there is a need for a liberal religious voice in the world and therefore the commitment to growing our community was a constant issue. Growth is difficult in this setting, and hard work, with a turnover of about 20% of people coming and going each year. Sarah asked people to be thoughtful about how we make the church a friendly, safe, welcoming space, and include new people. She particularly thanked Ellen McHugh for suggesting the initiative of people greeting someone they don't know at the end of each service.

d. Chairperson of Trustees' Report

Howard Hague confirmed that this will probably be his last report as chairperson of trustees as he has now moved away. He will discuss the issue of the chair-ship with the trustees over the next few months and is happy to remain a trustee. In his report, Howard gave the legal background, and information relating to the charity commission. Sarah thanked Howard and noted that he has served the congregation for 30 years and holds a great deal of knowledge of the church. Heidi Ferid mentioned that she was sorry not to see trustee Roy Parnell. David noted that we are lucky that most of our trustees are members and regularly involved attenders of our congregation as this is not the case at many churches.

e. Outreach Officer's Report

Jane Blackall reflected that we had a successful year of events in 2013 and that our 'Spiritual Life Skills' series had got off to a good start in 2014. She invited members of the congregation to make suggestions for the programme but even more importantly to sign up and turn up to support events to ensure they are viable.

f. Warden's Report

Jenny Moy was unable to attend the AGM. However, David expressed his thanks to Jenny for all that she does for us. David noted that 83% of our income is from lettings and only 17% from other sources such as donations from members. He reflected that things would be very different for this congregation if we didn't have the rooms to let and raise money. Jenny gets a very good rate for our lettings but is also flexible so as to encourage a variety of user groups.

g. Church Music Report

Harold Lorenzelli commented that the choir try to come up with music that reflects the service theme or the season. He offered the view that it is sometimes nice to have an anthem from the Anglican tradition even if it does not quite fit our theology. Sarah noted that the musicians are happy to perform any music and encouraged members to make requests via herself or Harold.

h. Librarian's Report

Howard focused on listing the most important archives in his report. He highlighted the fact that we are proud to trace our roots back to the original Essex Street Chapel founded in 1774 but that we sometimes forget that there was already a Kensington congregation in this area from 1867-1885. The box which he mentions in his report contains several items connected to this congregation. Howard also noted that one of the old ministers of this church was named Channing and was a nephew of the famed William Ellery Channing.

5. Any Other Business

Gina Bayley raised the fact that we used to have a visitors' book and asked if there is any reason why it stopped. Sarah replied that it has periodically been lost and rediscovered over the years. It is something we would like to reinstate but it would be good to find a better way of doing it.

Ellen McHugh read with interest about the bible reading group that had been run in 2013 and said that she would like us to offer such a group again as she has never read the bible all the way through. Jane responded that there was a problem of diminishing interest as the group went along. This is not just an issue with the bible reading group but seems to be a recurring feature of any long-running programme. Carole Grace suggested a group where people highlight their favourite bits of the bible or bits they find challenging. Sarah encouraged Ellen to try and enrol enough people to make such a group viable again. We have tried offering groups at different times of the week but in a busy capital city it is difficult to get enough people to commit to make such a group work. David commented that it was encouraging to hear that there was a continued appetite for a bible group in our congregation. Sara Taylor suggested that if we do have a bible reading group then perhaps we could make it known to other churches and other denominations. Sarah responded that we have found advertising to be difficult and although Jane makes nice flyers and posters there is a lot of footwork involved in distributing those to other groups and venues so that they are seen. Ellen suggested advertising on Meetup. Jane responded that we had been advertising the 'Spiritual Life Skills' on Meetup and although there had been some signups as a result there was a very high rate of people signing up but not turning up. Carole suggested that people would be more likely to come if they paid upfront. This is something we've tried for 'Spiritual Life Skills'. Sarah noted that the London School of Meditation who run sessions at the church charge a great sum, defined as a proportion of income, for their own training. Carolyn responded that she would question the idea of a church charging money to attend a bible reading course and suggested a variation which might be more acceptable would be to give the fees to charity. Sarah commented that she is committed to us always having a sliding scale so that nobody is excluded because of the cost. Harold suggested that people pay a deposit which is refunded when they show up for the event. Gina commented that the 'Compassionate Communication' weekend course went really well despite the much higher fees than we usually charge. Returning to the topic of a bible reading group, Juliet Edwards, who enthusiastically took part in the 2013 group, commented that it was important that Sarah and David had been present to explain the background and offer expert interpretation. Juliet would have been less likely to attend just to read the bible with others who did not have these insights to offer. Stephanie Saville echoed this sentiment. David said that he would give the suggestion of reviving the bible group further thought.

