

“Squid!” he said in a cheery voice.

## Communication: Its Pleasures And Pitfalls

### Tower of Babel Is International

by the Rev Sarah Tinker

Do you remember I wonder the biblical story of the Tower of Babel? The Tower of Babel seemingly did exist: it was a seven-stage ziggurat, a sort of stepped pyramid with a temple to the god Marduk at the top. It was called Etemenanki, or ‘the temple of the platform between heaven and earth’, and was built in the city of Babylon sometime during the 6th or 7th century BC.

The Biblical story of the tower of Babel tells of a time when the people of the world spoke one language and used the same words. These wandering people settled in a land and said to one another ‘come let us make bricks and let’s build ourselves a city and a tower, with its top in the heavens and let us make a name for ourselves’.

Then the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that these people had made and the Lord said, though who or what he was talking to nobody knows, ‘look they are one people with one language and this is only the beginning of what they will do, nothing will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so they will no longer understand one another’s speech’. And the Lord scattered the people over the face of the earth and confused their language and they stopped building the tower and the city.

Fascinatingly there are other remarkably similar stories about the

origin of language told in other parts of the world – one that is particularly striking is told by the Choctaw Indians of North America. Now they themselves are a people with a fascinating history – they are known for their kindness to the white settlers who arrived in their land, they were later forcibly moved from that land in what became known as the Trail of Tears. Then only a few years after that they heard of the Irish people’s great suffering through famine and made a collection of 170 dollars to send to Ireland, a vast sum of money in those days.

The Choctaw Indians tell of the first people’s arrival upon a stony plain and how they started to build walls and dwellings rather than living in tipis. The people of the earth at that time spoke just one language and all peoples understood one another as one tribe, one family. One night the great spirit came as a mighty wind and blew upon the stones as if they were tumbleweeds and they rolled far across the plain. When the people awoke in the morning they found that the stones with which they were building had been blown far and wide and that they could no longer understand one another, they no longer had a shared language.

Sadly the people wandered off across the plains following the stones that the great spirit had spread across the land and ever after they lived in separate tribes, each with their own language, unable to understand one another.

by the Rev Sarah Tinker

*(This address was delivered at the LDPA Autumn Service in October preceded by the reading at the left)*

One of the things I learnt in ministerial training is that there are many possible sources of inspiration for sermons and addresses such as this.

There are the holy texts of the world’s great religions, there are inspirational writings from mystics and sages, there are the words of hymns to explore, not to mention important aspects of our Unitarian faith and history.

But I also learnt that if all else fails you in your search for inspiration, nip into a gift shop and pick up one of those twee little plaques that hold eternal truths for humanity – you know the ones – and here are some such pearls of wisdom found by a ministerial colleague in a Torquay gift shop -

*I know you believe that you understand what you think I said but I am not sure you realise that what you heard is not what I meant.*

Doesn’t that just perfectly express the challenges that we humans experience in attempting to communicate with one another.

We have a thought in our head, we attempt to put it into words, we hope that the other person is listening. There are some clues to that. They hopefully have their eyes open and are not snoring.

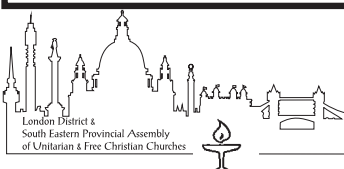
We might check that they haven’t got their fingers in their ears but how can we ever know what they are actually hearing or how they are inter-

*(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 1ER Tel: 020 8667 1681

*Ditchling* Old Meeting House,  
Ditchling,, W Sussex Tel: 01273 842359

*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*

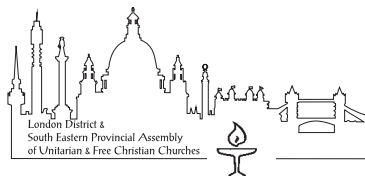
Unitarian Christian Church, West  
Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15  
Tel: 020 8534 3646

### *Tenterden*

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

*Watford* Unitarian Fellowship meeting in  
Friends' Meeting House, Church Rd.,  
Watford, Herts Tel: 01923 232 110

*Worthing* Unitarian Fellowship  
meeting at Friends' Meeting House,  
34 Mill Rd., Worthing, W Sussex  
BN11 5DR Tel: 01903 202477



## ALL WELCOME

at our  
*London District  
& South Eastern*

## SPRING MEETING

(Including AGM & ANNIVERSARY SERVICE)

### Saturday 18 March 2006

1.30 pm—Anniversary Service conducted by

**Rev. Jane Barraclough** Minister to Mansford St Church, Bethnal Green

2.15 pm—Refreshments 2.45 pm—ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

3.15 pm—

Engaging  
Our  
Theological  
Diversity

Can we Uphold the Liberal Christian tradition?  
Is there a place among us for Pagans?  
Does the General Assembly Object limit us?  
Does the General Assembly Object empower us?  
Are we Anythingarians?  
Are we Exclusive?  
Are we Inclusive?  
Is Unitarian a theological statement?  
Does it matter?

