

May  
2019



richmond + putney unitarians

the **flame**

## April Showers ... and May Flowers



*'March's cold winds and April's showers  
bring us May-time and its flowers.'*

The above, slightly elongated version of the traditional saying was first recorded in the written word in 1886, some ten years before our church building was built. It recognizes the movement from the uncertainty of the weather in March, through the rains of April and into the abundance of May. May Day, or in earlier times, Beltane, was a time to celebrate and welcome the sun once again.

This saying has had a deeper resonance with me this year as I have had to cope with health problems. In my life, and

more times than I care to remember, I have struggled with and only grudgingly admitted to the presence of March winds and April showers, and, rather than looking for a way to shape a fresh hope in the future, I've been simply wishing the cold winds away. How could I reach those May flowers when I was still, of necessity, engaged with March winds and April showers? At one such time, a dear friend once said to me: 'Hope is the death of contentment'. Those were the words which I needed to hear. I needed to accept the death of contentment I was experiencing. Just glibly hoping for something else was actually obscuring the

lessons that were there for me to learn in the moment. In order to reach a real hope for the future, often, it's necessary, first of all, to admit to the truth and the difficulty of the time you are in.

My friend's words contained a lot of meaning for me. I think that they also express the idea that to be hoping for something is not, in fact, a restful or settled state of mind, which contentment is. To be hoping for something is actually to know and understand that what you hope for may – but also may not – occur. To find real hope is hard work; and it is brave. You are taking a risk. I think this is precisely the conundrum that many activists from the 'Extinction Rebellion' have faced. They have confronted the powerlessness that many of us feel when trying to effect genuine change in governmental policies relating to climate change. Petitions have been signed and protesters have marched, but to no real effect, no significant governmental engagement in the face of what many perceive to be a swift and steady movement towards a point of ecological hopelessness. For the Extinction Rebellion followers, this moment signifies a fork in the road, and shows their acceptance of an agitating 'death of contentment' with the current situation in relation to our planet. It seems to me that Extinction Rebellion's direct, non-violent action is a rejection of a downward spiral into a pseudo-contentedness in preference to a personal engagement with, and individual responsibility for, the painfulness of the true situation for our

planet. Each demonstrator is doing what they can in a personal way to create a genuine hope for a better planetary future.

In the midst of the recent upheaval and discord in central London, a new 'Banksy' has appeared, with these words written upon it: 'From this moment despair ends and tactics begin.'

The image depicted is that of an ashen-looking child tending to what seems to be a struggling and sickly plant, 'looking up' from the ecological mire, with the power, maybe for the first time, to speak through the microphone held in hand to us all.

What could this prophetic child be saying? Maybe that we need, in our own way, to create hope? That without facing our discontentment we can never manifest contentment? Or that we have to weather the March winds and April showers if we stand any hope to feel the joy of May's flowers?

There have been many seasons in the life of RPUC since its inception in 1896 and for each generation a celebration of nature's seasons against a backdrop of personal, congregational and societal issues – and often through a true uncertainty as to whether (in a larger sense) March would give way to April and in turn from April into May. In my mind, together, we have the opportunity to take our place in this succession and, I dearly hope, in our own individual ways, to bring May flowers to those who will follow after us.

*Simon*





# MAY | services

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

**Sunday 5 May** – March cold winds and April showers bring us May-time and its flowers

May Day, or Beltane, is a traditional festival that welcomes the long-awaited summer. I don't know about you but I always seem to have a spring in my step when the summer finally presents itself. Today we welcome the sun and the summer and have the opportunity to share our best experiences of both.

*There will be a creche available during this service: 10.30–12.30*

**Sunday 12 May** – The journey from the familiar into the unknown

In a recent documentary on the BBC six pilgrims of differing faiths and of no faith took a pilgrimage journey along the 'Via Francigena' from Canterbury to Rome. It was really interesting to watch their emotional, spiritual and physical journeys as individuals and also together as a group. The documentary is on the BBC Iplayer and is worth a watch to see what we might be discussing in today's service.

**Sunday 19 May** – Visiting speaker: Carol Chambers

*There will be a creche available during this service: 10.30-12.30 and also a choir rehearsal following it, practising for the Choir Sunday performance on 2 June. Margaret Lord would welcome a lady – or a gentleman – who would be happy to sing alto. If someone is willing, talk to Margaret. It's not necessary to be able to read music to join the choir as Margaret can teach any new learners in rehearsal and can supply them with a cassette tape of the music as well.*

**Sunday 26 May** – Resentment at the burden of being

No matter how much we squeeze our eyes tightly shut and wish for another reality life often does not give us what we want. What should we do when presented with such a conundrum? Do we let go and surrender into the flow of life or resist reality and risk becoming resentful about all the ifs, buts and whys of life? Wisdom teaches that the former rather than the latter is a better way to proceed ... often, however, it is easier said than done!

*Organ rota:* Margaret Lord: 5, 12, 19 May; Christopher Johnson, 26 May.



# MAY | what's on

**Wednesday 1** | 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

**Sunday 5** | 1–2.30 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

**Sundays 5, 19** | 10.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.

There will be a creche available during the services on these Sundays.

**Wednesday 8, 15, 22, 29** | 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.

There will be no Coffee with the Minister on Wednesday 1 May.

**Thursday 9, 16, 23, 30** | 6–7 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 meditation.

*Contact:* Simon Ramsay

**Sunday 12** | 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 14** | 8.00 p.m.

## Tuesdays @RPUC: Walking the Labyrinth #3

Another chance to walk our illuminated labyrinth. You can turn up at any time, but please enter the church silently, respecting the meditative atmosphere, and wait your turn to enter the labyrinth.

*Contact:* Simon Ramsay

**Tuesday 28** | 7.00 p.m.

## Tuesdays @RPUC: A Fish and Chip Supper

All are welcome, but do let us know if you are coming so that we know how many portions of fish and chips we should buy!

*Contact:* Simon Ramsay

*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.

## Contact

**Minister** | Rev. Simon Ramsay

07915 618549 |

minister@rpuc.org.uk

**Newsletter editor** | Louisa Watson

newsletter@rpuc.org.uk

**General inquiries**

info@rpuc.org.uk

**Lettings inquiries**

lettings@rpuc.org.uk

*Postal correspondence to the church address  
in the first instance*

Richmond and Putney Unitarians,  
Ormond Road, Richmond TW10 6TH

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>

