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# Open Mind

The Bulletin of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel

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December 2012

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*“Candles, fire and star –  
These are the symbols of this most blessed of seasons:  
Candles for the banishing of darkness;  
Fires to warm hearth and home;  
Stars to beckon us, guiding our footsteps to the holiest.”*

(Tony Perrion)



## December Services

**Sunday 2 December (11.00am & 7.00pm)**

*Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching  
“When Just saying Sorry Isn't Enough”*

No matter what your theology is or what claims or excuses you wish to make for our human foibles, two words you will almost certainly have to deal with this year are "I'm sorry." You'll have to say them, or receive them, probably both. You'd think by now, surely, with all the practice human beings have had at giving and receiving apologies in life, you'd think these two little words would be fairly easy for us to exchange in a graceful and straightforward way. Think again.

**Sunday 9 December (11.00am & 7.00pm)**

*Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching  
“Not Broken, Just Unfinished”*

Rachel Naomi Remen has an interesting way of describing how many of us feel sometimes. She says, “we are not broken, we are just unfinished.” If we view our lives this way, it's possible to escape the tendency so many of us fall prey to, of always viewing our past and our future as a series of broken places that we need to fix, and instead see our lives rather as unfinished works of art waiting to be completed.

**Sunday 16 December (11.00am)**

*“Carols With The Choir”*

A celebration of the season with carols and readings, led by our Chapel Choir (director Georgina Drewe). Come along, join in and have your spirit lifted! All ages welcome!

**Sunday 16 December (7.00pm)**

*Rev Dr Oatrick T. O'Neill preaching*

**Sunday 23 December (11.00am)**

*Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching  
“The Most Important Virtue”*

We tend to believe that the world is changed only by miracles or by huge acts of heroism, performed by people who are greater than us, larger than we are in spirit and in influence. We forget that the world is transformed and made new everyday by common people living out the most common of virtues. What do you consider the most important virtue a religious person should seek to cultivate?

**Sunday 23 December (7.00pm)**

*“Winter Solstice Celebration”*

Drawing from Celtic and other traditions we will celebrate the darkest time of the year and the return of the Light. Led by members of our “Wheel of the Year” group.

**Christmas Eve 24 December  
Candlelight Service 6.30pm**

*“Room In Our Hearts”*

A Candlelight Service of lessons and carols, readings, and musical celebration for all ages. As we expect this service to be crowded, we encourage you to come early! Includes a Homily by Dr O'Neill. Come early and bring a friend!

**Sunday 30 December (11.00am & 7.00pm)**

*Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching  
“Endbeginnings”*

In our culture we tend to view our lives as a series of separate and distinct episodes, rather than as a continuing cycle. It's logical and it's linear, but it's also a limited way of viewing existence. T.S. Eliot calls us to a truth we might well ponder at the end of another year:

*“What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.....”*

The Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel  
The Unitarian Chapel in the heart of Hampstead



Unitarianism is spirituality without dogma and welcomes people of all religious faiths as well as those who are humanistic. Unitarians cherish and live by the values of love, compassion, a free mind, service to others, human dignity, and other similar values. It encourages each person to deepen their relationship with God, yet allows each person to understand God in their own unique way.

**The Chapel holds two services on Sundays,  
at 11.00am and 7.00pm**

The morning service is more family-oriented, including activities for children led by professionally trained leaders, and a Children's Chapel is offered for children of all ages. The evening service is more intimate for those who prefer a more meditative tone.

**Visitors and guests are always welcome!**

The Chapel also offers a rich programme of social activities, covering a wide range of interests such as literature and poetry, Tai Chi, choir singing, monthly lectures, and a variety of monthly events for all age groups.

The Chapel is licensed for marriages and other ceremonies.

**For more information, visit our website at  
[www.rosslynhillchapel.com](http://www.rosslynhillchapel.com)**

### **Publisher's Statement:**

"Open Mind" is a tool of outreach for Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel. The views expressed in this publication reflect the spirit and substance of Unitarian values, as well as matters of concern to Unitarians, but are not necessarily shared by all members

## From the Editor

### **Winter Holidays!**

Winter with its long dark nights, is the time of year that we celebrate the light at the heart of darkness. That's why lighting candles and filling our homes with twinkling lights are major symbols for this season of winter holidays. Many cultures celebrate the rebirth of the light – Hindus have Diwali, Jews have Hannukah, Pagans have Yule, Christians have Christmas. These holidays remind us that darkness will yield to light. The sun does come back, and spring will follow winter. Nature is only slumbering, she is not comatose, and she will awaken as the wheel continues to turn.