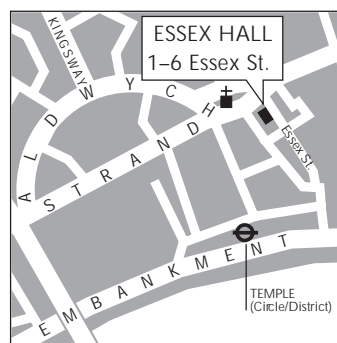
*An Exploration with  
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## "Squid!" he said in a cheery voice. Communication: Its Pleasures And Pitfalls

(Continued from page 1)

preting the words they might, or might not, be hearing.

A friend of mine works for the mediation service in Sheffield and regularly sets up mediations between neighbours who are in dispute with one another.

The process that they use sounds tortuously slow at times as they work to encourage people to listen to one another. The people who are in dispute take it in turns to speak and to say how the situation is for them.

After each person has spoken the other has to repeat it – starting with the words 'what I think I heard you say is ..' and so it goes on as a process, back and forwards, until people have truly heard and understood one another.

Communication between human beings can go so very wrong so very quickly can't it – how easy it is for us to misunderstand one another, sometimes bringing pain and distress, sometimes bringing humour and delight.

I had several holidays abroad with my one time partner Neil and from each we would come back with stories of Neil's enthusiasm for speaking foreign languages, badly it has to be said.

One time we ate out in a Spanish restaurant and Neil ordered *insalate de mare* – salad of the sea. We expected a seafood salad – perhaps some limp lettuce leaves and the odd pink shrimp, a classic English salad.

What arrived instead was a huge platter of raw, and indeed some still alive, sea creatures, with or without their shells. Not a lettuce leaf in sight. In Spanish *insalate* can simply mean raw and that may have nothing to do with vegetables.

And it was Neil that gave us the title of this address. We were on holiday in Greece and he grappled determinedly with the Greek language, reaching the peaks of his linguistic prowess on a day when he went walking alone in the hills. He came back saying how friendly everyone had been, how in fact they had laughed heartily and clapped him on the back when he'd said 'good morning' to them in Greek.

Now the Greek word for good morning is *kalimera* but when I asked what Neil had been saying to the

Greeks he met up in the hills, he'd been saying *calimare* which means squid. No wonder the Greeks had been laughing at this cheery Englishman with a sunburnt nose who had been walking round saying 'Squid!' to each and every person he met.

This tale has a final twist to it, explained to me a few years later by a colleague who had spent many years working in Greece. He roared with laughter when I told him the squid story and explained that many English tourists confuse *kalimera* and *calimare*, so many that the Greeks have a standard way of responding. When the English say 'squid!' the Greeks reply with an equally cheery greeting of 'lobster!' and both parties go home happy.

If only every linguistic confusion could have such a happy and harmless outcome. But behind the stories of the Tower of Babel and the Choctaw Indians' stones blown across the great plains lie one of humanity's painful truths.

Whether we speak in different languages or with the same tongue, we struggle, don't we, to understand one another. And those struggles to understand and our failures in comprehending one another can lead to isolation and alienation be it in our individual lives or the lives of the nations of the world.

This has been yet another week in which terrible events in another part of the world have been transmitted to us as we sit in the comfort of our living rooms.

I have found the suffering of the people of Kashmir and northern Pakistan in the aftermath of the dreadful earthquake almost too unbearable to watch and felt such frustration and despair when I heard that the relief efforts were being hampered by governments that would not allow rescue teams to cross the fiercely guarded border between the Indian and Pakistan controlled areas of Kashmir.

Remote valleys which could not be reached easily, if at all, by road could be accessed much more simply by crossing the border, but such crossings were not being allowed. Yesterday I read that the two governments had begun talks to establish ways to relax the border controls in order to facilitate the distribution of aid and the transportation of people who need medical care.

What a powerful image of slow, faltering moves towards a better relationship between two governments, attempting to communicate and to overcome fear and aggression and intransigence, whilst the people's suffering goes on.

And would that it were only foreign governments that made such a mess of communication, that were so ponderously slow in starting to use communication as a way to transcend their differences.

