

December
2018



richmond + putney unitarians

the **flame**

Honouring Christmas and Community

'I will honour Christmas in my heart and
try to keep it all year'
Charles Dickens

Here it is again ... Christmas. The earth has rotated 366.25 times (a seasonal factoid) to return us once again to the themes of this season. It is not only time to return the themes contained within the traditional stories of the season, but also an opportunity for us to spend time with one another as a community. This year there are many opportunities for us to do both. During the month of December, the two meditation sessions between 7 and 8 p.m. on Thursdays will be planned slightly differently in that in each of the sessions will focus on the deeper aspects of the Christmas story in the Christian contemplative tradition. The Sunday services will also provide the opportunity to reflect upon, sing about and celebrate the season (see page 2, What's On). On the more social side, after the service on 16 December we will share a sit-down Christmas meal provided by Lynne and Heavenly Dish. The food last year was amazing and a good time was had by all!

It is always a little challenging to find new and fresh ways to look at the themes of Christmas and the winter solstice after some fifteen years of ministry ... and this is particularly the case when addressing the diverse beliefs contained within the community at RPUC. For me, the wonderful thing about timeless wisdom stories that no matter how many times we engage with them, there is always something new to learn, no matter what your belief or unbelief.

One of the beautiful aspects of a yearly festival is that when they come around we can reflect ever more deeply on their meaning for us. The Christmas themes such as inclusivity, the inherent goodness and potential in all human life, and faith, to name but a few, are perennial aspects of life worthy for our reflection. When we do this together, I get a sense of belonging and meaning which, for me, is the spirit of Christmas ... a wonderful aspiration for the heart to keep all year round.

I hope you all have a wonderful, peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Simon





DECEMBER | services

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

Sunday 2 December – Preparation

Christmas for many of us is a hectic time in our attempt to do the many tasks that Christmas requires. Sometimes, however, we need to take a step back from rushing around, look at where we are, and ... breathe! In this service we look at the Advent theme of preparation.

Sunday 9 December – A Journey towards Harmony

Two great themes within the Christmas story are movement and stillness. In this service we will look at what the Christmas story has to tell us about balance and, ultimately, harmony in our lives.

Sunday 16 December – Carol Service

Come along and sing your hearts out for our carol service with a choir! This is the time to don the most garish Christmas jumper you have to get into the celebratory spirit of the season.

Followed by our lovely Christmas Lunch from Lynne and Heavenly Dish

Sunday 23 December 2018, 11 a.m. – Christmas Past, Present and Future

In this service we will look at the themes of Christmas within the context of the liberal religious tradition and how the understanding of Christmas has changed through the years ... and what Christmas might look like in years to come.

Sunday 23 December 2018 4 p.m. – Christingle *

You are invited to enter the mystery and magic of the festive season with songs, stories, readings and the lighting of our traditional Christingle candles in the darkness. Suitable for children and adults alike!

Service by Rev. Lindsay Joyanne Stevens, Interfaith Minister and long-time Unitarian friend

**Please note: Lindsay would appreciate a volunteer to help make the Christingles after the morning service or even the day before (it's a lovely thing to do, but she's allergic to oranges!) Your help will be hugely appreciated, thank you.*

Sunday 30 December – Solstice Celebration

In this service we will mark the turning of the year and in that the movement back from the winter towards the summer. There be will opportunity for you in this service to join in a fire ceremony to cast your hopes and aspirations into the New Year. Please bring a pen.

(Organ rota: 2, 9, 16 December: Margaret Lord; 23 December: Christopher Johnson; 30 December: Marilene Berryman)



DECEMBER | what's on

Monday 3 | 7-8 pm
Creative Journalling

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, Naomi Sophia Rae

Wednesday 5 | 1-3 pm
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 | 2-3 pm
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 later in the afternoon or at any other time. N.B. There is no Tide Table session on 26 December.

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay

Thursday 6, 20 | 7-8 p.m.
Meditation

There is no need to be a Zen master for this practice and practical guidance will be given to help you improve your practice. N.B. There is no Meditation on either Thursday 13 or 27 December. The first will focus on 'preparation and hope' and the second on 'the journey and arrival'.

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay

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

Sunday 16 | 1 p.m.-later on ...
Our Christmas Lunch!!

*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.

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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>

