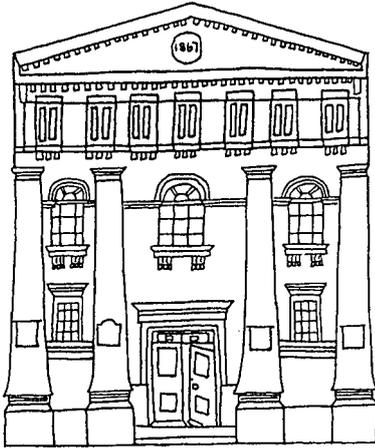


The quarterly magazine of the London District and South Eastern Provincial Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches—Soon to be on the Web at [www.unitarian.info](http://www.unitarian.info)

# Sunday Morning with the Unitarians



*This is from an article in The Hastings and St Leonards Observer, 25 August 1894, and is one of a series where a local writer visited various places of worship. Thank you very much to Roger of Hastings Reference Library who spotted this article:*

I remember attending a service towards the end of 1873 or beginning of 1874, and, in recording my impressions, offering a sincere tribute of admiration to the learning and general ability of the then minister ... He was anything but of a combative character, anything but impatient of pressing his theological views upon those not of his communion.

But how well I recollect ... Mr Briggs contending that no man of intelligence, reading the Bible with a desire to arrive at the truth, could come to any other conclusion than that Unitarianism was the only faith, an assertion the accuracy of which was at once traversed by an individual remarking: "Well, here are a dozen of us, fairly intelligent men; do you, Mr Briggs, open the Bible at any controversial part and let each one of us, putting aside all denominational prejudice, write

down, with the impartiality of jurymen weighing evidence, our belief as to the meaning of the text, and do you think we shall all agree?" The test was not accepted.

But I must say, so far as my experience goes - and admittedly it is a limited one - Mr Briggs' claim, that Unitarians are for the most part people of marked intelligence, has been borne out. And in a way I find illustration of the truth of this statement this morning in the church at South Terrace. Doubtless, the assembly is not a sufficiently large one to present many types of faces and degrees of intellect, for, man, woman, and child all told, the congregation numbers less than 50. Yet I am constrained to say that the proportion of those whom one would select as thinkers is very much larger than could be found, perhaps, in any other place of worship.

The Rev. Forbes E Winslow said some time ago that religion in the individual is in a great measure a matter of temperament. And may it not also be said that to not little extent theological profession and practice is ruled by the accident of birth, millions living and dying all untroubled in the faith of their childhood? These same two laws must govern Unitarians, but the fact none the less remains that, as this denomination is a kind of Ishmael as it were amongst other sects, having, if not its hand against every man's, at any rate every man's hand against its hand, its individual members are generally well doctrinally accoutred, according to their lights, for the polemical fray, which so far as my knowledge goes, they do not seek, but when forced upon them they do not shrink from. I am told that they are not making many

converts throughout the country, and looking at the fact that in Hastings they are in numbers not more today than they were in the days when Mr Briggs was pastor, it cannot be said that Anti-Trinitarianism has found, or is finding, much favour among the population of this town...

Unitarianism in Hastings is of very modern growth, the local Church dating back only some forty years, and I am sure that it has never been viewed with any particularly favouring eye by other denominations in this town. Differ as they may among themselves upon fundamental points of doctrine, Trinitarians yet unite more or less in their hostility to a sect denying the Godhead of our Lord...

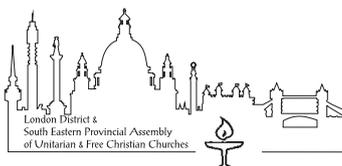
The Unitarian Church in this town owes its establishment to Mr Sharpe, a member of the once important banking firm of Rogers, Olding, Sharpe, and Boycott, and his four daughters. . . . For this .. I am indebted to the writer of some singularly interesting and informing articles on Unitarianism which appeared in the Observer a few years ago. I gather from this source that it was Miss Emily Sharpe who took the principal part in starting the services here, for it was she who looked up the best known local members the faith and persuaded them to commence public worship in this borough. Obtaining from Mr Samuel Collier Burgess - himself a Unitarian - ... the names of all other wealthy resident co-religionists, Miss Sharpe called upon them, roused them to energetic action, and thus collected the first congregation of its persuasion in this orthodox borough.... on a Sunday in March, 1860, the first local

*(continued on page 3)*

Edited by the District Minister: Rev Steve Dick, 15 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HB

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LONDON DISTRICT and South Eastern PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches (Incorporated)  
No. 649091 Registered Address: Essex Hall, 1/6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY Registered Charity No. 233390



## <sup>2</sup>LDPA Congregations

### *London Bethnal Green*

Mansford Street Church & Mission,  
117 Mansford St., London E2 6LX  
Tel.: 020 7739 7241

*Billingshurst* Unitarian Chapel, High St.,  
Billingshurst, W Sussex Tel.: 01276 503  
489

*Brighton* Brighton Unitarian Church,  
New Rd., Brighton, E Sussex BN1  
6UF Tel: 01273 696 022

### *London Brixton*

Unitarian Christian Church, 63 Effra Rd.,  
London SW2 1BZ Tel: 020 7737 7576

*Chatham* Chatham Unitarian Church,  
Hamond Hill, New Rd., Chatham, Kent  
ME4 6AP Tel: 01634 847 407

### *Croydon*

Unitarian & Free Christian Church, 1  
The Croydon Flyover, Croydon,  
Surrey CR0 7HB Tel: 020 8667 1681