Contrary to the natural rhythms of the earth, our culture makes this season the busiest time of the year – many of us are frantically running around shopping, cooking, baking, decorating, and partying.

Yet, when we pay attention to the rhythms of this season, we realise that the long dark nights of November and December are a time of preparation for the coming of the light. This offers us a great opportunity to pause, to take a break from the rush of everyday, and simply be – to sit quietly, not expecting anything, just breathing, stilling our mind, calm and at peace. So, let us slow down to renew ourselves and reconnect with spirit in some way, and find inner strength and resolve.

This season is a time to rest in faith that through the darkness of winter the sun will return. Blessings are with you as you journey towards the coming of the light.

**Ingrid Tavkar**

*Again did the earth shift  
Again did the nights grow short,  
And the days grow long.  
And the people of the earth were glad  
And celebrated each in their own ways.*

(Dian Lee Moomey)



### **Submitting copy:**

Unsolicited copy is welcomed and should be emailed to: [RHUCbulletin@yahoo.com](mailto:RHUCbulletin@yahoo.com). All submissions may be edited for content and length (200 words) at the discretion of the Communications Team, who also reserves the right to reject unsuitable material. **Deadline** for submitting items for the January issue of 'Open Mind' is **Wednesday 19 December 2012**.



## PO'Nderings

From our Minister  
Rev Patrick T. O'Neill

As I write this column, I have just returned from the Paris Unitarian Universalist Fellowship where I had the privilege of preaching last Sunday. What a lovely group they are, about 80 or so adults on a Sunday, with a large number of American expats in the membership. I first preached there twenty years ago when I was on a sabbatical from my congregation in Framingham, Massachusetts. With such a large number of Americans in the group, they asked me to preach on "Gratitude" in marking the occasion of the American Thanksgiving this week. Patricia and I felt most warmly welcomed.

Thanksgiving has always been one of my favourite holidays. I think having a national day of Thanksgiving is one of brilliant ideas America has given to the world. With Christmas and wintertime approaching and soon a new year to follow, I like the idea of having occasion to take stock of all the things I'm grateful for in my life. Some years my list is longer than others, but I'm acutely aware of the many blessings that grace my life. The medieval Christian mystic Meister Eckhart suggested "that if the only prayer we ever say in our lifetime is 'thank you', that would suffice".

Every congregation I know struggles mightily to say 'Thank You' as often as possible to the many volunteers and behind-the-scenes helpers that make good things happen at church. I worry that it is too easy to overlook or forget to mention someone who has worked hard for our congregation. For example, our recent 150th Year celebration of our Chapel actually involved scores of helpers who contributed their time, talents, treasure, and energies in ways large and small, seen and unseen. To each and every one of you, Thank you! To the music-makers, the stewards at the front door, the program printers, the organizers, the planners, the setter-uppers and chair-stackers, the sweepers and the refreshments tenders, the worship assistants and the Children's Chapel helpers, readers and greeters – every one of you makes a individual difference to what our Chapel can do, can offer, and can be. Thank You!

May I offer a special thanks to Choir Director Georgina Drewe and her husband James Drewe for their wonderful concert here last month. James's "Jubilate Deo" was simply terrific, and the hours of work and rehearsal that went into it were obvious. Thank You, Georgina and James, for that gift to the life of our Chapel!

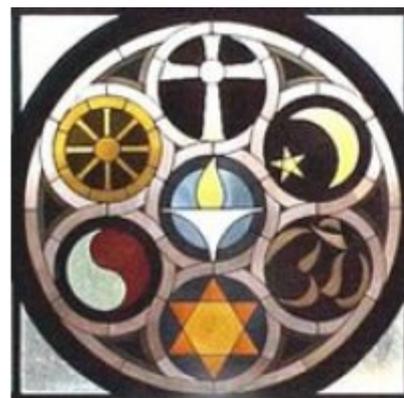
Are we too early to be thinking about Christmas? Just a heads-up to our friends that this Christmas Eve we will have one Candlelight Service at 6.30pm. It will be crowded, so you are advised to come early for seating.