But it's not just foreign powers is it? Which of us has no communication equivalent of the skeleton in the cupboard? Which of us has managed to achieve clear, open, fear-free, respectful communication with everyone in our lives?

It takes bravery and constant effort to keep those channels open, to keep dismantling walls of confusion, dislike, misunderstanding and negativity.

It helps I think to hold on to some of those inspiring spiritual messages that remind us that beyond our differences and our dislikes we are all indeed one people, sharing one common humanity, sharing one life on one planet.

And to that end I will close with this prayer, that we may all become tireless communicators, people who build bridges across divides, people who tear down walls of confusion and suspicion, creating instead connections of love and warmth and kindness that cradle humanity and melt all hearts, for the greater good of all beings. Amen

Kensington Unitarians are looking for a Facilities Manager / Caretaker for their busy premises in Notting Hill Gate. This live-in post involves flexible working particularly in the afternoons / evenings and at weekends. Salary: £12,000 with one bedroomed flat. For information pack please contact Rev. Sarah Tinker on 020 7221 6514 or email [sarahtinker@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:sarahtinker@unitarian.org.uk)  
Closing date for applications: February 14th 2006

# Southern Unitarian Youth Take Over Arethusa

Text by Bethan Hills



Aaaaagh the three of us shouted as Olivia, Annabel and myself ran in circles and went mad. To explain, this was not some kind of new game - it was just that we hadn't seen each other since Blah Fun and that seemed years ago.

We are at the Arethusa again (September 2005) with both old and new friends.

After introductions both to people and the centre, food, a swim test, hot chocolate and a story we went to sleep.

Last year the leaders complained that someone woke up at 5.00 am and thought to wake everyone else up too. This year we decided to go one better! The girls all got up at 2.30 am and started to have a pillow fight. Only then did one of the leaders come along to see what the com-



# Centre in Maidstone for a Second Weekend of Blah!

Photos by John Harley

motion was all about. She was a cross-patch!

The next day was rope day – high ropes, low ropes, skipping ropes, mooring ropes, know the ropes and losing ropes.....and the plot!

My favourite was the high ropes. These are ropes joining 2 extra tall telegraph poles, which we were encouraged to climb up, walk across and swing along. When I was up at the top I could see Chatham Dockyard and the whole of Kent.

Sunday, after a complete nights sleep, saw us back in the pool on kayaks and then a session entitled 'How to lose 14 children in a field for an hour'. The real name was orienteering!

I went home feeling very tired but happy as I had seen all my friends again. I can't wait 'til the next Blah.





Stratford Unitarians have met in this building since 1869 and it was the third home of the congregation. It will soon be demolished to make way for a new development. Photo by Howard Hague.

#### Kent & East Sussex Unitarian Union

##### President

Mr Marston Preece  
9 Burnup Bank  
Murston  
Sittingbourne  
Kent ME10 3PP  
Tel: 01795 470837

##### Secretary/Treasurer

Rev. David Usher  
5 Westerham Road  
Sevenoaks  
Kent TN13 2PX  
Tel: (01732) 465248

## Putting together a Service

A Workshop for all those interested in leading worship

**Led by Rev. David Usher, Sevenoaks and Tenterden**

Sponsored by Kent & East Sussex Unitarian Union

- How to find themes
- How to choose hymns
- Where to find readings
- How to write a sermon
- The role of ritual, music and silence

Whether you already take services, or think you might like to, this Workshop is designed for you.

Where: Chatham Unitarian Church

When: Saturday, March 25th, 10:30 - 3:30pm  
Bring your own lunch. Hot drinks provided.

Please reply to David Usher at the above address, or by email to [dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk](mailto:dusher@sevenoaks-unitarians.org.uk) no later than March 20.  
A minimum of ten required.

# STRATFORD UNITARIANS CROSS STREET FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS UNTIL NEW CHURCH BUILT NEXT DOOR

As one door closes, another opens...

Stratford Unitarians held their last service in their present building on the 8th of January marking the next step in a journey towards a new building that has already taken several years of negotiation.

The current site is to become part of a large office building acting as headquarters for a local Housing Association. A new home for Stratford Unitarians is to be erected as a free-standing building literally next door to the present location.

The sale price of the old building will cover all costs associated with building the new church and provide a modest endowment. As the new site will be the construction access point for the new development, the new Stratford Unitarian Church will not be ready for occupancy until the spring of 2007. Services in the meantime will be held in the hall of the Baptist Church across the street.