*Ditchling* Old Meeting House,  
Ditchling,, W Sussex Tel: 01323 502 763

*Dover* Unitarian Church, Adrian St.,  
Dover, Kent Tel: 01304 206 601

*Enfield & St Albans* Friends Meeting  
House, St. Albans Tel: 01707 872 267

*Godalming* Unitarian Chapel,  
Meadow, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3JB  
Tel: 01483 421905

### *London Golders Green*

Golders Green Unitarians, 31 1/2  
Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS  
Tel: 020 8455 5000

### *London Hampstead*

Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Rosslyn Hill,  
Hampstead, London NW3 1NG  
Tel: 020 7431 4160

### *Hastings*

Unitarian FC Church, South Terrace,  
Hastings, E Sussex Tel: 01424 432 135

*Horsham* Unitarian Church, Wor-  
thing Rd., Horsham, W Sussex RH12  
1SL Tel: 01403 263 377

### *London Islington*

Unity Church, Upper St.,  
Islington, London N1  
Tel: 020 7226 0276

*London Kensington* Essex Church, 112  
Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8  
4RT Tel: 020 7221 6514

### *Lewes*

Westgate Chapel, High St., Lewes, E  
Sussex BN7 1XH Tel: 01273 471 149

*London Lewisham* The Meeting  
House, 41 Bromley Rd., Catford,  
London SE6 2TS Tel: 020 8695 0389

### *Maidstone*

Unitarian Church, Market Buildings,  
Earl St., Maidstone, Kent ME14 1HP  
Tel: 01795 470 837

### *London Newington Green*

Newington Green Church, 39 Newing-  
ton Green, Stoke Newington, London  
N16 9PR Tel: 020 8809 1138

*Northiam* Unitarian Chapel, Dixters Rd.,  
Northiam, E Sussex Tel: 01424 202 552

*Reading* Reading Fellowship meetings  
at a central venue Tel: 0118 941 6976

*Richmond* Richmond & Putney Unitar-  
ian Church, Ormond Rd., Richmond,  
Surrey TW10 6TH Tel: 020 8332 9675

### *Sevenoaks*

Old Meeting House, Bessels Green,  
Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2PX  
Tel: 01732 458 234

### *Southend*

Unitarian Meeting House, Grange  
Gardens, Southend-on-Sea, Essex  
Tel: 01702 478 541

### *London Stratford*

Unitarian Christian Church, West  
Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15  
Tel: 020 8534 3646

### *Tenterden*

Old Meeting House, Ashford Rd.,  
Tenterden. Kent Tel: 01424 202552

*Watford* Unitarian Fellowship meeting in  
Friends' Meeting House, Church Rd.,  
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*Worthing* Unitarian Fellowship  
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.....  
(further details and medical forms etc will be sent out soon)

# Sunday Morning with the Unitarians

(continued from page 1)

Unitarian service was held, the congregation consisting of about one dozen persons. . . .

The services were for short time conducted by laymen, the first accredited minister being the Rev. W W Robinson, who, preaching at Hastings in the morning officiated at Battle in the evening. . . . Ministers followed in succession till 1892, when, the church not seeming to thrive, it was closed for a month. However, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association came forward, and the services have since been directed by supplies from this organisation. It was one of these "supplies" who occupied the pulpit last Sunday morning, and I am bound to admit that if the denomination has many preachers as able as Mr Preston its pulpit is well served.

... there is a smell of varnish, the walls are clean and newly painted, and the woodwork fresh from the grainer's hands; the floor is covered with kamptulicon, the benches are made bright and attractive by the artificer's art, and warm-looking with coloured coverings, edged with brass nails; the pipes of the American organ to the left, and near to the pulpit, and the right of the preacher, are almost as variegated as Joseph's coat; through the partly-stained windows high above the minister's head, one of which sets forth that it was erected to the memory of Samuel Francis, the light comes in softened, subdued tones; while beneath these windows are suggestions, I cannot call them anything else, and very poor suggestions at the best, of two tall pillars surmounted by capitals, on one of which is written in gold letters, "Faith and Hope" and on the other, "And Love".

There is a gallery facing the preacher, and the whole church is so square and small that if there were anyone in the gallery he might almost shake hands with the minister at the opposite end. But the whole apartment is singularly compact, commodious, and comfortable. There were plenty of tempered sunlight, plenty of brightness, the acoustic properties are good, the little American instrument was re-

duced to its best behaviour under the skilful fingers of the lady who manipulated it, the singing was good, the preaching was good - is it necessary for me to again say that, in describing these religious services, I carefully eschew all approach to doctrinal discussion? - and from the beginning to end, alike in the material structure and in the character of the service, while there was much to stimulate the emotions, there was nothing to depress them.... The church bells having ceased ringing, the Salvation Army swept by with its defiant blasts, and the last of the late comers taken their seats - I wonder whether there is a denomination without its tardy worshippers; at any rate, I have not yet found one - the organ gives out its preliminary sweet sounds, and thereupon a gentleman, apparently on the sunny side of 40, auburn bearded and moustachioed, and having nothing of the clerical or ministerial air about him, for in these clays the small white bow he wears under an ordinary turndown collar can have no "clerical" significance, issues from a narrow door on the side opposite to the organ, ascends the platform, and takes his place at the reading desk, whereon, on a piece of tasteful tapestry or cloth covering, embroidered with the letters "IHS", rests a large gilt-edged bible... .

Mr Preston proceeded to his sermon, which was based on the words: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians, both the wise and the unwise." And very ably indeed was the subject treated. He spoke for, I think, little more than twenty minutes, but assuredly he managed to say in that time twice as much or more as some ministers of my acquaintance usually succeed in saying: the same period. A man of reading, a man of thought, and a man of world experience clearly

is Mr Preston. He has a happy aptitude of introducing homely phrases and figures, and making them tell their own story . . .