Let's see now, anything I forgot to mention? Oh, yes, did I say 'Thank You' for being a wonderful congregation in so many ways? - Thank You!

See you in church!

...po'n

## Chapel Activities



**Children's Chapel** meets every Sunday at the 11.00am service. New children of all ages are always welcome. Infants are welcome in the creche.

**Chapel Choir** rehearses each Wednesday at 7.30pm in the Chapel. New voices are always welcomed into the choir. No audition necessary.

A **Tai Chi class** is held each Wednesday at 5.45pm in the Chapel.

### December Activities and Meetings

11 December - **Social Action Committee** meets

14 Decemberr - **Management Committee** meets at 7.00pm in the cottage basement science room at the Chapel. Members of the Chapel are welcome to attend but contact one of the co-Chairs, James Chiriyankandath or Jane Crispin, ahead of time as a courtesy.

16 December - **Potluck Lunch** in the Hall at 12.30pm (after the morning service). This is an informal, friendly occasions - all are welcome and the request is to bring some food to share, maybe homemade or cheese/fruit/salad. We look forward to seeing you there.

17 December - If you like to read and /or write poetry, the **Chapel Poetry Group** will meet on Monday 17 December at 7.00pm. For more information contact George Appleby (Tel: 020 7424 9733 email: gappleby@talktalk.net)

**The Book Group**, as usual, does **not** meet in December. Our next meeting will be on **Thursday 17 January 2013** when we will discuss '*Absalom, Absalom*' by William Faulkner. For further information, please contact Bill Ellington at ellingtonbill@aol.com

# OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY

## 150th Anniversary - A Year of Celebration

In 1862 the first service was held in Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel's new building. Rev Thomas Sadler, who was minister for 45 years, conducted it.



### Victorian Soiree

As we all know, our chapel was completed in 1862, a century and a half ago, in the middle of the mid-Victorian Era.

To celebrate this anniversary, various events have taken place including a 'Victorian Soiree' which took place on Friday 12 October.

Our Minister, his wife and various members of the congregation donned the clothes and personalities of that period. Patrick made a particularly dashing appearance as Dr Thomas Sadler, who was our Minister when the new chapel was built and served the congregation for almost half a century. Patricia was gorgeous as Mrs Sadler, in which capacity she spoke to us knowledgeably about our late-Victorian windows. Chris Mason compered the evening, which was largely organised by Margaret Perry. Indeed Margaret was so omni-present and omni-active that she reminded Chris of the White Rabbit from Alice in Wonderland. The Rosslyn Hill Chapel Choir performed magnificently.

It is impossible to do justice in one brief account to all the other performers, so I shall simply say "Thank you!" to all those individuals who shared their talents and goodwill.  
Will Hopper

*Come into the circle of love and justice.  
Come into the community of mercy, holiness,  
and health.  
Come and you shall know peace and joy.*

(Adapted from Israel Zangwill)

### Building on Rosslyn Hill

Written by Kate Buchanan

Performed at the 150th Anniversary 'Victorian Soiree' -  
by Kate Buchanan, Julia Reid and Stewart Dean

Chorus:

Brick by brick and stone by stone  
We'll build a chapel of our own  
And the neighbours may gawp  
The authorities groan  
We're building on Rosslyn Hill

The Honeywood's barn overflowed with Unitarians  
They looked for land but were banned as dissenter libertarians  
Things were pretty awful for members back then  
Even though they were tolerated by parliamentarians

In eighteen fifty-eight they opened a bank account in their own name  
But this here plot of land would be up for sale in a few days  
A cry from the chapel pulpit for subscriptions rang out  
And with a promise of funds they were able to pay

There were incidents and arguments then the idea finally stuck  
But each time they raised the funds, the price went up  
Finally through various means, a plan was agreed  
Some land for a manse, a generous loan and a deal was struck

A more beautiful a chapel you never did see  
Filled with artists and thinkers from beam to beam  
Walls of Kentish ragstone and a roof of slate  
A home for a community who were free to believe

Fast-forward to the sixties and a spirit of liberation  
Out went all the wooden pews, part of interior renovations  
The cross on the spire, a symbol of Christian heritage  
And the gilded cockerel weathervane (re-gilded in the 1990s)  
remains a symbol of wisdom drawn from ALL directions...!

## OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY

### Cold Weather Shelter



### Home Truths from the Homeless Shelter

Our Cold Weather Shelter for homeless people in the chapel hall has been running for two Friday nights and Saturday mornings as I write. I was lucky enough to be involved with Leighton (Cole) and Sally (Somerville) in co-ordinating our shelter for these first two weeks, with a band of volunteers from inside and outside the chapel.

"I like a corner", one guest said to me on his first Friday night with us. He looked nervous, terrified even, when confronted with a row of mattresses along one wall. We found a suitable corner and dragged his mattress there. He seemed more content when he had put his stuff down and claimed his precious space. How easy it is for us to lay claim to our place on sofa, bed, desk, or corner...

"My life is shit", said one young man, apologising immediately for (apparently) shocking us with such a bad word. Bereavement has led to two troubled years, different countries, separation, and last Christmas and New Year spent on the street. He is determined not to do the same this year.

"I'll be able to visit my sister tomorrow [in London] if I get a bus ticket from Jamie", said another guest, devoted to his toddler niece. Jamie of C4WS, the organisation running the Shelter with the other Camden churches, gives out bus tickets, supports the guests in finding accommodation, and much, much more. Many of the guests arrive having walked from central London. When did we last consider what one trifling bus ticket means to us, slapping our Oyster cards with abandon, without a backward glance.

As I left the house on Saturday morning to go and help with breakfast, the weather was foul. Raining. How irritating! I got into a car. The car had a heater. I had an umbrella too. I had come from a warm and comfortable home. And I went back there afterwards. Our guests leave one church hall floor to find shelter in libraries, soup kitchens or other facilities, before walking (often) to the next night's church hall floor.

One guest, who'd been discharged from hospital to the Shelter said: "I am very happy to come and sleep here; you are all so friendly. But I do need somewhere to go."

In spite of all this, and alongside fear, anxiety and irritability, there is laughter, kindness and caring amongst our guests, and much gratitude for what is on offer. What we are doing is not enough. But it is something. And most of us - however busy our lives - can spare a little time.

Claire Julian (Social Action Committee)

If you are interested in helping with breakfasts for the Cold Weather Shelter guests on Saturday mornings, please contact Leighton Cole on [leightoncole90@hotmail.com](mailto:leightoncole90@hotmail.com) or 020 8444 9728.



### Children's Chapel

One Sunday morning in November, Rev Rob Gregson told 'The Little Match Girl' story, and then asked the children if they could come up with ways to help "take care of our world". After the service, one of the kids handed a letter to Rev Rob with some of their ideas.

Dear Reverend Rob,

These are our ideas:

Help with Cold Weather Shelter.

When we see a 'Big Issue' magazine seller we can give some money, smile at them, say 'hello'.

Bring food for Harvest (Fair/Festival).

Make Christmas cards for the Cold Weather Shelter visitors and leave these for the visitors at chapel.

From the Children's Chapel.



## OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY

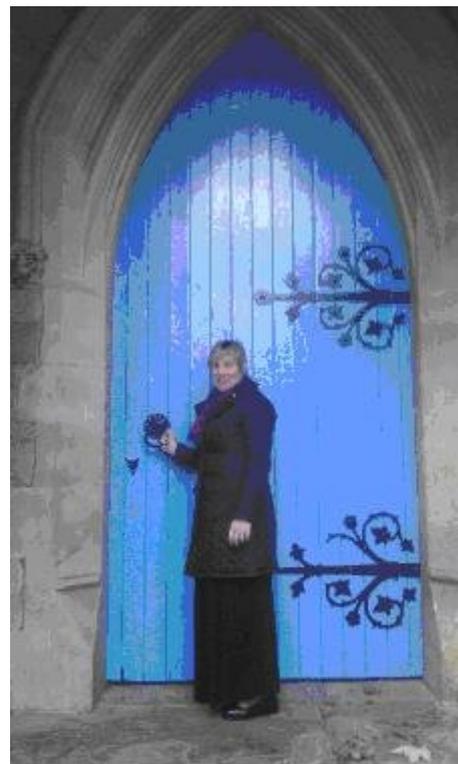
### Opening the door of the original chapel entrance!

Many people have admired the beautiful blue door commonly known as the *bride's entrance*. It has not been used as the main entrance for many years but there are several reasons why we would like to reinstate it. Many visitors to the chapel for the first time find it difficult to find the current entrance which is not as obvious as the main bride's entrance.

