



Open Mind

The Bulletin of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel

December 2014

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 7 December (11.00 am)

Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching

'Hope and Good Will & a Place for the Passing Bird'

A sermon in celebration of Advent, a season that invites us to open our hearts and prepare room for life's hopeful possibilities. Come join us for worship today...and bring a friend along!

Sunday 7 December (7.00 pm)

'A Service of Music, Words, Reflection and Silence'

Khalil Gibran wrote 'Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife' - Come and join us for meditative music followed by silence & reflection. Led by Margaret Perry & Ingrid Tavkar

Sunday 14 December (11.00 am)

'A Holiday Choir Service of Lessons and Carols'

Matthew Fletcher and the Chapel Choir bring us their annual holiday service. Come lift your voice and lift your spirits with us this morning!

Sunday 14 December (7.00 pm)

'Meditation'

'The essence of meditation is simply to reach a 'state of being' - Come and join us for silence, reflection, poetry and music. Led by Ingrid Tavkar

Sunday 21 December (11.00 am)

Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching

'There's No Place Like Home'

This is the time of year when 'Home' is a very tender notion for many people. We say there's no place like home for the holidays. We say home is where the heart is. But in a mobile society where the average person will move some twenty times in a lifetime, where exactly does the ideal notion of 'home' reside? Where is home for you these days? 'Nuestra casa, su casa'.

Sunday December (7.00 pm)

'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.

Wednesday 24 December (6.30 pm)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

'The Road to Bethlehem'

Our minister leads us in a traditional Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols with special music from our Music Director, Matthew Fletcher, and soloists. It is strongly suggested you arrive early to ensure seating, as this is the most crowded service of the year.

Sunday 28 December (11.00 am)

Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill preaching

'The Fine Art of Reckoning'

Another year comes to a close, a new year beckons. How is it with your spirit these days? We reflect this morning on the fine art of Reckoning.

Sunday 28 December (7.00 pm)

'The Fine Art of Reckoning'

Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill



The Rosslyn Hill 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, and a variety of monthly events for all age groups. The Chapel is licensed for marriages, civil partnerships and other ceremonies.

**For more information, visit our website at
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

Submitting copy:

Unsolicited copy is welcomed and should be emailed to: 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 18 December 2012**.

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.

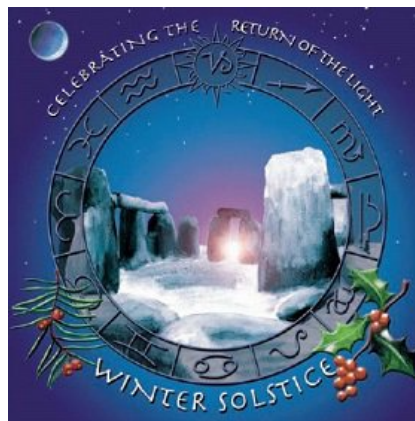
Yet, when we pay attention to the rhythms of this season, we realise that the long dark nights of November and December are a time of preparation for the coming of the light. This offers us a great opportunity to pause, to take a break from the rush of everyday, and simply be – to sit quietly, not expecting 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





PO'Nderings

From our Minister
Rev Patrick T. O'Neill

'Eyes on the Prize' A word about Mission

Sometimes, in the blur of activities around the Chapel, it is easy to lose sight of our priorities. An old mentor of mine, a minister of many years' experience, used to say to me, 'Eyes on the prize, Patrick. Don't forget why the church exists in the first place. Mission, lad, mission!'

Whenever there are lots of things going on and all of them calling out for attention, I hear my old teacher's voice pointing me back to first principles. What, after all, is the 'mission' of this place? What's a Unitarian community supposed to be doing? Why are we here? What's a church for, anyway?

I'm pretty clear after 35 years in ministry that the Unitarian community is shaped, first and last, by our fundamental covenant to care for each other and to care for our world, to make this a better world for all to live in. We're here to live out the values of faith, hope, and love in all that we do. Everything else, as the old rabbis used to say, everything else is but commentary.

That is why I am clear that the Chapel's Cold Weather Shelter Project lies squarely at the heart of our mission as a Chapel and deserves absolute priority from all of us. Working in cooperation with other interfaith communities in the Camden area, we open our Chapel Hall to accommodate safe overnight shelter and hot meals to some fifteen homeless men and women every Friday night during the winter months. Do I need to say that this is literally life-saving work for some who need it? Friends, this is what a Chapel is for.

You've shown that you agree this is proper priority. More than 65 members and friends of our Chapel volunteer to help with this project each year - giving a few hours each to cook a meal, set up beds, stay overnight on occasion, collecting food and sundries for our guests. It is by far our most successful and effective community outreach year to year.

The Project has grown this year. We're committed to more weeks, and more people are involved. Claire Julian has done yeoman work coordinating the Project, and next year I suspect we will need to give more structural support for everything that is involved.

