

February  
2019



richmond + putney unitarians

the flame

## The Lovely Light-filled Labyrinth

*'It's your road, and yours alone. Others may walk with you, but no one can walk it for you.'*  
(Rumi)

On a wintry January evening I turned up at the church to meet David and to lay out stones along the lines of the labyrinth chalked out on the floor of the church at the weekend. On the previous two days, I had laid these special solar-powered stones out in the garden in the hope that they would suck up the light of the winter sun, ready to glow sufficiently to illuminate our walking meditation. We also spent some time lighting tea-lights along the windowsills of the church, including the apse. When we turned off the lights the effect was stunning! In the subdued light, with the additional glow of the pebbles, the church seemed imbued with peace. After a short time, the first person stepped into the labyrinth...

I would love to tell you what that person was thinking and feeling as they mindfully trod that winding path but, I guess that, as in life, we can see another's outwardly visible journey, but have no real idea of their inner life. How can we know the depth of their struggles, the heights of their joys and everything that lies in between? Although our lives may revolve around the same social groups, and familiar faces, ultimately, we all have to walk our own path.

A seated meditation is a continual process of training the attention to be pointed only in one direction ... every time our attention dissipates and moves away from the breath, mantra or the present moment, we have to gently cajole it back

to focus once more. With a walking meditation the process is the same but embodied in and through a physical activity.

As with seated meditation, quietly walking the labyrinth may seem a lot easier away from the hubbub of the world, with its unpredictable clamour and the presence of others. Many, indeed most, of us don't have the opportunity to stay permanently in the peaceful solitude of the wilderness, but find ourselves having to carve out times and places of depth to refresh and wittingly re-orient the trajectory of our lives. Our paths regularly, to a lesser or greater extent, come into



proximity with others, which is something that we cannot avoid. We have to learn to cooperate and work with others whilst retaining a fidelity to our truths and aspirations. This seems to me to be beautifully embodied in the labyrinth. Walking through the labyrinth, we may well encounter

someone else going in the opposite direction. Then we are faced with a decision: do we get distracted and worry about what will happen when we encounter the other person or do we trust that in our mindful state we will be able to successfully navigate the situation? This is a question I hope you may ask yourself as you make your own way through the labyrinth when we make it once again, but who knows what your questions may be? That is a decision you will have to make. 'It's your road, and yours alone. Others may walk with you, but no one can walk it for you!'

*Simon*



# FEBRUARY | services

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

## **Sunday 3 February – Awake!**

Sam Harris is an author, philosopher and public intellectual. Although he is a critic of traditional religion, he does advocate a secular spirituality. There are many aspects of wisdom held in the writings of the mystics that correspond to our current scientific understanding. In this service I will look at some of the thoughts of Sam Harris and his theory of ‘waking up’.

## **Sunday 10 February – Real love**

As all the restaurants get fully booked up and florists hike up the prices of roses for Valentine’s Day, we will look at the place of romantic love on the spiritual path. Does it have any place and, if so, what would that look like?

## **Sunday 17 February – Guest preacher: Lindsay Stevens**

This will be a heart-centred service.

*Choir practice:* After the service, from 12.30.

## **Sunday 24 February – Sacred Geometry: From Chaos to Order**

At the heart of many of the world’s religious paths is the tradition of sacred geometry. It is a way of ascribing sacred significance to shapes and forms. This may take the more permanent form of architecture or the impermanent practice of creating mandalas (or labyrinths! *Ed.*). In this service we will look at the place of sacred geometry as part of a modern spiritual path.

*Organ rota:* Margaret Lord, 3, 10 and 17 February; Christopher Johnson, 24 February.

# FEBRUARY | what's on

**Monday 4** | 7–8.30 p.m.

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

**Tuesday 5, 19** | 7–8.30 p.m.

Tuesdays @ RPUC

Tuesday 5: *The Inner Light*

The three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are well known around the world and in recent years the inner, mystic or contemplative aspects of these traditions have become popular. Writers such as Rumi, Halevi or Meister Eckhart belong firmly in their own religious tradition, but their teachings seem to transcend their outward forms into a more expansive, inclusive and universal understanding which is relevant today. During these sessions we will look at what these great thinkers have to say about the human condition and their advice on how to live life to the full.

*Contact*: Simon Ramsay

Tuesday 19: *The 42 Club*

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the super-computer 'Deep Thought' decided that the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything was: 42. 42 might also be the number of opinions held in a room of two dozen Unitarians (several of us are in two minds!). Our 42 Club is a fun, lively but non-adversarial discussion group on the Big Questions: our first theme is: *If Not God, Then What?*

*Contact*: David Watson

**Wednesday 6** | 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 13, 20, 27** | 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 later in the afternoon or at any other time.

N.B. No coffee and chat on 6 February.

**Thursday 14, 21, 28** | 7–8 p.m.

Meditation

Thursday 14: *Walking the Labyrinth #2* (in the usual meditation spot). If you're not out sharing a romantic evening with a loved one maybe you would like to come along to church to walk the labyrinth? This session is instead of the usual meditation.

Thursdays 21 and 28: There is no need to be a Zen master for this practice and practical guidance will be given to help you improve your meditation.

N.B. There is no meditation on 7 February.

*Contact*: Simon Ramsay

**Sunday 10** | 12.30-2 pm

Management Committee meeting

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

*Contact* : David Watson

**Sunday 24** | 12.30-2 pm

Vineyard Lunch

This is our turn to provide lunch for local people in need of a hot meal and companionship. We do this in conjunction with the South West Humanist Group who provide the main course. We are responsible for puddings and ask for contributions from the congregation, to be brought to church in the morning. We also need volunteers to help greeting guests, serving meals and washing up etc.

*For further information about any of these activities, please email [info@rpuc.org.uk](mailto:info@rpuc.org.uk).*

*See also our website at: [www.rpuc.org.uk](http://www.rpuc.org.uk)*



# richmond + putney unitarians

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 (Southwest 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>