With an increasing number of regulars and visitors with mobility problems, it is much easier to give wheelchair access via the main entrance. The front gate now open allowing a slope for wheelchair and pushchair users, so using the original entrance will make our community fully accessible for worship services, ceremonies and events.

The signs to the entrance have been moved and we will use this entrance from December onwards.

(from Rev Dr Patrick O'Neill and Sharron Conduit, Administrator)



Sharron Conduitt, the Chapel Administrator, tries out the reinstated main entrance.

### Helping Hands

#### Worship Assistant

- 2 December James Chiriyankandath
- 9 December Victoria Ellington
- 16 December Janna Williams
- 23 December Leighton Cole
- 24 December Zoe Gerrard
- 30 December James Chiriyankandath



### Other events in the Chapel

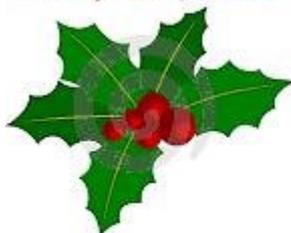
**Thursday 6 December (7.00pm)** - Mayoral Fundraising 'Carol Concert'

**Friday 7 December (7.00pm)** - 'A Christmas Carol Concert' - Trumpet Concert, Christmas Organ Solo. (£10) - Tickets available in advance or on the door ([www.johncampbelltrumpet.com](http://www.johncampbelltrumpet.com))

**Friday 14 December (7.30pm)** - 'Dickens Dreaming' a Christmas Vignette (Harry Meacher)

**Saturday 15 December (7.30pm)** - "Carols with Good Company" - Hampstead Chamber Choir (Tickets £10, concessions £9)

*Merry Christmas*



## NEWS FROM THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Any member of the Chapel is welcome to attend the Management Committee meetings as an observer. If you would like to attend, as a courtesy, please contact either James Chiriyankandath or Jane Crispin (co-Chairs) in advance. The next meeting will be on Thursday 13 December 2012 at 7.00pm in the Chapel (in the Cottage Basement Science room).

### **Meeting held on Wednesday 7 November 2012 James Chiriyankandath in the chair.**

**Minister's and Worship Group Report:** Rev O'Neill expressed his thanks to all who had helped with the 150th Anniversary Thanksgiving service and to all who had attended: 'A splendid day!' were his words.

**Anniversary Concert:** Patrick was looking forward to the 'Jubilate Deo' concert to be given that evening. Under the leadership of Georgina Drewe, the leader of the Chapel choir, our choir were joining with the Chamber Choir of Channing School to sing the 'Jubilate Deo' composed by James Drew Edwards for the Chapel's anniversary.

**Evening service:** The Minister, with Gordon Jackson, leader of the Worship Group, had devoted one evening service to discussing with many of those who attend the service, what they valued about it. The service was well attended and there was a thoughtful discussion. This would be followed up by a small group. Rev O'Neill affirmed his commitment to the evening service.

**Christmas services:** on Christmas Eve this year there will be ONE service, at 6.30pm. There will be no service on Christmas Day.

**Vacancies:** the position of organist will be advertised shortly and it was hoped a leader for the Children's Chapel would be found soon. In the meantime, the members of the Children's Programme committee were working together to support the programme.

On 18th November, the Minister would be preaching at the Unitarian church in Paris.

**Administrator's Report:** Damp: Work is proceeding to deal with the major damp problem in Cottage 3. To ensure there would be no recurrence, a chartered surveyor's advice had been sought as to the best way to proceed, and damp proofing companies asked to quote. The Academy School have offered to share some of this expense.

The damp south wall in the Chapel will dry out once the guttering above it is replaced with guttering that has a larger capacity. Camden Council have confirmed that to meet the 'like for like' requirements of the Conservation area, the new guttering has to be made of cast iron. Quotes for the work have been received.

**Treasurer's and Co-Chair's report:** New membership system: Jane Crispin (treasurer) reported that following the agreement at the SGM that membership should be paid for by standing order and that the membership year for all would start in October, she and the Administrator would be writing to each member about the new arrangement.

**Utilities:** Ways of keeping heating costs in check were discussed. The practicality of installing thermostats would be looked into. Readings from the Chapel's eight meters should be taken on a regular basis; help was needed with this.