Thanks to all of you who contribute to the Project in any way. You've reminded us, this holiday season in particular, of how we can live out the values on which Rosslyn Hill Chapel has always stood. 'Eyes on the prize! Mission, dear hearts, mission!'

Happy Holidays! See you in Chapel. ...po'n



Chapel Activities



Weekly Activities

Children's Programme 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.

Monthly Activities and Meetings

CHAPEL POETRY GROUP - If you like to read and /or write poetry, the group meets on **Tuesday 2 December at 7.30pm**. For more information contact George Appleby (Tel: 020 7424 9733, email: gappleby@talktalk.net)

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE meets on **Tuesday 9 December at 7.30pm**

THE CHAPEL MANAGEMENT BOARD meets on **Thursday 11 December at 7.00pm** in the Cottage basement science room at the Chapel. Members of the Chapel are welcome to attend but please contact, as a courtesy, Kerry Reid (Chair), in advance.

CHAPEL BOOK GROUP - The Book Group will **not** meet in December. They will be meeting again on **Thursday 15 January 2014 at 7.30pm** at the Holly Bush, in Holly Mount, to discuss 'The Island', Aldous Huxley's Utopian alternative to his Brave New World. For further information, contact Bill Ellington at ellingtonbill@aol.com

STITCH & STORIES GROUP - meets on **Thursday 11 December (7.00pm-9.00pm)** - to knit and crochet for various charity projects, and to share personal stories. For more information contact: Ingrid Tavkar (Tel: 020 8455 0162; email: ingridtavkar@gmail.com)

POT LUCK LUNCHES - The next lunch 'will be on **Sunday 14 December** in the side aisle 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 or make a financial contribution (£2.50 minimum). We look forward to seeing you there. Margaret Perry

OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY



Chapel Winter Shelter - can you help?

The guests in our Friday night Winter Shelter frequently need things we probably take for granted. Below is a list of some of those things. Please donate whatever you can – into a red plastic box that you will find in the chapel.

Priority needs:

Outdoor: Good condition men's walking boots, lightweight foldable waterproof jackets, rucksacks/backpacks scarves, hats, gloves.

Work wear (for job interviews, work etc): suits, ties, trousers, skirts, smart shoes, new tights.

Other needs

Clothing: Vests, shirts, t-shirts, winter jumpers and cardigans, and less formal trousers. Pyjamas, nightgowns.

New items: Underpants (male/female), socks and tights, bras.

Thank you so much.

Claire Julian (Social Action Committee)



Shadwell Opera presents a series of concerts at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, featuring the best of the art song repertoire. Exciting young singers will be accompanied by Rosslyn Hill Chapel's director of music, Matthew Fletcher, and Finnegan Downie-Dear (who many of the congregation may recognise from his performances in Chapel). These concerts will raise funds for future Shadwell productions.

You can learn more about Shadwell Opera here:
<http://www.shadwellopera.co.uk/>

Thursday 4 December
7.30pm - Songs by Schubert and Ravel

Tickets: £10 (£8 for students)
www.wegotickets.com/ShadwellOpera
or on the door



CHRISTMAS CHEER!

Thursday 18 December 10.00am-2.00pm

All are welcome! Can you come along to help decorate the Chapel so it's bright and beautiful for our mid-winter celebrations? Mulled apple juice, mince pies and fellowship.

If you'd like to lend a hand, please contact Janna (j.williams.16@virginmedia.com) or just come along.



Other events in the Chapel

Saturday 6 December (7.00pm) - Concert - Seiko Mizuta-Spencer (No further details)

Tuesday 9 December (7.30pm) - 'Carol Concert by The Camden Choir'. Tickets available at the door £15 (adults) and £5 (children) wine and mince pies to follow

Friday 12 December (7.30pm) - 'Opera From The Heart' Concert by Ilona Domnich, Simon Wallfisch & Simon Callaghan. Tickets £25 includes canapé food and drink

Saturday 13 December (7.30pm) - 'Beethoven Chamber Orchestra - Concert by Santiago Mantas' Tickets £17 (£15 concessions)

Sunday 21 December (2.00-6.00pm) - 'The Ehlers-Danlos Support UK (EDS UK) Christmas Carol Concert'. Arrival from 2.30pm for mince pies and mulled wine. Crafts for sale and there will be incredible festive performances from a full choir and singer songwriter Stina. PLUS Santa will be there to meet all the children!

OUR CHAPEL COMMUNITY

Viewpoint – Let's have Peace.

In the process of evolution, one day an animal lifted its forelegs to stand on its hind legs, and took the first steps towards developing into a human being. This fellow (being) adopted from the physical world and his animal forebears the law of force and the law of cause and effect. Both urge that you hit me when I hit you.