Carolyn Appleby asked if we are part of Churches Together. David explained that Churches Together had excluded Unitarians. Carolyn asked if we were involved in any interfaith organisations. Carole suggested 'Inclusive Church'. Sarah noted this as something that we could explore further.

Ellen McHugh suggested inviting a local church to share a service or potluck lunch once a month, to be neighbourly, and make some sort of inroads with the local community. Sarah said that the door is always open but ecumenical and interfaith work takes a great deal of effort and she is always asking herself what activity has the best payoff in terms of both her own satisfaction and the flourishing of our church community. Sarah does attend a local interfaith gathering which is somewhat quirky but she does not feel that this activity will contribute to the growth of our community.

Liz Tuckwell suggested that we should display a rainbow flag in a prominent position so that LGBT people know that this is a welcoming congregation. Jane responded that we could actually carry out a much more thorough review of our welcome of LGBT people and that a fellow Unitarian, Yvonne Aburrow, had written a document on becoming a welcoming congregation. Carole mentioned that our website is the first place that people check to find out what sort of community we are.

Ellen commented that in Waitrose people who have a loyalty card get a free cup of tea every day. She suggested that we could have a welcome board outside on Sundays saying 'Are you lonely? Are you bored? Come in for a cup of tea!' Sarah replied that if Ellen wanted this to happen she would need to find at least two people to commit to be there each week for it. David added that most of us don't live in the area and don't have free time during the week to support such a big commitment. He added that if we invite people in then we've got a responsibility to welcome whoever comes in. Ellen made the comparison to Waitrose where it is a marketing strategy. David responded that Waitrose have a large number of paid staff. Sarah added that Ellen is great at welcoming new people and some

people find it much easier than others to take on this sort of role. Sara Taylor added a note of caution, saying that there can be a destructive element that comes along with such an open-door set-up, and security is a big issue. Sarah Tinker echoed this and commented that early in her ministry she realised the limits of our capabilities as a tiny and widely-spread congregation to do any significant work of this kind. Local churches that offer an open door to homeless people tend to have a massive staff team and huge resources and we're simply not in the same league. Carole used to be involved with St. James' Piccadilly and she noted that they had problems even with a big staff team. Carolyn commented that if we did try to attract people in with the offer of cups of tea on Sunday morning they might arrive early, or arrive during the service, and be coming and going in a way that would be disruptive to our worship. She suggested that if we were going to offer that sort of welcome it might be during the week and not while there was a service going on. Stephanie commented that something along these lines was tried about 50 years ago, and it went well on the first two occasions, but on the third occasion they had ended up calling the police out to an incident. David drew this to a close by emphasising the need to be even better than we currently are at welcoming people who come along to our Sunday services at present.

6. Acceptance of 2013 Reports and Accounts

Carole Grace proposed and Gina Bayley seconded acceptance of the report and accounts. This was agreed unanimously.

7. Election of Management Committee Members

The list of committee members going forward for re-election was read out as: Caroline Blair, David Darling, Natasha Drennan, Juliet Edwards, Heidi Ferid, Harold Lorenzelli, Carol Sheppard. Stephanie Saville proposed and Howard Hague seconded that these should be re-elected en-bloc and this was agreed unanimously.

8. Closing Words and Votes of Thanks

David expressed thanks to Sarah Tinker for all she does for our community and gratitude 'that she is still here with us'. He thanked Jane for 'keeping the show on the road' and commented that she is 'paid for a few hours but works hundreds.' David went on to thank Jenny, Howard, Harold and the musicians. Sarah thanked David and all the committee members.

Minutes taken by Jane Blackall