The spirit of the text ran through the whole sermon as a melody sometimes runs through an opera. . . . The contention was that n only was man under an obligation to God, but that each separate mortal, no matter what his position in life, owes a duty to his fellows. He depicted the Almighty as the God of Love, and wondered how any minister could preach from the pulpit the doctrine that some men were born to be saved and some to be eternally damned. He spoke of Him whom we recognise as our Lord and Master, before whom we gladly bow the knee in reverence, the Son of God, as the Called and Elected, and then went on to point out, in cogent, impressive language, that no matter what gifts a man may have, material or intellectual, the possessors are but the stewards holding them in trust for all.

A picture of the intellectual man, to whom the wondrous power is given of getting at the heart and soul of things almost at a glance, and the duty imposed upon such man not of sitting down and possessing his soul in peace, b of communicating his knowledge to others, was wonderfully well drawn. If they had anything, he urged, which others needed, the question was not what claims those others had, or what they had done to deserve consideration, but simply that they were in need. This was the spirit in which Paul spoke of his debts to others, and this was the principle which would solve those Socialistic problems of which we hear so much in these days. I may add that from beginning to end there was little in the sermon which a Trinitarian could not accept . . .

## LDPA Autumn Meeting

All Are Wel come

Saturday 15 October at Essex Hall

1.30 Service led by the Rev Sarah Tinker,

Minister to Kensington Unitarians at Essex Church

2.15 Fellowship & Refreshments

3.00 Presentation by Colleen Burns,

INQUIRER EDITOR on **The INQUIRER Conversation**

For more information, contact the Rev Steve Dick (020) 84071135



# News & Views From The Congregational Newsletters



## BRIGHTON

### *"WHEN I CHANGE, THE WORLD CHANGES"*

As we entered the ordinary-looking house in Hove from busy Nevill Avenue, the first Feeling was one of calm serenity. It was quiet and peaceful and as we took off our shoes (in the Hindu fashion) we realised we were in for something rather special. The room into which we were then led had some very quiet ambient music otherwise there was silence. Those attending included young and old from different faith communities. There was a large screen with a point of light projected onto it (we later learnt that this was to aid meditation, which is done with the eyes open). While we waited for people to arrive we had the time to dwell quietly on our own thoughts.

Linda Lee described how the movement of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University was founded in 1936 in Sind, which is now part of Pakistan, by Brahma, a self-made diamond merchant, who had a vision of heaven on earth. It started with his desire to create a school. It began a change in his life, which attracted others to be inspired also. With the partition of India, Brahma moved everything from Sind to Mount Abu, a small hill station overlooking the Rajasthan plains bordering the Pakistan border.

Before he passed away in 1969, Brahma had the strong conviction that he ought to pass on the administration of what had now become a University into the hands of women—a very revolutionary thing to do at that time. It paid off handsomely as the women carried forward his vision with vigour so that after expanding to London and from there to many other countries, there are now Centres in 88 nations.

Following this brief history, Sarah Cavanagh went on to describe the daily routine of the Centre, where the day begins with early rising at 4.00 am, followed by time for silent meditation with the first classes starting at 6.00 am—clearly a challenge to all the audience! Those at-

tending the classes come for many different reasons, some even coming as a last resort to find peace and support for life's difficulties. The classes include rajyoga, positive thinking, special classes on subjects like addiction. The classes include men and women, though there are also some separate classes for women only, as well as recently started courses for men only. As well as the Hove Centre, there are now centres in Lewes, Eastbourne, Crawley and soon one to be established in Worthing.

Three students then spoke, giving their experiences of learning from these classes. One spoke of the positive thinking she has gained, having been rather a shut-in kind of person. She found the early start resulted in her gaining energy for her studies. Another, who was studying pharmacy, has found the courses helped her to concentrate more on her studies and she felt nourished by the times spent in meditation. The third spoke of his upbringing to believe in God, but he had broken away to follow his own enjoyment. After being influenced by others, he felt drawn back to the Brahma Kumaris way which led to change in his life and more understanding, of himself. He was able to break out of self-imposed boundaries in his life.

The evening ended with a time for everyone to experience a few minutes of meditation, followed by a pictorial presentation on screen of the University centre at Mount Abu, with its excellent buildings and fine facilities set in the natural surroundings of the hills. Before leaving, everyone was served with some delicious refreshments.

*Dinah Staples*

## CHATHAM

### *OUR LADY OF CHATHAM*

During the 350-year celebrations of our Church of the Great Companions at Chatham I stumbled upon a slim volume penned in 1938 by the late Will Hayes, who was then the minister of that Unitarian congregation. Entitled 'The Great Mother', it is an eloquent and very

erudite appeal for the female aspect of the deity to be recognised anew. Hayes must have needed even more than his usual quota of courage when citing, in those days, examples of divine femininity in pagan and (horror of horrors!) even Catholic traditions.

On pages 4 and 11 he mentions a local legend about 'Our Lady of Chatham' [sic] as retold, a little irreverently, by William Lambarde (1536-1605) in his 'Perambulations of Kent'. This writer was a staunch Protestant, a highly successful lawyer and a man of exceptional learning. Here is a summary of his version, as found on pages 324-7 of the 1826 edition of his book.

Before the Reformation, which had occurred not long before Lambarde wrote, miracles were available to the denizens of Medway from numerous sources, including the 'roode' (or cross) of Gillingham and an 'image' of Our Lady, enshrined in the Church of St Mary in Chatham. (This image was defaced by the Reformers but the Church, now disused, still stands on Dock Road.)

At some unspecified time, not long after the cross was erected at Gillingham, an unidentified corpse was washed ashore at Chatham and buried there in the Church of St Mary.