The closing service in January was led by congregational chair Julian Meek and included this historical account from *The Unitarian Monthly* as a reading:

The Rev. Richard Wright, Unitarian Missionary, has recorded that he visited the Stratford Unitarians in 1819, and several times previous to this, probably in 1815, and found a Unitarian congregation, which he said had been raised by the exertions of the Rev. Mr. Fidler and other missionaries. They met in a hired room, and included several Unitarian families, some of them large ones, and there was a considerable proportion of young people for the size of the congregation.

In April, 1824, Mr. Wright reported that a chapel had been erected for Unitarian worship at Stratford. This is supposed to have been on the Middlesex side of the river near Bow Bridge.

But in 1857 a band of Unitarians built a place of worship on the Essex side, and it is supposed that there were two congregations existing at that time, the second building still existing, 'being now a coffee-house, with an ecclesiastical appearance.

The Revs. Thomas Rix and T. Crow Were the founders of this second chapel, and it was here that Mr. Rix continued his labours until 1869, when the congregation removed to the present site in West Ham Lane. This change was brought about with the help of the Rev. Robert Spears, who was then the minister of the London District Unitarian Society; and others assisted, including Miss Emily Sharpe, Messrs. S. S. and N. M. Tayler, and Mr. Alfred Lawrence.

The church was built to hold one hundred and fifty persons, in what proved to be an advantageous position, as West Ham Lane has become a main thoroughfare. Its minister, the Rev. Thomas Rix, conducted the

services here until his retirement in 1879, and remained a member of the committee until his death in 1886. For 21 years he was the voluntary minister. He was not only the founder of the church, but gave his ministerial services with considerable devotion without accepting fee or reward. Under him a Sunday school was established, a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, and an "Eclectic Society" were formed. There were watchnight services, a singing class, and a boys' choir, and other activities.

Mr. Rix was succeeded by the following ministers.: -- Rev. James E. Stead, 1878-83; Rev. S. 8. Brettell, M.A., 1884-86; Rev. E. T. Russell, 1887-90. There were supplies from 1890 to 1909, when the Rev. John Ellis was appointed to the joint ministry of Stratford with Forest Gate, and since Mr. Ellis removed to Stalybridge, in 1912, the ministry of both churches has been carried on by Pioneer Preachers.

Under Mr. Stead there was much social and temperance work; the institutional agencies prospered; and a scheme was promoted for the erection and equipment of a schoolroom. This object was realised under his successor, Mr. Brettell; the new building became an accomplished fact, and was made large enough for 200 scholars. A Social and Literary Society was formed, and from this time there was much institutional activity.

During Mr. Russell's ministry, a memorial tablet in commemoration of the Rev. Thomas Rix was erected. A Young People's Society—the forerunner of the Guild—was established, and later an organ was bought.

## LETTINGS SECRETARY REQUIRED

Kensington Unitarians are seeking a part time (4 hours per week) lettings secretary to support our minister and treasurer in establishing a new lettings system for our busy building and its user groups. Our current administrator is due to leave in February 2006.

The post would be have flexible working hours, so could fit in with the post-holder's other commitments, and would be based at our Notting Hill church building. The post would initially be for 6 months, starting as soon as possible, with the possibility of extension. Pay: £12.50 an hour. Applicants would need to have proven financial, administrative and inter-personal skills.

For further information, please contact Rev. Sarah Tinker  
email [sarahtinker@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:sarahtinker@unitarian.org.uk), phone 020 7221 0907

To apply for this post please write to Sarah Tinker at Essex Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, LONDON W8 4RT, detailing your previous experience, the skills you would bring to the post, how this position would fit in with your other work / personal commitments and the names and contact details of two people who could provide a reference for you.

During the 19 years of pulpit supplies the church owed much to the devoted supervision of the Rev. T. E. M. Edwards, District Minister of the Provincial Assembly of London and S.E. Counties. A Young Peoples' Guild was established with the help of Rev. Lucking Tavener, minister at Stepney, who continued to be its leader, followed afterwards by the Rev. W. H. Rose, minister at Walthamsiow.

After the retirement of the Rev. T. E. M. Edwards the church came again under the care of the London District Unitarian Society, and with the oversight, of its district minister, the Rev. J. A. Pearson, there was renewed activity. Then the Rev. John Ellis entered upon his joint ministry. '

The Guild became a strong organisation, having a considerable variety of institutional branches, including Temperance, Young Citizens' League, Boy Scouts, Boys' Clubs, Sewing Societies, Girls' Clubs, Athletic Clubs, Swimming Clubs, etc. For these various, agencies the accommodation for meetings was felt to be very inadequate, and the Sunday School was cramped.

**Saturday 13 May 2006**

**A Music Workshop**  
*Horsham Unitarian Church*

A day of music for any singer and/or instrumentalist who would like to take part, even if only as a listener.

