

November
2023



richmond + putney unitarians

the flame

‘Open the door, step right inside, come into this place where love and hope will abide.’

This song from *Sing Your Faith* was the first hymn we sang on my return from sabbatical. It was, it is, good to be back with you all in RPUC. My sabbatical was a much-needed time to stop, reflect and re-establish my ministerial mojo. It was great to hear of everyone pulling together while I was away. I would like to thank you all and our guest preachers for all your hard work!

I had great plans for when I was away. In my sabbatical I saw myself going ever deeper to imagined spiritual depths. But as John Lennon once stated ‘Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans’. My plans for good diet, regular exercise and good sleep were achieved, but the peaceful state eluded me somewhat ... at least for a while!

In the *Flame* last year, on my return from Brittany, I recounted being on the ferry when it was forced to slow down, due to the turbulence created in busy shipping lanes from its own wake. For a while we sat there in rocking in motion from the wake of what went before. This seemed a like a metaphor of what I was going through.

Many people find stopping, reflecting and being still very difficult for this exact reason. In stopping we allow ourselves to feel the wake of that which went before. Avoiding difficult situations and emotions may seem the thing to do as we keep ourselves busy in the current moment, but one day the wake of them catches up.

This was my sabbatical experience. Rather than engaging with high-flying spirituality, I found myself facing those things I would have preferred to avoid. As I sat on the beach during a blustery day watching the rapid assault of the waves rolling in to the shore for as far my eyes could see I recognized within myself the incessant rate at which the different undigested feelings and emotions from the wake of went before came rolling into my mind’s eye.

I was left with a quandary. How do I move through this? Do I journal? Do more yoga? Or howl at the moon? I was willing to try almost anything that wasn’t avoidance. All the skills and practices I could bring to bear did little to alleviate my uncomfortable experience. Then I made a connection with a book I had been reading earlier that day, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, by a psychiatric doctor named Mark Epstein. As a mental health professional and as a life-long Buddhist practitioner, he argues that there are some difficult feelings and emotions that we may never get to the bottom of, despite all of our spiritual practices and self-examination. He equated the first ever Buddhist words he had read as describing his own mind: ‘Flapping like a fish thrown on dry ground, it trembles all day, struggling.’ What we do in life, he argued, is not the whole picture. Striving to reach a point of imagined peace in the future through books, self-introspection and spiritual practices such as prayer or going to church, may give us glimpses of peace, but will not, on its own, resolve the flapping fish of the mind.

What does make a difference is how we hold our thoughts and life. In letting ourselves feel all the feelings that arise without trying to distract ourselves or judging what arises the flapping of the mind begins to diminish. Finding ways to wrestle, wrangle and to pin down what keeps us from feeling peaceful and whole had about as much efficacy for me as me attempting to stop the wind and the incessant waves against the shore. But to actively participate in watching what arose without judgement the flapping slowed and peace arose.

My sabbatical didn’t give me what I imagined I wanted but really did give me what I needed. I now feel inspired, enthused and ready to explore those how to hold those things in our life that give us meaning. To co-create with you all a community ‘where love and hope can abide’.