Our Lady, offended by the 'ghastly grinning' of this sinful man, interred so close to her shrine, arose by night and rattled on the windows of the parish clerk 'in the Streete a good distance from the church'. His initially gruff response soon mellowed when she informed him who she was and bade him come and help her to dig the body up and throw it in the river. Otherwise she would withdraw from 'that place' and work no more miracles there.

The clerk did exactly as he was told and the corpse soon came ashore again in Gillingham, where it was re-buried in the local churchyard. The Gillingham cross promptly ceased to provide miracles and the burial plot sank deep into the ground. Lambarde suspects that the whole episode was invented by the

clerk (whom he calls a 'Talewright') to divert offerings away from the Gillingham rood in the direction of Our Lady of Chatham.

The only part of the story that Hayes relates is that the ground on which the Lady trod, between the clerk's house and the church, stayed grassy green from that night on, especially the part where she had rested 'in a bush'. He relates this aspect of the legend to a fertility cult of the Great Mother Earth. Lambarde, who tacitly admits the existence of this green path, likens it to the traces which bide wives' regard as the 'dauncing places of night spirits, which they call Fayries'.

Perhaps the moral of the story is that the cult of Mother Earth can present the same blend of beauty and debasement as any other religion.

*Dr Michael Topham*

#### CROYDON

##### **ANY ACTIVITY MAY BE SACRED**

I am someone who thinks that any activity may be sacred. Whether it's running or singing or dancing or painting or gardening or cooking — whatever activity : if it is an activity that engenders a sense of well-being in you, and enables you to connect with a sense of meaning/energy/creativity that transcends you, then in my view, it's a sacred activity.

One of the books I'm currently reading is William Bloom's "SOULution: The Holistic Manifesto" (published 2004). He says too that any activity can be sacred. And he makes the point that as we are all different by temperament, so there are different styles of gateway to the sacred dimension. The possibilities for connecting to cosmic and natural reality, to the Good, the True and the Beautiful, are not to be confined to particular practices or places.

What this highlights for me is that we are all responsible for recognizing what works for us. No one can tell me what will work for me: I have to discover it myself. And having recognized the style of gateways that "work" for me, then it is my responsibility to cultivate whatever it is / they are. In this way, we are capable of "self-managing" our spiritual experience.

Whatever activity it is that connects us with the highest and deepest and best in ourselves, and beyond ourselves, that is what we must give special attention.

William Bloom tells us to pause in the experience / the activity: allow the experience to expand and deepen. He continues (page 111):

"We have to exercise our spiritual muscles, the muscles of our consciousness, lengthening and deepening the spiritual awareness, until finally the tiniest event can be a gateway to a full appreciation of the universal mystery. This regular rhythm of connecting with 'God' is not supposed to be an arduous discipline that we endure, but a careful positioning of ourselves in conscious and enjoyable experiences. Inside these havens, we can come away from the stimulation and lack of awareness in the rest of our daily lives, return to our true values, giving thanks for our true location in nature and the universe."

So, will you take another look at your favourite activity? Keep pausing in your weeding...your needlework... your walking... Pause and be aware of what you are re-connecting with...Even the tiniest event such as smelling a summer rose can be a gateway to a full appreciation of the universal mystery.

*(the Rev) Elizabeth Birtles*

#### DITCHLING

##### **THE IONA COMMUNITY-- CONNECTIONS**

On Saturday 9th April, four members of the Old Meeting House congregation attended a meeting of the South Eastern Group, Iona Community, held at the Priory of Our Lady in Sayer's Common. They were Maureen Maguire, Frances Colgate, Jean and Alexander Corrie. The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian Community founded in 1938 by a Scottish minister in Glasgow, the Rev. George MacLeod. Since that time, the historic Abbey of St. Columba on the tiny island of Iona, just off the west coast of Mull, serves as their centre for prayer, meditation and worship for many thousands of visiting people from all over the world, who journey to reach the starting point of the religious message. St. Columba established the Celtic Monastery in 563 .

Unitarians will be heartened to know that the Iona Community embraces the promotion of inter-faith dialogue and has formal links with the Church of Scotland, and all ecumenical bodies in Britain. Their particular priorities are the renewal of worship and an integrated approach to spirituality, the opposing of nuclear weapons, seeking reduction in the arms trade and supporting all efforts to reduce the misery of poor health and poverty here and abroad.

Our leader for the meeting was Jan Sutih Pickard, recently retired as warden of the Abbey. She emphasised those ideals of peace and justice, and strongly stressed the importance of making and maintaining Connections to unite those of different faiths. From a visit made to the Middle East quite recently with a group of young people, she gave us a vivid portrayal of life in the Holy Land today, with the wall there, which physically separates.

The peace and quiet of the fairly isolated priory at Sayers Common reminded us of the tranquil atmosphere, the spirituality and the strength of purpose to be found in the our Old Meeting House.

*Jean & Alexander Corrie*

#### GODALMING

##### **THE DIFFICULTY OF DOING BENEFICIAL THINGS**

I wonder why it is that I find it difficult to do those things which I know are beneficial will make me feel better. For example, I know for a fact that I will feel better after I have been for a run, or done some other form of strenuous physical exercise. And yet it is so tempting to find excuses not to do it. I procrastinate, I tell myself/ am too busy. I am just plain lazy. Maybe I should be out running right now instead of writing about it! Similarly, I know that eating healthily makes me feel much better than eating junk. Yet that piece of chocolate cake looks so much more irresistible than that apple! I know that what my body needs in order for it to function well is a good diet and regular exercise, but too often I ignore what I know. And then I am surprised when I ask my body to do something and it cannot cope.