The workshop will be led by  
UCMS President and GA President-elect  
David Dawson.

Please indicate your interest in attending  
by March 1, letting us know:

Voice - (SATB)  
Instrument -

Interest: How to improve music in worship  
Hymn singing, Part songs, Instrumental, Other

Tea and coffee will be provided;  
please bring a packed lunch.

Registration: 10:30 - 11:00  
Workshop will conclude by 4:00 pm  
and include a break for lunch.

Contacts

Adrienne Wilson: [adie@adiewilson.co.uk](mailto:adie@adiewilson.co.uk);  
01483 421905

Joan Sparrow: 10 Robinson Court, Rusper Road,  
Horsham, RH12, 4YS, 01403 252981  
Diana Ramsden: Stablehayes, Five Oaks, Slinfold,  
Horsham, RH13 7RG 01403 790447



# News & Views From The Congregational Newsletters



BETHNAL GREEN

## **SPECIAL MEETING AT CHESTER**

The so-called Extraordinary General Meeting in Chester did not feel very extraordinary but it did finalise a change in the internal organisation of our movement which may have passed some of you by.

Members of congregations will now vote every three years for the members of the Executive Committee, who will make big decisions affecting the way forward for us for the middle to long term.

At least I hope they will. It strikes me as someone still relatively new to Unitarianism that we are faced with a crisis of focus.

We maintain a truly dazzling array of initiatives and interests nationwide. But we spread ourselves too thin.

We need to choose from these, compose some form of strategy and stick to it for a while. Such choices will never be popular because some people will always feel that their priorities have been ignored.

So we will see where we go from here. The time of nominations is passed and I am proud that from our small congregation we have a nominee - someone who is prepared to step forward and take a risk and throw their efforts and skills into the pot.

Voting papers will be heading out soon and in the new year we will have a committee.

*(the Rev) Jane Barraclough*

## **ANIMALS HONOURED**

In a mood of compassion and concern for all life Golders Green Unitarians hosted a special event in September, - A Celebration of Animals by the World Congress of Faiths. (It wasn't blessing animals but praying for them). A crowded meeting house saw the Director General of the RSPCA light a candle for the worlds animals.

People from nine major religions affirmed the central importance of respect for the Earth and compassion for all beings having the power of perception by the senses.

In an Address delivered with passion Prof. Timothy Sprigge, a Unitarian and Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh, spoke of the varying views of the worlds religions on animals.

He said movingly that he believed animals had moral rights and could feel boredom, fear and anxiety and living happy and fulfilled lives, or miserable and painful ones.

He believed all finite consciousness, human or animal, was part of a unified Cosmic Consciousness. From this flowed ethical duties to all fellow living creatures and, indeed, to our natural environment.

People from over five animal welfare societies affirmed the importance of their work in raising awareness and preventing suffering. The host Minister led prayers for all animals, including those in factory farms and laboratories and for departed animal companions.

A harpist played and a soprano sang Carolyn McDade's uplifting "Spirit of Life". A practical item was £400+ collected for the Dr. Hadwen Trust for Humane Research. It was all very moving and followed by tasty vegetarian and vegan nibbles.

*Gordon Deaville*

DITCHLING

## **THOUGHTS FROM THE PIANO STOOL**

It's not easy being a church pianist. You can't help feeling that much of the smooth running of the Sunday service depends upon you. (It doesn't of course). You, in turn, are dependent upon the Minister not deviating from the Order of Service, a copy of which you have hopefully been given and will have Blu-tack'd to the inside of the keyboard lid.

There will be occasions when you miscount the number of verses and stop playing the hymn too soon, leaving the congregation open-mouthed but silent as they wait for the next verse.

Unless you are quick enough to notice this the Minister will lean down towards you from the pulpit

with a smile and a whispered "There is more!"

Sometimes he or she forgets to give you time to play that lovely voluntary you have spent so much of the week practising, and launches into the service a split second before your fingers hit the keys. Hymns chosen only for the words which will complement the subject matter of the Address are likely to have unfamiliar or almost unplayable tunes.

Spectacles have a nasty habit of steaming up and hearing aid batteries of running out of power at critical moments during the service. It helps if you can lip-read, because the Minister's words are directed forwards to the congregation and don't always reach the accompanist crouched below him round the side of the pulpit.

It's the Amen's you need to watch for. Easily recognised, they are clues that you are about to be required to play something, though staring up at the Minister's lips for too long can give you quite a crick in the neck.