**Follow up to the SGM:** It was agreed that a meeting would be held after Chapel on Sunday 13th January to discuss the implementation of the proposals agreed at the SGM. Details to follow, but it is hoped as many people as possible will come to take part in this important debate about future directions for our Chapel.

**Sources of income:** Stella Fakieyesi, in charge of fund-raising, pointed out that the refurbishment of the Hall could increase RHUC's income as those using the Chapel as a venue could also hire the Hall for entertaining after the event; this would be at times when the Hall was not let to the Dance School, ie in the school holiday breaks. Stella will draw up a business plan for this proposal for discussion at the SGM Follow up meeting on 13 January 2012.



*"May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope,  
the spirit of Christmas which is peace,  
the heart of Christmas which is love."*

(Ada V. Hendricks)

## Seasonal Festivals

### Winter Festivals

For me, the festive season starts with a bang on 5 November - Bonfire Night! My younger cousin was born on this day so we have always had fireworks when I was growing up. The tradition seems to have stuck with him as he now works for an engineering company, blowing things up for the film industry! In my part of London, fireworks play a part in the festivals of 'Diwali' and 'Eid', which sometimes take place around the same time, and it's not unheard of to find the odd firework display all the way up until New Year's Eve.

I grew up in a largely secular household with some neo-pagan/New Age influences, but Christmas was still a big celebration for us. Although I am more likely to attend a 'Winter Solstice' celebration than a Midnight Mass, my spiritual experiences are most keenly felt through the coming together of family and friends to share love and good humour. Christmas was always a family affair growing up, with me and my five cousins at the centre of the party.

I think we need festivals at this time of year; with the short days and dreary weather, I am warmed by twinkling lights and mulled wine. This year, I am looking forward to hosting my mother at my new home for Christmas, perhaps along with a few friends who find themselves in London over the Christmas holiday.

A more recent annual tradition for me has been to meet up with a friend to review the past year and think of goals (rather than resolutions) for the New Year. I've always enjoyed the opportunity to turn over a new leaf and think of new projects. However, now I recognise the importance of acknowledging and appreciating the events and achievements, highs and lows of the old year before welcoming in the future. **Kate Buchanan**



### Christmas Past

For many of us the season of goodwill is a time of busyness, enjoyment and receiving. But most of us have had years when the "Ho-ho -ho" of Christmas is replaced by "Oh-No-no-no"! This may be caused by illness, loss or bad circumstances of a financial or domestic nature.

For many years I used to be absent from the family circle because I worked in the Drinkers' Shelter at Crisis. During those years my Christmas Day might start with singing to the elderly at their Christmas lunch in Hampstead Community Centre and then cycling down to Crisis where I might help someone to have a shower, make innumerable cups of tea and listen to the guests telling us their stories. One I particularly liked was the one about the ex-soldier whose first job was as a bellboy in a Glasgow music hall where he once had Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jnr in his lift all at once!

For many of us Christmas is a time of dysfunction where we receive gifts we don't really want from people whom we may have a love-hate relationship with. I remember one year two of my relatives started in on each other and I had to leave the house and go for a long walk; fortunately the weather was fine!

My essential Christmas is one that is stripped down to include the Christmas Story, Christmas music and food, and giving and receiving of our time and gifts. No matter that the cynics tell me that Christmas was pinched from the Pagans by the church or that commercialism has pinched Christmas from the Christians! No matter that Jesus Christ was perhaps born in June!

When I find myself in a quiet place as I did many years ago, on the plump snow-covered hills of Perthshire with the sheep standing by, then I might have hoped that it was on a starlit night somewhere long ago that a miracle happened that we may hold on to for all our shared love, forgiveness, sorrow and joy. A Merry Christmas to you all! **Christopher Mason**

## Christmas/Yule

As we travel into the darkest days of the year, how glad I am that our days are lit up by the festive season and that the early Christian Church decided to fix the birth of Jesus at this time.

I enjoy it so much because it is such a glorious mix of traditions, some old and some comparatively new. It starts with the Advent calendar, which counts off the days until the 25 December - great fun for children. Then there is the buying and decoration of a tree, the sending and receiving of cards, the wrapping of presents, the fun of going to carol concerts, of singing carols ourselves, of children singing at our doors and going to visit Father Christmas. When my children were young they wrote out their lists for him and then before going to bed on Christmas Eve the sack was left at the end of the bed, along with a tot of whisky and a mince pie, not forgetting a carrot for the reindeer.