As with our bodies, so often also



*Richard and Iris O'Brien tied the knot at Richmond Unitarian Church. Photo by Alan Ruston.*

with our minds and spirits. Our spirits also need proper nourishment and regular exercise if they are going to function well. We sometimes either starve our spirit by ignoring it completely or else we give it junk with no sustaining value, and then wonder why it is unable to cope when we make demands of it in moments of crisis. Being an active part of a spiritual community offers no guarantees against the tragedies and sorrows which life can bring, but it is a way of strengthening one's inner resources for when those times do arrive. It is a way of being regularly exercised and challenged through acquaintance with high ideals and noble exemplars.

It has been my observation over many years of ministry that those people who cope best when confronted by life's vicissitudes are usually those who have laid their faith foundations well beforehand. Week by week, even when it was tempting to have a lie in or read the papers, there they have been. Exercising their spirit. Keeping it in shape.

See you in church!

*(the Rev) David Usher*

GOLDERS GREEN

### **FINDING (N)EVERLAND**

I have just seen the film *Finding Neverland*, which relates how J.M. Barrie's friendship with a widow and her four sons led to him writ-

ing *Peter Pan*. I found the film interesting but unsatisfying. I have previously seen the film *Shadowlands*, which describes C.S. Lewis's friendship with an American divorcee and her son. In both films the woman becomes ill and dies. J. M. Barrie tries to cope with the sons' previous loss of their father and the illness and death of their mother by inventing an imaginary world — "Neverland" — inhabited by fairies and such like and by imagining going there. C.S. Lewis, however, believed in heaven, although his faith was shaken by the loss of the woman he had grown to love.

I am like Peter in the J. M. Barrie film: I object to people pretending that things are better than they are — I want to know the truth. I don't want to find "Neverland" — I want to find "Everland" — a real place which can give comfort to people without any need for pretence or escapism. And I find it through fellowship with other people — be it through circle dancing or just sitting in silence. And I find it through my experience that it is easier to believe that life goes on than that it doesn't.

*Robert Emberson*

HORSHAM

### **ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**

An 'Alternative' to what? you might ask. An alternative to 'orthodox'

medicine which, in my training days, was dominated by the 'germ concept' and an emphasis on the treatment of the symptoms of illness and palliative care.

Nowadays alternative or un-orthodox medicine as it used to be called, is more often referred to as Complementary medicine as doctors and healthcare workers are becoming more aware of the benefits of such therapies and are incorporating them into their own Health Centres. Working together in harmony rather than divisively or in competition has proved of greater benefit to the patient. People today are taking a greater responsibility for their own health and realizing that physical health is frequently related to our spiritual, emotional and mental welfare, as well as that of the whole planet. The power of positive thought or prayer is considerable.

Medical science has advanced tremendously, and we now have organ transplants, laser surgery, new drugs and advanced psychiatric treatments. As well as advanced technical methods for scanning and treating injured or degenerative bones and tissues.

Complementary therapies have always seen health, not just as the absence of disease but rather a positive glowing state of mental and physical well-being, it considers the body as a whole and emphasises the simple rules of health. These are that fresh air, exercise, intelligent nutrition and a proper understanding of, and care for, our minds and bodies, can go a long way to preserve our well-being and often prevent us from having to use drugs and surgery as a last resort. This holistic approach teaches that the ultimate cause of our health problems lies within ourselves. So the therapies help us to gain knowledge and acceptance of our inner selves, as well as becoming more aware of our diet, exercise, stress levels etc

Many people in the past held the attitude that it was the doctor's job to keep them healthy (that's what they were paid for!), any idea that they might in some way be responsible for their own health, did not seem acceptable. Although many dedicated family doctors do a wonderful job, and they know all about peoples' needs and the affects of stress and relationships on their patients, but they simply don't have

TIME to give to the increasing need for personal counselling.

Therefore individuals have started to seek further a field. As our minds have become open to other ideas and alternative ways, we are growing to accept therapies that at one time were regarded as suspect. More and more we are realising that the whole answer to health does not only lie in the identifying and treatment of symptoms, but also in a greater understanding of people and their relationships, the health of their environment and their needs as individuals. The more enlightened healthcare professionals not only recommend their patients to other therapists but also have incorporated them into their own practise. Thus many of us prefer the term 'complementary' to 'alternative' as BOTH are necessary.

*Joan Sparrow*

#### KENSINGTON

##### **A VISITOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

Regular visitor Rick Taylor, from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Greenville (UUCG), North Carolina came to several services at Essex Church back in the summer of 2003 and when he got home he wrote a report about his time with us for his own church's newsletter. Here are some excerpts:

"From the Notting Hill Underground Station (if you ride 'The Tube' as most Londoners do), you turn right, take another right, and then look for Essex Church on Palace Gardens Terrace. If you take two lefts, however, you arrive at a conservative Christian church geographically parallel to the home of the Kensington Unitarians. 'You can always see them coming,' the greeter will tell you, when visitors accidentally turn right instead of left. She doesn't explain how you can tell, but one supposes that the parallel greeters can also recognise left-turning Unitarians: natural mistake, no?"

The building is small but immaculate and surprisingly ornate. Posters depicting luminaries of early British Unitarianism decorate the lobby, along with various newsletters and appeals for social action. Early arrivers are led to a sunny meeting room where tea is served after the service.

The worship area is arranged with chairs in concentric circles, the minister's podium completing the inner circle and the chalice in the centre. The hymnals are comfortingly familiar, and the children are led out to the tune of 'Go now in peace'. Joys and concerns are expressed, although visitors are not asked to introduce themselves (Imagine my

disappointment!). The worship area is set up for a congregation of thirty or so, and fewer than that arrive. Here, too, we are a well-kept secret; or perhaps as one of the members observed, 'Londoners don't go to church.'