As I said, it's not easy being a church pianist, but once you stop worrying about all that might go wrong, and have faith that you can cope come what may, you will find it rewarding and very enjoyable.

There's a lovely atmosphere about the Old Meeting House which most people notice as soon as they step inside, of welcome and friendship. I first came because I was asked to join the then team of pianists, one of whom had been driving from Horsham on most Sundays for thirty years, and who wished to retire. I stayed because I felt at home here. That was twenty years ago.

I wasn't brought up in a Unitarian family. Grandparents and great-grandparents on my mother's side were Quakers and Bapists, and on my father's side Church of Scotland. My parents seldom went to church and probably only packed me off to Sunday School, at St. Leonard's Church, West Hove, to get a bit of peace.

*Doris Hay*



KENSINGTON

## **FESTIVAL OF WORLD SACRED MUSIC**

On Sunday 23rd October, Daniel Hughes and Alex Buchanan from Newington Green Unitarians (and Daniel's mum, who was on holiday in London) and I visited Brighton Unitarians for the Festival Service of the Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music.

This is the only festival of its kind in the UK and is part of an international network of World Sacred Music Festivals inspired by the hugely successful Fez Festival of World Sacred Music in Morocco.

As well as providing wonderful music the Festival has a more serious aim, which is to promote understanding and tolerance among the many different faiths and cultures in our society.

The service was conducted by the Minister, The Revd. Jane Barton, and the opening song, based on the words of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, summed up the main focus of the Festival:

*There are numerous strings in your lute, let me add my own among them"*

During the service there was some beautiful singing from the Sacred Chants of Shiva by a Hindu singer Razia Aziz and also some Hebrew songs by a Jewish singer/guitarist Lou Beckerman.

After the inevitable cup of tea and chance to meet some of the congregation and a couple of people from Bethnal Green Unitarians we made our way to the Brighton Buddhist Centre (part of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) for a concert of Buddhist music.

I must confess that I was expecting ancient Buddhist chants and was pleasantly surprised to discover Buddhist themes expressed in a very "gutsy" western style.

The main singer and composer of much of the songs and music was Suryagita a professional musician from New Zealand who has lived in Brighton since 1990 and who was ordained into the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order last year. She was accompanied by fellow Buddhist Jo Wace and guitarist Enrick Adam.

All in all a very enjoyable day and I would encourage people to visit it next year.

More info can be found on [www.worldsacredmusic.org](http://www.worldsacredmusic.org)

*David Francis Darling*

RICHMOND

## **FROM THE MOUTH OF BABES**

From the mouth of babes... Last week I overheard a conversation between a seven year-old girl and her teenage brother. Little miss recalled a day out the two shared some months ago. Her brother, however, didn't have a clue as to what she was talking about.

Unimpressed by her brother's recall of events, she suddenly announced, "short-term memory loss" and exited the room.

Perhaps it's true, "Wisdom is wasted on the youth". (Don't ask me who said this; I have my own issues with memory.)

I frequently save quotes such as these and others. They offer insight into a changing world. I started keeping quotes as a teenager. At first I was absolutely pedantic, penning complete quotations, with author references.

Times have changed, and so has my use of creative license with regard to the written word. Take for example this beauty from a recent Sunday address: "God does not ask us to understand, but to heal." After jotting this down, I immediately crossed out "but to heal".

Why did I do this? Probably, because (at least at the time) I had visions of supernatural healings of the type neither I, nor anyone I know is capable of.

This got me thinking. Perhaps a better definition of "to heal" might be "to accept".

To accept, for instance people as they are, and those things we cannot change. To do this offers a sense of peace, freedom, even healing...

Next time I decide to change a quote, I shall at least leave the remaining bits somewhere, in order to re-visit at a later time. When I'm ready...

*Dawn Duchac*

SEVENOAKS

## **TO MISUNDERSTAND THE VERY ESSENCE**

Readers of The Inquirer will know that for the past several months

there has been a debate raging in its letters column about whether or not Unitarians are Christians, with some arguing passionately that we are, and others equally determined that we are not. Part of the problem arises from our Object which states, in part, that we exist for "... the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition" and part arises from our awful denominational name - "The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches", which suggests that we are an amalgam of Unitarians and Free Christians, each different from the other. And the proponents of each side of the argument have occasionally been as guilty as the other of saying "This is what I am as a Unitarian; therefore it is what you must be also." And predicting dire consequences if the other side does not convert.

