

September
2019



richmond + putney unitarians

the flame

LOVE AND COMMUNITY

'Love only grows by sharing. You can only have more for yourself by giving it away to others.'

Brian Tracy

At the end of last month, we, as a community, celebrated a significant birthday (the number is irrelevant!) of Helen. Life throws us many curve balls, with all its inevitable ups and downs, so when we reach significant milestones it is important to mark the occasion. I'm sure many of you will have heard me bang on about the essential human need to be part of community. An essential aspect of what it is to be human; to be and share our lives in relationship with others.

Many of us belong to many communities. Some are based around where we live, where we work or in the interests that we have. In all these communities, it is important to bring who we are and the values that we hold to them. Often, this is difficult, as the business of being human is rarely tidy, straightforward or easy-going. As a minister, I very clearly understand that the complexities and needs of people are infinite and we are limited in our capacity to assist all of those in need, but there is a peace to be had in doing what we can.

One of the worst jobs I've had was working for an industrial laundry in Cheltenham. The laundry served local hospitals, hotels and care homes and, needless to say, it wasn't the most glamorous of jobs. As a

young man who was down on his luck, one of the best things about this job was the more that you got done, the more pay you received. For me, it was something that I had control over and it was a chance to change my life. There were other lads in similar situations to me, in that they were willing to work hard for the reward of better earnings and the potential for an extra £1.50 per hour if you worked faster made all the difference!

Some days, though, the mountain of laundry seemed to stay the same size or even to get bigger no matter how hard any of us worked, which was frustrating. The extra £1.50 an hour did make a difference to me back then, but it was the relationships with others, in a town where I knew no one, that made a huge difference to me. I didn't realize it at the time but what we had was a community. They were there for me and I for them. We supported each other through the difficult days, but made sure that we celebrated the milestones together too.

...Maybe it's not the amount we get done in life or what we have that marks our life as successful but the quality of presence that we bring to our 'communities', whatever they may be, along the way; to be open to support and be supported on our journey. Maybe community and love only grow by sharing the ups and downs together.

Simon

CAN YOU HELP WITH OUR CHURCH'S DEVELOPMENT?

Over the last three or four years our development group has been meeting intermittently to explore ways to support and improve the life of our church and community. In its earlier manifestation, the group paid a lot of attention to internal organisational issues and increasing our income, both vital tasks for a church that is largely self-sufficient (as I said in last month's *Flame*, we manage ourselves, raise our own revenue and stand or fall by the efforts put in by our own volunteers) and until recently was running an annual deficit. I'm pleased to say the hard work has paid off: the church now runs like a well-oiled machine (all right, a well-oiled but occasionally glitchy machine) and is now financially well into the black.

That work needed to be done for the church's long-term sustainability, but is not the core of what we are about. Our mission is to provide a space for liberal, tolerant spiritual practice and to support others, and so from this autumn our work will focus on developing our own community and reaching outwards to the wider community. This will have the following strands:

- 1) Raising awareness of our church and growing our congregation.
- 2) Outreach/charity work in the local community.
- 3) Exploring new forms of spiritual/community practice.

Awareness: without wanting to big ourselves up, I have always thought that Unitarianism has something unique to offer those seeking a spiritual practice without the religious dogma, and our liberal, non-prescriptive mode of spiritual exploration would appeal to many people if they could only discover the secret: a secret hidden in plain sight here in the heart of Richmond. We need to explore all ways – online and offline – that we can raise our profile and reach out to those people who might be looking for us – even if they don't realise it yet. All creative ideas for online/offline publicity welcome.

Outreach: with spiritual awareness comes the requirement to help and support others. What can we do for people in need in the Richmond community and beyond? We're already part of some initiatives, such as the Vineyard lunch, but of course, given that we are a small, geographical disparate congregation with busy lives it can be difficult to participate enough to make an impact. But the question can be addressed laterally: we could think about partnerships with others – local charities, community groups or volunteers – who might be able to join us to provide their expertise or simply helping hands, whether it is social events for old or lonely people, playgroups for children, activities for physically or mentally disabled people, or whatever. We have wonderful, usable spaces in our church and hall that could host any number of events large or small and we can make them accessible to enable activities of real benefit to our wider community.

Activities: outside of our Sunday-morning gatherings, we have some longstanding assemblies – such as meditation, Tide Tables, journalling or stitches and stories – that offer ways for us to come together in smaller groups and form closer ties with each other. Earlier this year we experimented with a few new ones: some successful, such as the labyrinth walks and the journalling retreat weekend, others arguably less so. But there is no shame in failing – just in not trying. We will always be interested in any ideas you might bring – for spiritual, communal or simply social gatherings – that will continue to seek new ways to create community.

The new development forum, as I am calling it (it's not a closed group but open to all), will be on Tuesday 17 September, 7-8.30 p.m. Join in, bring your ideas, no matter how vague or unformed; if you can't make the meeting, feel free to email any thoughts or suggestions to info@rpuc.org.uk. I hope to hear your ideas.

David Watson



SEPTEMBER | services

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

Sunday 1 September – Returning

A central theme in the world's religious traditions is the theme of returning... This may be returning to a place, community or to a state of being. Have you ever felt the pull to return? What does this theme have to teach us in the modern world?

Sunday 8 September – Chewing the fat...

Trying something a little different here, folks! Music, reflection wisdom and conversation ... intrigued? Come along and see what's occurring!

Sunday 15 September – Breaking bread and being open to the 'other'

Banter and church life are not mutually exclusive! I was thrilled when Lena (an Iraqi American who grew up in Egypt and Lou (born and raised in Egypt) first came to our community. It will not surprise many of you that one of our first conversations, instigated by me, was about food. I stated with confidence that my Ful Madammas (a traditional Middle Eastern broadbean dish) was good but when it came to a Ful Madammas bake-off challenge I wasn't so sure! Due to my lack of confidence (and, possibly cooking skills), Lena, Lou and I will prepare a breakfast together! In this reflective breakfast and in the service afterwards we will talk about the benefits of being open to the 'other'.

Sunday 22 September – Michael Allured: Guest preacher

Michael is training to become a Unitarian minister and first visited us last month, so I hope you will come, support and make him feel welcome for what is bound to be a very interesting service.

Sunday 29 September – Harvest Festival

Please bring along as many dry goods (pasta, rice, tins) as you can as we collect food for the food bank in The Vineyard. In this service we will give thanks for having enough, for those who work the land or in factories to provide for us, and for the abundance of nature.

Organ rota: Margaret Lord: 1st, 8th, 15th September; Christopher Johnson: 22nd September; Marilene Berryman: 29th September.



SEPTEMBER | what's on

Sunday 1 September | 1–2.30 p.m. (Apse space)

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 3 | 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 10, 17, 24 | 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.

Thursday 4, 11, 18, 25 | 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 8 | 12.30-2 p.m.

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 15 September | 12.30-2 p.m.

Choir rehearsal

Come and sing! No experience necessary. Open to all.

Contact : Margaret Lord

Tuesday 17 September | 7–8.30 p.m.

Development Forum

Come along and bring your ideas for new church activities, ways of publicising our church and outreach into the wider community. This is an open forum for exploring ideas to develop the work and life of our church. See article on page 2 for further details.

Contact: David Watson

For further information about any of these activities, please email info@rpuc.org.uk. See also our website at: 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>