After the service, members chat over tea and scones, which look a bit like Bojangles biscuits but without the baking powder aftertaste. There were also strawberries. I paid for my portion by drying the dishes.

Here are the words with which the Kensington Unitarians concluded their service:

Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere; Its temple, all space; Its creed, all truth;

Its shrine the good heart; Its scripture, all wisdom; Its ritual, works of love; Its profession of faith, everyday living. "

#### NEWINGTON GREEN

##### **GREEN FEATURED IN GUARDIAN**

It's not every day that Newington Green features in a major national newspaper, but then Newington Green is no ordinary place and the urban regeneration that has taken place here over the last two years has had a major impact on the lives of many.

The article, written by church member Mandy Richards filled four



*Richard and Iris O'Brien share a happy moment with the Rev Jo Lane outside Richmond Unitarian Church.*



*Peter Sampson and Adrienne Wilson introduced LDPA Unitarians to new hymns at the last Summer Meeting in Worthing. Photo by Alan Ruston*

pages in the paper's Society section and featured a photograph of, and comments from, minister Cal Courtney. Our very own opera diva, Rebecca Blankenship was photographed eating an ice-cream on the green in the company of Haydn, who, you will recall, wrote that lovely prayer for us in January which ended with the words, "are men."

The article gives a fair assessment of how the regeneration of Newington Green has gone, giving the views of those both for and against the changes

Anyone who missed the article can find it by going to the Guardian website and searching for the issue of 20th April.

### **PROFILE OF PETER MAIR**

Peter Mair has been a member of the Newington Green congregation for over a year now and lives in Hampstead. He was born at the Chelsea Hospital for Women, giving him his first taste of what it's like to be surrounded by adorning females - and the adoration hasn't stopped since.

Prep-school in Sussex was followed by Oundle Public School in Northamptonshire where Peter developed a love for all things theatrical. When he completed his secondary education he headed off to France for three months and then to Vienna to brush up on his language skills. "Vienna is a city I adore. I had a great time there."

Upon his return to London, Peter enrolled at RADA in the days

when a RADA training consisted of two years intensive work. "I loved my time there and I guess I started to grow up. When I started I had all the social graces one gets at public school, but I had no maturity. I began to grow up at RADA.

His training was followed by four years in rep, "two years of which involved holding a spear for The Royal Shakespeare Company." He then decided to focus his career in the area of arts administration and from 1970 Peter worked in the drama department of the Arts Council of Great Britain, as it was then called.

Working sixty hours a week gave Peter little time to indulge his passion for acting. Then in 1989 while walking home from the pub one night, "merry but not too drunk," he decided the time had come to act once again. "I thought to myself this is the time. I can survive for a few years even if things go really badly, so I gave it a go. Since then there have been good years and bad years, but I've managed and have no regrets."

Readers may recognise Peter from his television roles as the judge in Brookside or the expert witness in a recent Channel Four courtroom drama. Recently he starred in a Pot Noodle commercial deemed to be too rude to be broadcast before 11pm by the television standards watchdog.

Last winter saw Peter in action as both Squire Squeazy and The Poppy in Salisbury's production of Jack and Beanstalk. This summer he will

spend eight weeks in Wales in the role of Bronlow in *Oliver*, the musical. We will miss him when he goes to Wales because wherever he is, there is warmth, compassion and great fun.

### **RICHMOND**

### **A SIMPLE BUT ARRESTING SCULPTURE**

Change. It is said that the only certainty we have in life is that things will change! Sometimes I like change, I thrive on the challenge and uncertainty of it, and at other times I dread it upturning my well thought out routines and carefully prepared plans.

My life has changed a great deal over the last eight years and is about to undergo more change with the birth of my second child in August.. As a church community we continue to undergo change. When I was musing on this situation recently, I remembered an image that had helped me many, many times in dealing with change and with the complexity and diversity that comes with it.

Twelve years ago on my honeymoon, my husband Rory and I travelled to the Malaysian side of the island of Borneo. We stayed for a time in the city of Kuching in the province of Sarawak. Kuching is a multicultural and multi-faith city. It is inhabited by indigenous Iban people who practice their own indigenous earth centred religions; mainland Malays who are generally Muslim; Straits Chinese who practice a combination of Confucian and Taoist and Buddhist religions; many immigrants from the Indian subcontinent some of whom are Hindu, some Buddhist and some Muslim; and from the British colonial-days, there are many Christians

Kuching city is a riot of colour and taste and smell not least in the plethora of temples, churches and mosques.

On the banks of the Kuching River, a river that meanders through the city, there is a simple but arresting sculpture that attracted my attention; and has influenced me greatly in many facets of my life ever since.

The structure is mainly made of wood and it consists of seven solid poles standing separately. On each

pole are intricate carvings depicting the spiritual life of each of the different religions practised in Kuching. There is a Hindu pole, a Muslim pole, an indigenous Iban one and so on. Each pole reveals the distinctiveness of each faith. The poles stand in line together; yet not too near together; there are considerable spaces between them; and they form not a straight line but a meandering line; a line that looks a bit like the ripple of a wave.

On a plaque next to the structure the artists explain the message of their collective piece. The sculpture represents many things. It represents the individuality and distinctiveness of each faith. In its wave of a line, it represents the way each religion, although distinct, exists together in harmony and communion with all the others through friendship, grace and respect.

And, most importantly, I think, the spaces in their togetherness, the waves of space in the meandering line between them, represents the winds of change that have been allowed to flow through these communities. It portrays the movement that has been allowed to travel through them and around them to ensure that they never stagnate or fossilise, that they will instead become thriving, vital, relevant communities within a much larger community, communities that continue to feed and be fed by each other.

Each pole is solid and grounded in its own tradition and each tradition is committed to its stability and its continuity, yet each community is willing to let the winds of change blow across them and allow the content of their continued existence to be ever evolving, ever fresh and ever relevant.