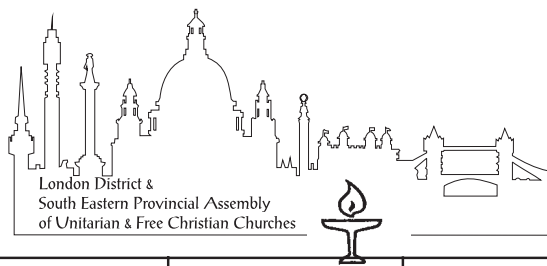
This is not only a futile debate with which we sometimes waste our energies, it is to misunderstand the very essence of who we are as a religious community. The fact is, some Unitarians identify themselves within the liberal Christian tradition, some don't, and some are in between. End of story. The real internal division which threatens us is not theological, based on Christian versus non-Christian; it is the division between the inclusivists who embrace and celebrate our diversity, and the exclusivists who don't.

I don't care if your personal Unitarianism is Christian-based or not. I hope that our congregation includes both, and all variations in between, and I see my minister's task as honouring and blending both in active mutual engagement. You should be just as indifferent to the details of my personal theology.

But I do care that Unitarianism should never become dogmatic. In that, I am most definitely an inclusivist, and resist strongly any attempt to define who we are according to one narrow theological label, even if that label is one I would be happy to wear.

The true essence of Unitarianism is that it refutes any single theological label for all, but insists on the individual's freedom to explore, engage and evolve within a community of fellow liberals. That is what makes us unique and special.

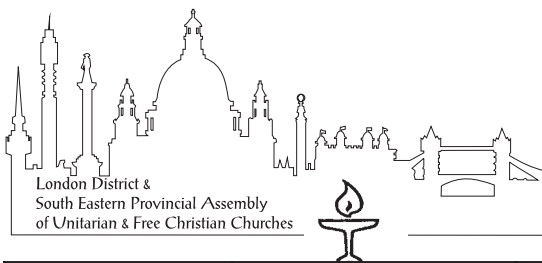
*(the Rev) David Usher*



## LDPA Service Arrangements for January 2006

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please contact the Rev Steve Dick on (020) 8407 1135

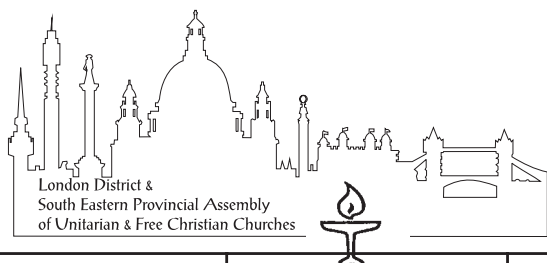
Congregation	January 1	January 8	January 15	January 22	January 29
Bethnal Green	NS	NS	J Barraclough 6.30		
Billingshurst 11	NS	NS	Rev Johanna Boeke	NS	NS
Brighton 11 am	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Johanna Boeke	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Brian Anderson	Rev Jane Barraclough
Brixton 10.30am	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Beasley	Mr J 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 J Boeke	Rev S Dick	Mr L Davidson	Rev Peter Roberts	Rev A Hills
Dover	NS	NS	Congregation 11am	NS	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	A Braithwaite 2.30	Mr P Kern 11am	A Braithwaite 2.30	NS
Godalming	Ms S Gabriel 3.30	Dr J Williams 11	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev C Courtney 11	Rev D Usher 3.30
GoldersGreen11	Rev F O'Connor	Mr M Allured	Rev F O'Connor	Rev A Hills	Rev F O'Connor
Hampstead 11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	Congregation	Mr T Weeks-Pearson	Ms L Davies	Rev D Skelton	Rev D Skelton
Horsham 10.30	Rev R Boeke	Rev R Boeke	Mr A Ruston	Rev J McClelland	Rev S Dick
Islington 11am	NS	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS	NS
Kensington 11am	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Peter Godfrey	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker
Lewes 10.30am	Open for quiet prayer	Speaker from Charity	Congregation	Congregation	NS
Lewisham 11am					
Maidstone 5.30pm					
Newington Green 11 am	NS	Rev Cathal Courtney	NS	Rev David Usher	Rev Cathal Courtney
Northiam 3pm	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Reading 3pm	NS	David Francis Darling	NS	NS	NS
Richmond 11am	Mr W Schmidt	Mr W Schmidt	Mr W Schmidt	Mr Schmidt	Mr W Schmidt
Sevenoaks 11am	Congregation	Rev D Usher	Rev D Usher	Mr Michael Garrard	Rev D Usher
Southend 3.30	NS	NS	NS	NS	Mrs P Howell
Stratford 6 pm	Mr Julian Meek	Mr Julian Meek	Rev C Courtney	Mr Julian Meek	Mr Julian Meek
Tenterden	NS	NS	Congregation 11am	NS	NS
Watford 3pm	Congregation	NS	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Jane Barton	Dan Lake (Talk)	Rev Brian Anderson	Rev Jane Barton