Since joining Rossllyn Hill Chapel the Christmas Eve service has become a new tradition for me. It is heart warming to be in the beautiful candlelit chapel amongst people of good will. Before that we have the revived tradition of 'Yule' which reminds us of the importance of going into ourselves as we go into the darkest days.

For me, the true joys of this season are the opportunities for giving, for being with friends and family and remembering those who live far away. I love buying presents and do this throughout the year, when I see something which I think will please someone.

Giving to charities by buying Christmas cards from them has become a tradition for me and now that charities have devised innovative ways for us to give to their causes in the shape of anti-malaria nets, goats, etc., we can give even more and the receiver of the present can feel the pleasure of giving as well as receiving

Then there is the traditional family meal of roast turkey, with all the trimmings and the disgustingly rich pudding with mince pies and cream, while we wear silly hats and groan at the jokes in the crackers.

After all the excitement and activity, the following indolent days are a welcome comfort and a rest as we travel towards the New Year. **Zoe Gerrard**



## St Lucia's Day

The shortening of the daily cycle gives rise to festivals of light around the world.

St Lucia's Day (13 December) is a traditional Swedish festival that combines pagan heritage with Christian legend. Lucia herself had little to do with light and winter, she was a Christian martyr beheaded in the days when Christians faced horrific persecutions. But because her name is Latin for light, the Vikings who converted to Christianity infused their solstice service with the personage of this beloved saint.

The Scandinavian image of a young woman in a white robe and a wreath of burning candles is a compelling image. It is a day to let everyone's light shine – and perhaps to wonder how we can bring light and sustenance into each others lives more often.

*(extract from: 'Earth Bound', by Brian Nelson)*

## Yule - The Winter Solstice



There are two main reasons that the winter solstice is my favourite midwinter festival: one is that it marks the turning of the year from darkness towards the light. We know that the days will begin to lengthen, the snow will melt and that we can look forward to the coming of spring. Expressed poetically: 'The seed of light is born in the dark womb of midwinter'.

The second reason is that it is not in any way a commercial event. We are under no pressure to buy anything, we do not have to exchange gifts unless we feel like it and are under no obligation to spend the day with relatives we don't get on with. It's a purely spiritual and organic (in the sense of being in tune with nature) festival, which we can celebrate alone or together with like-minded people.

Yule is the time when we learn from nature how to honour the darkness of life's mysteries without losing faith. In the darkness, the seeds of our creativity can grow, to flourish when the light returns. **Hillary Ratnasabapathy**

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## OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY



### Flower Group

We are a small group and need more people to help us make the altarpiece for Sunday services (tuition given) and especially for festivals. With Christmas coming up we do need people to come forward and help decorate the Chapel. We shall be decorating the Chapel on Saturday 15 December between 10.00am – 2.00pm. Please let me know if you can help.

Please come along to my 'Christmas Workshop' on Sunday 16 December after the morning service (2.00pm – 4.00pm) where we shall be making a seasonal arrangement, no experience is necessary as it will be very easy to follow in simple steps. Please bring scissors and secateurs, everything else will be provided at a cost of £20. We shall be using blue pine, pine cones, cinnamon, dried orange and lemon slices and other natural materials. Please let me know if you would like to attend this class so that I can bring enough materials for everyone.

And lastly, 'Flower Sponsorship' to remember a loved one or for a special occasion enables us to do something a little more special than we can on our normal flower budget and it's only £20.

**Helene Howard** (Helenehow@aol.com; Tel: 07778 176425)

### Viewpoint - The Soul

Every human being is basically a soul, a spirit, a being. To me these words are synonymous, and depending on what I think about, I use the term I feel fits best.

One of my mental pictures is that body and mind together are like a computer: There is the hardware (the body) and the software (the mind) and then there is a person (the soul) who sits in front of the computer and operates it, i.e. s/he makes the decisions and gives the commands to make the computer work.

We can only live on planet Earth and communicate with one another because each of us souls has a body and a mind. To me the mind is the bridge between the soul and the whole 'environment' which includes the body, the animal and plant kingdoms and the micro and macro cosmos.