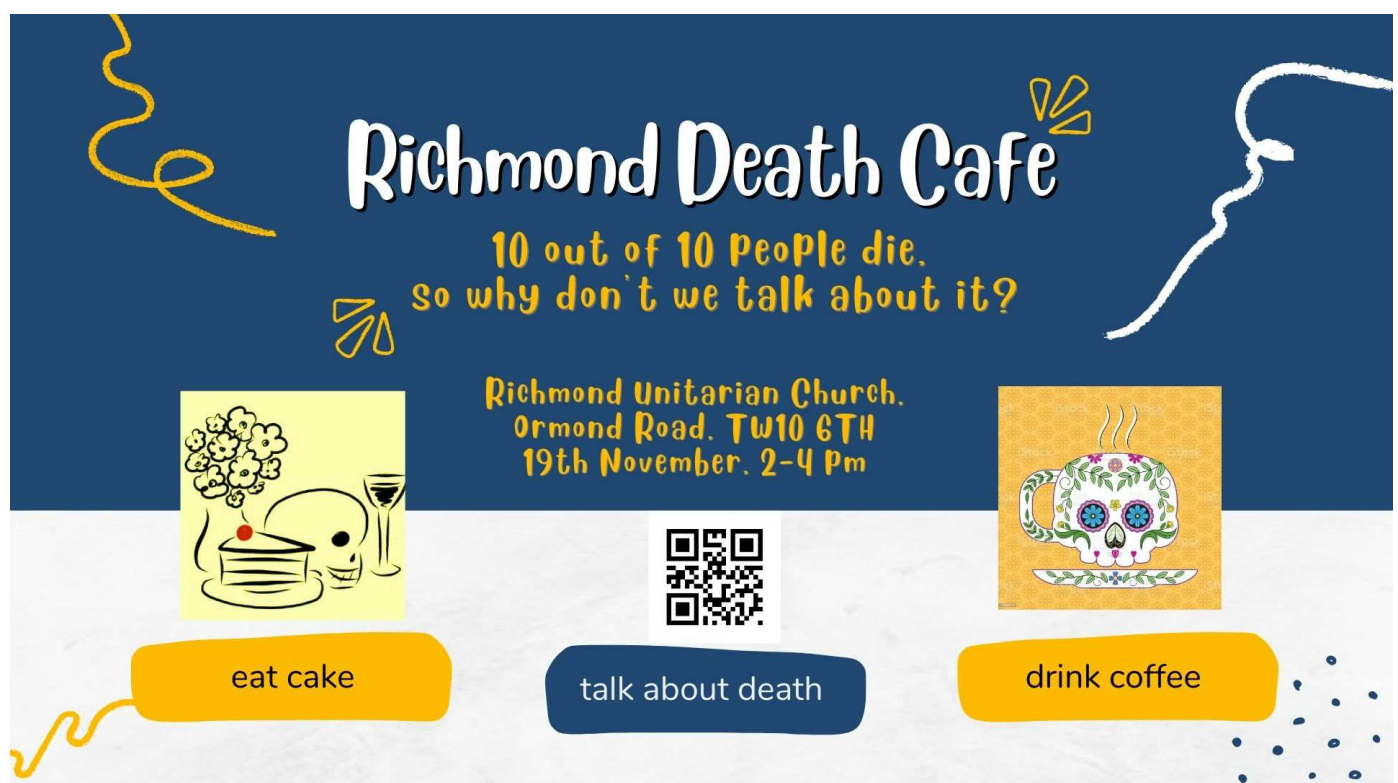
Simon

Richmond Death Cafe

On Sunday 19 November, we are holding a death café at the church, in the afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m. You are warmly welcomed to attend. See below for details.

We all will die, but death is a subject we often feel inhibited or fearful to talk about. Death Café offers a supportive space to share our thoughts and feelings about our own deaths and the death of those who are near to us in a spirit of compassion, acceptance and openness. All with a cup of tea and some cake! The Death Café concept was invented in 2011 by Jon Underwood and Sue Barsky Reid, based on the ideas of Bernard Crettaz, and has since spread to 85 countries. Its object is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'. It provides a forum for discussion rather than a grief support or counselling session.

For more information, visit <https://deathcafe.com>.



The poster features a dark blue background with white and yellow text and illustrations. At the top, the title 'Richmond Death Cafe' is written in a white, rounded font with a yellow flourish above the 'e'. Below the title, the text '10 out of 10 people die, so why don't we talk about it?' is written in yellow. The event details 'Richmond Unitarian Church, Ormond Road, TW10 6TH, 19th November, 2-4 pm' are also in yellow. Three icons are arranged horizontally: a yellow square with a white skull, a slice of cake, and a glass of wine; a QR code; and a yellow square with a white skull decorated with colorful flowers and a steaming cup of coffee. Below each icon is a rounded button: a yellow button with 'eat cake', a dark blue button with 'talk about death', and a yellow button with 'drink coffee'. The background is decorated with white and yellow wavy lines and a white silhouette of a person's head and neck.

Richmond Death Cafe

10 out of 10 people die,
so why don't we talk about it?

Richmond Unitarian Church,
Ormond Road, TW10 6TH
19th November, 2-4 pm

eat cake

talk about death

drink coffee



NOVEMBER | services

All services are by Rev. Simon Ramsay and will be both in church and on Zoom, unless otherwise stated. The Zoom login link is given below.

Sunday Services at 11–12 a.m.
URL for Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/101828528>

Sunday 5 November – Compassionate Inquiry, Part 2

(This service was planned for October, but has been moved.) Socrates said ‘The unexamined life is not worth living’. How we can go about using the discipline of compassionate inquiry to examine our lives and as a way to integrate difficult and often painful experiences.

Sunday 12 November – Remembrance Sunday

Today we will mark Remembrance Sunday in the customary way by marking two minutes’ silence at 11 a.m. To allow for that, the service will begin at 10.50, so please remember to turn up a little earlier than usual.

There will be a creche for toddlers and young children run during this service, 10.30–12.30, led by Mica Forbes.

Sunday 19 November – Assisted Dying

Today we will host Christine Pond from the campaign organization Dignity in Dying (dignityindying.org.uk), who will come with her team to talk about the theme of assisted dying. Their talk will take place in the service followed by a short Q&A session. This seems a wonderfully themed service for the ‘Death Cafe’ which will be held a little later, during the afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Sunday 26 November – Power of Rest and Retreat – Julie Langridge-John

This service is a reflection on the fallow periods of life. The times when we need to rest and retreat. To pause when we need to care for and repair ourselves.

There will be a Sunday school for children of around five and upwards during the service, 11.00 to 12.00, led by Helen and Jack Meyer.

NOVEMBER | what's happening

Wednesday 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 | 11–12 a.m. **Dance for Health**

A dance class specially designed for people living with neurodiverse conditions or with general mobility impairment (though anyone is welcome who would benefit from a gentle but stretching physical workout). Beneficial to body and mind. No booking required, just turn up. Carers also welcome.

Contact: Adrienn Vass /
07949 564937

Wednesday 1, 15, 29 | 2–3 p.m. **Coffee with the minister**

Come along for a coffee and a natter at Tide Tables, the cafe just below Richmond Bridge. Please contact me first to let me know you are coming, especially if the weather is poor.

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

Wednesday 1, 8, 22, 29 | 6.30–7.30 p.m. **Meditation (in the apse)**

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 p.m. **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.

Monday 6 | 6–7 p.m. **Connections (Zoom only)**

A monthly forum for exploring ways to grow our community and improve our community outreach. All are welcome, whether you can attend regularly or just occasionally.

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

URL for Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81887935509>
(Meeting ID: 818 8793 5509)

Sunday 12 | 12.30–2 p.m. **Stitches and Stories (in the church)**

Our craft group meets to knit, crochet or sew items for charity. Good causes and good company make for a lovely afternoon.

Tuesday 14 | 5.30–7 p.m. **Trustees 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

URL for Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81000731823>
(Meeting ID: 810 0073 1823)

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.

Contact

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Minister's Availability

Our minister is available at the following times. Please do not contact him outside of these hours except for an urgent matter.

Monday	N/A
Tuesday	10 am–8 pm
Wednesday	12–8 pm
Thursday	12–6 pm
Friday	10 am–5 pm
Saturday	N/A

or at or after the church service on Sundays.

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).



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

For more information on RPUC visit our website:

www.rpuc.org.uk