May our faith community resemble both the stability and diversity of that sculpture and its flexibility and readiness always, to consider and welcome change.

*(the Rev) Jo Lane*

## SOUTHEND LDPA NEWS

The January Winter Quarterly meeting took place on 15th January in Essex Hall. The service was led by Dawn Buckle, G. A. President. Afterwards there was tea and fellowship.



*Unitarians from the LDPA and from the Southern Unitarian Association filled the home of the Worthing Fellowship with song at the last LDPA Summer Meeting. Photo by Alan Ruston*

It is always good on these occasions to have a chat with members of other churches from the District.

The discussion - "Who will lead?" - brought many views and some sad ones from people who cannot see a need for change.

The L.D.P.A. A.G.M. was, let's say, quite different from many others I have attended. Rev. Cal Courtney held our attention by taking the service and giving us a great story about the non-delivery of a parcel. The full story and meaning is in the new "Lantern". We then enjoyed tea in the garden at the back of the Richmond church - it was a lovely, sunny day.

A very short A.G.M. followed. I have known A.G.Ms to last the whole afternoon, but not this one! Ballet dancing was the next item on the agenda - very special and beautifully danced by students from the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance. Rev Steve Dick presented each young student with some spring flowers at the end of their performance.

The L.D.P.A. Summer Meeting will be held at Horsham church on 18th June. The service is to be led by young people from Rosslyn Hill and Rev. Jim Robinson.

*Grace Green*

## WORTHING REACH OUT TO BE OPEN

At our service on May 29th, when I looked at alternative realities within the context of prayer and meditation, I shared with you the

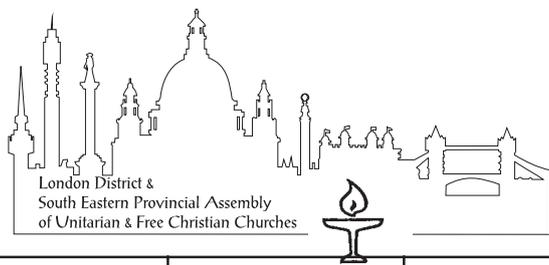
following quotation from Plato's 'Meno':

" I would not" says Socrates, " be confident in ever thing I say about an argument, but one thing I would fight for - both in word or deed - is that if we believed we should try to find out what is not known, we should be better, braver and less idle than if we believed that what we do not know is impossible to find out and thus we need not try."

Of course it is not easy to know what we do not know! That is surely why we need to reach out from our comfortable, established positions and be open to new or previously unexplored ideas. That is, to a greater or less extent, what lies behind the thinking regarding the 'Talks' which have been taking place on penultimate Sundays of the month for the past nine months. Here there is an opportunity to listen and to question - to learn about that of which we may have been previously unaware or at least, not very well informed. The common thread that has run through the talks is the connection with spiritual/religious thinking as it emerges in many and various ways.

The consideration of new ideas is, for me, a most important part of what I would call Unitarian religious philosophy. It is not that we have to change, but that the choices that we make - the commitments that we enter to a particular way - are as informed as is possible. May the coming months be full of sun-filled revelations.

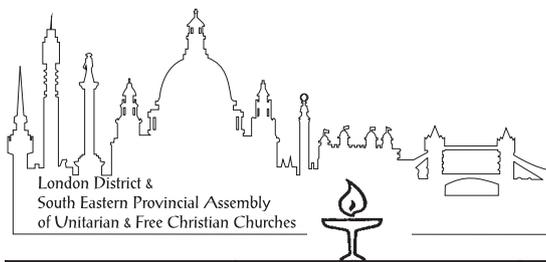
*(the Rev) Jane Barton*



## LDPA Service Arrangements for July 2005

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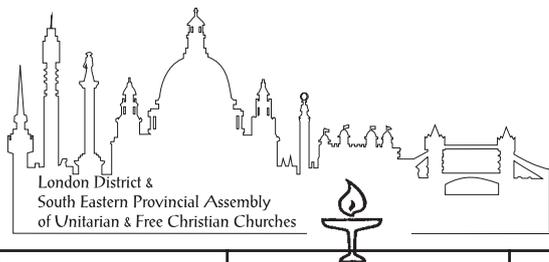
Congregation	July 3	July 10	July 17	July 24	July 31
Bethnal Green	11 am	NS	6.30		
Billingshurst 11	NS	NS	Rev Ashley Hills	NS	NS
Brighton 11 am	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Jane Barton	Ms Lynne Davies	Rev Jane Barton	Mrs P Simpson
Brixton 10.30am	Mr Tony Cross	Mr Julian Smith	Mr Julian Smith	Mr John Beasley	Mr Julian Smith
Chatham	Mrs V Darbon 10.30	NS	Mrs B Payne 3.30	NS	NS
Croydon 11am	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles
Ditchling 11am	Rev M Whitell 3pm	Mr T Weeks-Pearson	Mr W Schmidt	Rev B Anderson	Rev P Roberts
Dover 3pm		NS	NS	NS	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	A Braithwaite 11am	A & R Ruston 11am	A Braithwaite 2.30	NS
Godalming	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev B Anderson 11	Mr D Darling 3.30	Rev D Usher 11	Rev M Whitell 3.30
GoldersGreen11	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Mr M Allured	Rev F O'Connor	Mr M Allured
Hampstead 11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	Rev Steve Dick	Mr W Schmidt	Rev Steve Dick	Dr Roy Smith	Rev F O'Connor
Horsham 10.30	Rev R Walsh	Rev R Walsh	Rev R Walsh	Rev R Walsh	Rev R Boeke
Islington 11am	Rev C Courtney	NS	Rev J McClelland	NS	NS
Kensington 11am	Mr C Miller	Mr D Darling	The Blair Family	Rev A McClelland	Mr Alan Ruston
Lewes 10.30am	NS	Congregation	Congregation	Rev Steve Dick	Congregation
Lewisham 11am					
Maidstone 5.30pm					
Newington Green 11 am	NS	Rev Cathal Courtney	NS	Congregation	Rev Cathal Courtney
Northiam 3pm	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Reading 3pm	NS	Rev B Anderson	NS	NS	NS
Richmond 11am					
Sevenoaks 11am	Rev D Usher	Rev D Usher	TBA	Rev R Tarbuck	Mr M Killingworth
Southend 3.30	Mrs P Kern	NS	NS	NS	Mrs P Howell
Stratford 6.30	Mr Julian Meek	Rev Mark Shiels	Rev J McClelland	Mr Julian Meek	Rev Mark Shiels
Tenterden	Rev D Skelton 3pm	NS	Dr R Smith 11am	NS	NS
Watford 3pm	Rev F O'Connor	NS	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Steve Dick	Rev J Barton	Talk: White Eagle Lodge	Rev J Barton