I believe our purpose for being on Earth is to learn. When we learn we, the souls, grow and become more mature and wiser. Looking at history, I can see that mankind as a whole is maturing, which means there is not only a physical but also a spiritual evolution taking place. I think this spiritual evolution brings us closer to God. Maybe that is why it says in The Book: *'We are made in the image of God'*. **Britta Birtles**

*(Articles express the views of the authors)*



### Winter Solstice

Let us embrace the winter; the time of  
white skies and black bark;  
Of drifting mists and reflecting waters.  
Let us use this time, as the earth uses it, to  
rest and replenish.  
Let us be still and be nourished.  
Let us be patient and be loved.

Be glad of this dark earth-time and  
strengthen your roots.  
Feel close to the source of your life.  
Recover and restore.  
This season of inwardness and receiving  
Makes us ready for the time of growth  
And abundance which will soon begin.

*(Margaret Owen)*

# Our Larger Unitarian Movement



## Election to the General Assembly Executive Committee

The period for receipt of nominations has now closed. Popularis Ltd have confirmed that the following seven candidates have been validly nominated and that an election will take place for the five positions available on the Executive Committee:

- James Barry: Ditchling Unitarians
- Philip Colfox: Bridport Chapel in the Garden
- Joan Cook: St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh
- David E Gillman: Coventry Great Meeting House
- Robert Ince: Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield
- Louise Rogers: Newcastle-under-Lyme Meeting House community
- Jacqueline Woodman: Manchester College Oxford Chapel Society

Each Congregation will be sent a supply of blank voting papers in accordance with the number of quota paying members in that Congregation for the financial year 2010/11. Separate arrangements are being made to cover voting by full and associate members.

A booklet giving a profile of each candidate will also be included with each ballot, together with a pre-paid response envelope. These will be sent by: Popularis Ltd of 6 De Montfort Mews Leicester LE1 7EU, the company appointed by the GA to run the election. This mailing is scheduled to occur on 5th November. If anyone requires a large print booklet of the candidate profiles, please call Unitarian Headquarters on 020 7240 2384

The voting period begins on 12 November and ends on 14 December. It is expected that the results will be available on 17 December 2012.



## **A weekend by the sea filled with Celebration, Inspiration, and Education**

**8-10 February 2013**

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For Unitarians and other seekers with a passion for the future  
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Book early at <http://fusefest.org.uk/registration-form/>  
Visit the FUSE website: <http://fusefest.org.uk/>

**DECEMBER DIARY**

(\* = further details elsewhere in Bulletin)

**Sunday 2 December**

11.00am – Morning service - “*When Just saying Sorry Isn’t Enough*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

7.00pm – Evening service - “*When Just saying Sorry Isn’t Enough*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

**Wednesday 5 December**

5.45pm – Tai Chi class in the Chapel\*  
7.30pm – Choir rehearsal in the Chapel\*

**Sunday 9 December**

11.00am – Morning service – “*Not Broken, Just Unfinished*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

7.00pm – Evening service – “*Not Broken, Just Unfinished*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

**Tuesday 11 December**

7.30pm – Social Action Committee meets\*

**Wednesday 12 December**

5.45pm – Tai Chi class in the Chapel\*  
7.30pm – Choir rehearsal in the Chapel\*

**Thursday 13 December**

7.00pm – Management Committee meets\*

**Saturday 15 December**

10.00a - 2.00pm – Christmas Decorating in the Chapel\*

**Sunday 16 December**

11.00am - Morning service – “*Carols With The Choir*”\*

12.30pm – Pot Luck Lunch in the hall\*

2.00pm-4.00pm – Christmas Flower workshop\*

7.00pm – Evening service -

Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

**Monday 17 December**

7.00pm – Poetry group meets

**Sunday 23 December**

11.00am - Morning service – “*The Most Important Virtue*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

7.00pm – Evening service – “*Winter Solstice Celebration*”\*  
Led by the Wheel of the Year group

**Monday 24 December**

6.30pm – Candlelight Service - “*Room In Our Hearts*”\*

**Sunday 30 December**

11.00am - Morning service – “*Endbeginnings*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

7.00pm – Evening service – “*Endbeginnings*”\*  
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O’Neill

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Registered Charity 1131346

Registered Co. No. 05992717

*“Our religion is a spiritual journey and each one of us is an explorer.  
Reason is our map and conscience is our compass.  
Loving kindness is our way in the world”*