

July
2021



richmond + putney unitarians

the flame

‘Happiness is a garden walled with glass: there's no way in or out. In Paradise there are no stories, because there are no journeys. It's loss and regret and misery and yearning that drive the story forward, along its twisted road’

Margaret Atwood

Today was the most marvellous of Sundays! It was the first Sunday in a long time that those who attended church gathered following the service to chat and have a cuppa. The impromptu decision to share fellowship in the garden following the service was a breath of fresh air. The first time in over a year that we have been able to do that and it felt wonderful!

It also seemed apt that after such a long social hiatus that our return to chatting following the service was in the walled garden at the back of the church. In the Book of Genesis, the Garden of Eden, or Paradise, is a walled garden. In Persian, the word for Paradise has this same meaning.

The metaphor of the walled garden attempts to explain the nature of reality for humanity. Whereas outside the walls there is the wild, within a walled garden there is order. In a walled garden the unpredictable element of nature is worked with and stewarded for the benefit of those within its confines. The walled garden is a spiritual simile for the peace and order that can be developed even amidst the chaotic uncertainties that life will inevitably bring.

A walled garden is a sanctuary. An oasis of safety away from the hubbub of daily life. Being together,

sharing coffee (bought individually – respecting Covid restrictions), conversation and more than that, each other's company, felt so special. It occurred to me that the reason it meant so much was because each of us has made our own journey, experienced our own losses, regrets, misery and yearning during the last year and half or so. The last

year and half or so have felt anything *but* like a walled garden, but here we are at last ... sharing our stories as we go along life's winding road.

It could be that that feeling of peace was down to a good night's sleep or that the planets had aligned for me, but although these may well be contributing

factors, I strongly suspect they are not the whole story. It was being in the loving presence of others that made the moment so special. As conversation naturally slowed and people made their way homewards, the peace within me remained. The experience met a need in me. A need that I didn't know existed until I experienced it. The time in the walled garden has made me recognise how much I have missed the presence of all you. The time in the walled garden was an opportunity to pause – and exhale a long-needed sigh of relief and gladness. The effect of the walled garden remains; a peaceful and contented mind. Paradise.

Simon





JULY | services

(Services will be both in church and on Zoom. The Zoom login link is given below.)

Sunday Services at 11-12 a.m.

URL for Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/101828528>

Sunday 4 July: 'First, humility, second, humility and third, humility'

The advice on the value of humility espoused by Augustine of Hippo, or Saint Augustine, may seem a little fusty in our modern world. What is humility and does it have any place in the 'real' world?

Sunday 11 July:

There won't be a service in church this Sunday as Simon will be away, but we will keep you posted via email if there is another Unitarian congregation we can join for their service on Zoom.

Sunday 18 July:

As above, Simon will be away for this service. We will try to find another congregation whom we can join with on Zoom and we will let you know the details in due course.

Sunday 25 July: 'When the student is ready, the teacher appears'

These words were attributed to Siddhartha Buddha, and speak not only of a synchronicity evident in life, but also to a non-religious connection between our inner and outer worlds. To what extent are we part of the larger matrix of life? And how can this understanding enrich our lives?

JULY | what's happening

Thursday 1 | 9-10.30 am

Spiritual Companions Interfaith Group (Zoom only)

We meet monthly on Zoom, usually the first Thursday of the month. We base our reflections and shared experiences on 'Your Spiritual Health Programme', which is free to download from <https://spiritualcompanions.org/>.

If you are interested to know more please text or call Kitty Lloyd-Lawrence on 07976 615586.

Thursday 1, 22, 29 | 6-7 pm

Meditation (Zoom only)



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

Contact : Rev. Simon Ramsay / minister@rpuc.org.uk

URL for Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/205074902>

Sunday 5 | 2-3.30 pm

Reflective Journaling Group (Zoom only)

We meet monthly on Zoom, usually the first Sunday of the month, with open minds and open heart for a time of shared reflection on our lives as they are unfolding.

If you are interested to know more please text or call Kitty Lloyd-Lawrence on 07976 615586.

Wednesday 21, 28 | 2-3 pm

Coffee with the Minister

I am pleased to be starting this up again. Come along for a cup of tea and a natter at Tide Tables, the cafe just below Richmond Bridge. I look forward to seeing you there!

Tuesday 19 | 5.30-7 pm

Management Committee meeting (Zoom only)

As is our tradition, these meetings are open to all to attend, unless a sensitive agenda item is tabled. The meeting will be on Zoom - if you wish to attend, contact info@rpuc.org.uk for the login details.

Contact : David Watson / info@rpuc.org.uk

Tuesday 20 July | 5.30-7 pm

CIO Working Group

Our working group is in the process of drawing up a new constitution for RPUC as we apply to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. All members of RPUC are welcome to attend our online meeting.

Meeting ID: 810 0073 1823

Join URL:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81000731823>

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 (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>