# LDPA Service Arrangements for August 2005

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Congregation	August 7	August 14	August 21	August 28
Bethnal Green	11	NS	6.30	NS
Billingshurst 11	Congregation	NS	Congregation	NS
Brighton 11 am	Rev Jane Barton	TBA	Rev Jane Barton	Mr John Naish
Brixton 10.30am	Mr Julian Smith	Mr Julian Smith	Mr Julian Smith	Mr Julian Smith
Chatham	Mrs B Payne 10.30	NS	M Killingworth 3.30	NS
Croydon 11am	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev M Whitell	Mr D Darling
Ditchling 11am	Rev Ashley Hills	Rev R Boeke	Mr Roy Evans	
Dover 3pm	Congregation	NS	NS	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	A Braithwaite 11am	Mrs P Kern 11am	A Braithwaite 2.30
Godalming	Mr D Hughes 3.30	Ms M Mitchell 11	Rev D Usher 3.30	Mrs L Phillips 11am
GoldersGreen11	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor
Hampstead 11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	T Weeks-Pearson	Rev C Courtney	Rev P Roberts	Mr Roy Evans
Horsham 10.30	Rev R Boeke	Rev J Boeke	Rev R Boeke	Rev R Boeke
Islington 11am	Rev C Courtney	NS	Dr Jane Williams	NS
Kensington 11am	Rev P Godfrey	Mr D F Darling	Ms H Ferid	Mrs P Preece
Lewes 10.30am	Congregation	Mr W Schmidt	Congregation	Congregation
Lewisham 11am				
Maidstone 5.30pm				
Newington Green 11 am	NS	Rev A Hills	NS	Congregation
Northiam 3pm	NS	NS	NS	NS
Reading 3pm	NS	Mr Peter Shum	NS	NS
Richmond 11am				
Sevenoaks 11am	Mr W Schmidt	Rev David Usher	Rev David Usher	Dr Jane Williams
Southend 3.30	Rev A McClelland	NS	NS	NS
Stratford 6.30	Rev Mark Shiels	Mr Julian Meek	Mr M Garrard	Congregation
Tenterden	Ms L Davies 3pm	NS	Rev Ashley Hills 11	NS
Watford 3pm	Mrs Pat Kern	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Mrs Phillida Simpson	Rev Jane Barton	Talk:Implicit Religion	Rev Peter Roberts



## LDPA Service Arrangements for September 2005

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Congregation	September 4	September 11	September 18	September 25
Bethnal Green	11	NS	6.30	NS
Billingshurst 11	Rev J Boeke	NS	Rev R Boeke	NS
Brighton 11 am	Ms Jacquie Currie	Rev Jane Barton	Autumn Equinox	Rev Jane Barton
Brixton 10.30am	Mr Julian Smith	Mr John Beasley	Mr Julian Smith	Mr Julian Smith
Chatham	Mrs V Darbon 10.30	NS	Mrs B Payne 3.30	NS
Croydon 11am	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles
Ditchling 11am	Rev P Godfrey	Rev A Hills	Rev P Roberts	Rev A McClelland
Dover 3pm		NS	NS	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	Ms A Braithwaite 11	Mrs P Kern	A Braithwaite 2.30
Godalming	Rev D Usher 3.30pm	Mr D Lake 11	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev D Usher 11
GoldersGreen 11	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Mrs Ingrid Tavkar	Rev F O'Connor
Hampstead 11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	Mr M Killingworth	Mr G Dennington	Mrs Wendy Adams	Congregation
Horsham 10.30	Rev R Boeke	Rev R Boeke	Congregation	Rev J Boeke
Islington 11am	Rev C Courtney	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS
Kensington 11am	Congregation	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker
Lewes 10.30am	Congregation	Congregation	Congregation	Ms Jacquie Currie
Lewisham 11am				
Maidstone 6pm				
Newington Green 11am	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS	Rev C Courtney
Northiam 4pm	NS	NS	NS	NS
Reading 3pm	NS	Congregation	NS	NS
Richmond 11am				
Sevenoaks 11am	Rev D Usher	Rev David Usher	Rev D Usher	Mr G Dennington
Southend 3.30	Rev F O'Connor	NS	NS	NS
Stratford 6.30	Mrs P Kern	Mrs B Payne	Rev Steve Dick	Mr Alan Ruston
Tenterden	Congregation 3pm	NS	Rev E Jones 11am	NS
Watford 3pm	Congregation	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Ms Jacquie Currie	Mr Dan Lake	Talk: Subud	Rev Jane Barton