

February
2020



richmond + putney unitarians

the flame

Planting Trees for the Future

'Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree long ago' – Warren Buffett

A few days ago, I read a letter from a hundred years ago. It is dated January 1917 and is from the then treasurer of our church to the congregation. It was about the effort and finances needed to maintain financial and spiritual independence. It explained the importance of financial independence for the community, so that those within its fold could explore their life, meaning and the divine in absolute freedom. The mechanism that safeguarded that freedom was what the treasurer, a Mr Warriner, called 'the freedom of the pulpit'; this was a democratic principle which allowed people within the church's congregation to express their beliefs. This principle had twofold benefits for the church's community: it enshrined its egalitarian nature, and at the same time, afforded value to each and every individual journey towards meaning.

Here is what Mr Warriner writes of the Richmond Unitarian Church (as it was then - the merger with Putney happened much later): 'Here is a church where men and women may worship the Highest without dogma, and unite themselves with positive and practical devotion in the pursuit of human wellbeing. Here, all those who would study life anew as a physical and spiritual entity may gather out of all groups and find a common centre of weekly stimulation. But money and service are needed.' Despite the fact that the country was in the thick of the First World War, or perhaps because of it, the tenet of freedom seemed of great importance to the then Richmond congregation and, judging by the letter, it was not necessarily easily won!

The great transcendentalist thinker Henry David Thoreau, wrote, 'It's not enough to be busy, so we are like ants. The question is, what are we busy about?' What is it that we are busy about? At the moment, unlike a hundred years ago, we, due to the diligent work of many, are in a financially stable

position which leaves us space to think of how to answer the complications that our own times and context present. The spirit of those people who attended our church in 1917 lives on in our congregation today and is epitomised in the words of our modern-day covenant: 'We are a radically inclusive community of open hearts and minds.'

I feel as passionate about the need of a community such as ours in the space and time that we occupy as Mr Warriner did, and although our finances are stable at the moment, there are still many jobs which need to be done and perhaps even more importantly at this point, roles within the church community which need to be taken on. As the saying goes, 'Many hands make light work', so as we move towards our AGM in March you might like to ponder whether you could be a tree-planting person like Mr Warriner!* It's heart-warming to think that because of our efforts now that others may find the welcoming shelter and embrace of RPUC in the days to come.

With warmest wishes,

Simon

P.S. I have a gentle request to make of all of you. I am happy to say Hi and give you a hug (if you're into hugs!) before the service, but if there is something more you need to say, could you wait to see me following the service? This is so I can be completely focused for the service and, secondly, so I can give you my full attention. Many thanks!

** Our AGM is on **22 March 2020**. We actively encourage anyone who is a full church member to nominate themselves to join the church management committee, and in particular to apply for the posts of chair and treasurer, which fall vacant this year.*



FEBRUARY | services

(All services by Rev. Simon Ramsay unless otherwise stated)

Sunday 2 February – ‘You don't need eyes to see – you need vision!’

These words from the 1990s band Faithless from their song ‘Reverence’ seem pretty poignant to me. Franklyn D. Roosevelt said, ‘Keep our eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground’. In this service we will look at what the future vision for our community might look like.

There will be a reflective, bring-and-share breakfast before the service from 9.30–10.30 on the theme of ‘Vision’. There will also be a creche during this service: 10.30–12.30.

Sunday 9 February – ‘Two hands working can do more than a thousand in prayer’

The above were words spoken by Madeleine Murray O' Hair. At one point, she had the reputation of being the most hated women in America. She made it her life's work to separate government institutions, such as schools, from the formal religion of the state, which was Christianity. She went about her mission in a less than orthodox way... she was far from shy and retiring! What is the importance of such a voice such as hers? And how do we cope with those voices that express staunch beliefs which may be quite different from our own?

Sunday 16 February – Embracing mistakes

Our life is not a council of perfection. We all make mistakes – if you're like me, many – throughout our life. For me, it's not as important that we make mistakes as how we respond to them and try to let them shape our future endeavours in a positive way. In this service we will explore the power of making mistakes and learning from them in our personal and community life.

There will be a creche during this service: 10.30–12.30. Following on after the creche there will be a choir rehearsal in the Holland Room 12.35–1.35.

Sunday 23 February – Wade Miller-Knight (Guest speaker)

Organ rota: 2 ,9, 16 February: Margaret Lord; 23 February: Christopher Johnson.

FEBRUARY | what's on

Sunday 2 | 9.30-10.30 a.m.

Reflective Breakfast

Come to our bring-and-share reflective breakfast. The theme is: Vision. Please arrive at 9.30.

Sunday 2 | 1-2.30 p.m.

Creative Journalling (Apse space)

The journalling group, to which all are warmly welcomed, shares silence, a check-in, takes time for writing or reflection, some time for sharing as wished. Sometimes we work with a theme, sometimes the theme emerges out of our check-in.

Contact: Kitty Lloyd Lawrence

Monday 3 | 7.30 p.m.

Garden clearance

We're going to zap that jungle down the side of the church. The hard labour will be provided by GoodGym, a local community action group, so we don't need volunteers. What we do need are garden tools – forks and spades. If you are willing to lend us your tools and are able to bring them in to church on Sunday the 2nd, please let us know in advance on info@rpuc.org.uk.

Contact: David Watson

Wednesday 5 | 1-3 p.m.

Stitches and Stories (Holland Room)

Our craft and storytelling group meets to knit, crochet or sew items to be donated to charity. Good company and good causes make for a lovely afternoon.

Contact: Margaret Lord

Wednesday 5, 12, 19, 26 | 2-3 p.m.

Coffee with the minister

Simon will be available at Tide Tables near Richmond Bridge if you wish to drop by for a chat. This is an open social gathering, but one-to-one pastoral sessions are also bookable at any other time.

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay

Thursday 6, 13, 20, 27 | 6-7 p.m.

Mindfulness with the Minister

This month we will focus on basic mindfulness techniques to calm and de-stress the mind.

Please wear comfortable clothing.

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay

Thursday 6 | 9.30 -12 a.m.

Interfaith Spiritual Companions

A group exploring a common language and practice of spirituality that is accessible to people of all faiths and none. Contact Kitty if you wish to join in.

Contact: Kitty Lloyd Lawrence

Sunday 9 | 12.30-2 p.m.

Management Committee meeting

As is our tradition, these meetings are open to all, unless a sensitive agenda item is tabled.

Contact : David Watson

Tuesday 11 | 7.30-9.00 p.m.

Tuesdays at RPUC: Walking the Labyrinth

Walking the labyrinth is a spiritual exercise: but all you have to do is walk! Our spectacular labyrinth is illuminated, and the walk will take place by candlelight. Come and join us to experience it for yourself.

N.B. In order to make the event happen we need one or two extra volunteers to help lay out the labyrinth. If you are able to lend a hand from around 6 p.m. onwards, please get in touch with Simon.

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay



For further information about any of these activities, please email info@rpuc.org.uk.

See also our website at: www.rpuc.org.uk



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We are a radically inclusive community of open hearts and open minds, where individuals are free to trust their conscience in matters of spiritual inquiry, and the inherent worth and dignity of all humankind is celebrated, irrespective of race, social status, gender or sexual orientation.

Contact

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For more information on activities at RPUC
visit our website:

www.rpuc.org.uk

Find us

We are ten minutes' walk from Richmond Station (South-west Trains, London Overground and District Line) and two minutes' walk from the bus station. Cars can enter Ormond Road one way only (from the Richmond Bridge end).

<https://goo.gl/maps/cTtbX8acyY12richmond>