# LDPA Service Arrangements for February 2006

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Congregation	February 5	February 12	February 19	February 26
Bethnal Green	Rev J Barraclough11	NS	Rev J Barraclough 6.30	NS
Billingshurst 11	Congregation	NS	Rev Peter Roberts	NS
Brighton 11 am	Rev Jane Barton	Phillida Simpson	Rev Jane Barton	Rev Peter Roberts
Brixton10.30am	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith
Chatham	Mrs V Darbon 10.30	NS	Congregation 3.30	NS
Croydon 11am	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles
Ditchling 11am	Mr William Schmidt	Mr Roy Evans	Rev J McClelland	Rev R Boeke
Dover	Eileen Higgins 3pm	NS	Congregation 11am	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	A Braithwaite 2.30	A Braithwaite 11am	Mrs Pat Kern 2.30
Godalming	Congregation 3.30	David Dawson 11	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev J Boeke 11
GoldersGreen11	Rev F O'Connor	Rev Steve Dick	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor
Hampstead11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	Rev D Usher	Dr Roy Smith	Rev Steve Dick	Mrs Wendy Adams
Horsham 10.30	Rev R Boeke	Rev R Boeke	Rev Ashley Hills	Rev A McClelland
Islington 11am	Ms Lynne Davies	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS
Kensington11am	Rv Sarah Tinker	DavidFrancisDarling	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker
Lewes 10.30am	Congregation	Congregation	Congregation	NS
Lewisham 11am				
Maidstone 5.30pm				
Newington Green 11 am	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS	Rev C Courtney
Northiam 3pm	NS	NS	NS	NS
Reading 3pm	NS	Congregation	NS	NS
Richmond 11am	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane
Sevenoaks 11am	Tony Weeks-Pearson	Rev Ashley Hills	Rev David Usher	Rev David Usher
Southend 3.30	Mr M Allured	NS	NS	NS
Stratford 6pm	Rev M Shiels	Mr J Meek	Mr J Meek	Rev M Shiels
Tenterden	Rev D Usher 3pm	NS	Mr ALarcombe 11am	NS
Watford 3pm	Rev Steve Dick	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Rev Jane Barton	Mrs Eileen Wield	Talk:	Rev J Barton



## LDPA Service Arrangements for March 2006

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Congregation	March 5	March 12	March 19	March 26
Bethnal Green	Rev J Barraclough11	NS	J Barraclough 6.30	NS
Billingshurst 11	Rev J McClelland	NS	Mr Roy Evans	NS
Brighton 11 am	Rev J Barton	E Taylor & J Jones	Spring Equinox	Rev A McClelland
Brixton10.30am	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith	Mr J Smith
Chatham	Rev S Dick 10.30	NS	Mrs B Payne 3.30	NS
Croydon 11am	DavidFrancisDarling	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles	Rev E Birtles
Ditchling 11am	T Weeks-Pearson	Rev A Hills	Rev P Roberts	Rev Ashley Hills
Dover	Jean Durban 3pm	NS	Congregation 11am	NS
Enfield/StAlbans	NS	A Braithwaite 2.30	Mrs P Kern 11	Rev Steve Dick 2.30
Godalming	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev Steve Dick 11	Rev D Usher 3.30	Rev D Usher 11am
GoldersGreen11	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Rev F O'Connor	Mr M Allured
Hampstead11&7	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson	Rev J Robinson
Hastings 11am	Rev D Skelton	Rev J McClelland	Mr G Dennington	Rev F O'Connor
Horsham 10.30	Rev David Usher	Rev R Boeke	Rev R Boeke	Congregation
Islington 11am	Mr D Hughes	NS	Rev C Courtney	NS
Kensington11am	Ms Barbara Smith	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker	Rev Sarah Tinker
Lewes 10.30am	Congregation	William Schmidt	Congregation	NS
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	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane	Rev Jo Lane
Sevenoaks 11am	Rev R Boeke	Rev David Usher	Rev D Usher	Mrs Wendy Adams
Southend 3.30	Rev F O'Connor	NS	NS	NS
Stratford 6pm	Rev M Shiels	Mr J Meek	Rev S Dick	Rev M Shiels
Tenterden	Rev D Usher 3pm	NS	Ms L Davies 11am	NS
Watford 3pm	Mr Cyril Haddon	NS	NS	NS
Worthing 2.30	Rev J Barton	Rev J Barton	Talk	Rev A McClelland