Each human body is taken up by a spirit (a being) whose laws are those of ethics, morality and consideration for fellow human beings. Right from the start there has been a clash in Man (human beings) between obeying the laws of the physical or those of the spiritual world. In most cases the physical world won. Quarrels between tribes, countries and nations have nearly always been settled in line with the law of force by wars. This has been going on throughout Man's (human history until the present.

Animals can't speak to one another but humans can. By the 21st century the art of communicating has been highly developed and yet, those in power are still reluctant to use this finely tuned instrument to resolve their discords. Instead they send our young men forth to slaughter each other, and wait to see who can do it best.

Fortunately, there is a change developing and I think Mankind (humanity) is gradually becoming more aware of the fact that wars are not only futile but also an expression of immaturity, immorality and moral blindness. People are waking up to the desire that a different method of handling conflicts be adopted to replace war, this crude and barbaric relic from the infancy and dark ages of Man's (human's) past.

Soon, I hope, we will work out a sane and rational way to deal with disputes between nations, to prove that we have become mature and responsible at last. And to show we have finally realized that we are not only all 'related' to each other, but also in need of each other's support and understanding, to survive and thrive on this beautiful planet of ours. **Britta Burtles**



Worship Group Assistant

7 December	James Chiriyankandath
14 December	Julia Reid
21 December	Zoe Gerrard
24 December (6.30pm)	Margaret Perry
28 December	Martyn Watson

Stewards

7 December	Derek McAuley & Ken Levy
14 December	Christopher Mason & Leighton Cole
21 December	George Appleby & Lorna Mikhelson
24 December	Lorna Mikhelson & John Booth and two young apprentices
28 December	George Appleby & Derek McAuley



To make everyone feel welcome in our beautiful chapel on Sunday mornings; and to help them feel comfortable within our friendly community, we use a Welcoming Steward system.

We arrange for two regular members of our congregation to be there, greeting and welcoming people as they come in. They are there to offer a smile, a hymn book, the order of service for the day and an invitation to stay behind for a chat over tea and biscuits.

Visitors are also encouraged to enquire about our approach to religion and the historic building where we congregate. **Jim Burtles**

NEWS FROM THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Any member of the Chapel is welcome to attend the Management Board meetings as an observer. If you would like to attend, as a courtesy, please contact Kerry Reid (Chair) in advance. The next meeting will be on **Thursday 11 December 2014 at 7.00pm** in the Chapel (in the Cottage 2 Basement Science room).

Meeting held on 13 November 2014

Kerry Reid as Chair.

Chapel Hall: At October's SGM, various options for renovating the Chapel Hall were put forward, and the congregation voted to allow the Board or its delegates to begin discussions with the Academy School and the Rona Hart Dance School about an intensified use of the Hall by them. The Board discussed the Chapel's current uses for the Hall, in order to give proper guidance to the group which was planning a meeting about the Hall.

Jane Crispin, John Lawrence, James Sefton (Treasurer), Trevor Slack (Board member) and Kerry Reid (Chair) have since met with the leadership of the Academy School. This was a positive discussion and we hope to arrange another meeting soon, when the School have looked further into various options for how they could make more use of the Hall. Discussions will of course take place with the Dance School in due course.

Chapel Refresh: Also discussed at the recent SGM, we are awaiting a full listings status from Camden Council before we look at any areas, such as the screen between the kitchen and the main body of the Chapel and the raised area that formed part of the old choir stalls by the Chapel toilets.

Administrator's and Treasurer's Reports: We received our monthly report from the administrator. We were updated on the maintenance being carried out on our buildings and grounds. We also received our monthly report from the Treasurer.

Committee Reports: Reports from the Children's Programme, Choir and Staffing Committees were gratefully received.

We are grateful to Holly Vandermolen and Kristen Howe for the excellent work they are doing as the Children's Programme Co-ordinators. They did highlight in their report, that they are short of parent volunteers to help with the programme. If any parents are interested in helping, please contact Holly or Kristen as a matter of urgency!

Other Business: The Communications Team requested that the Board agree to fund a weekly advert for our Sunday Services in the Camden New Journal, for a two month trial. The Board are keen to try and grow our membership and felt that this, inexpensive form of advertising was worth pursuing.



*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

*May the candles we light this festive season
remind us of the glowing love within the heart.*

*May the carols we sing uplift our spirits
and renew our hope and vision.*

*May the special moments we spend with family and friends
strengthen the bonds of caring between us
at this time and throughout the coming year..*

Patrick Green

Reflections, thoughts, and poems about some Seasonal Festivals



On the Cusp of Winter

We've come to the season of waiting.
The colours of autumn are gone,
leaves faded and fallen, and branches rise bare to sky.
The deep quiet and frozen beauty of winter are coming
but not quite yet: we are in the season in between.
The world closes in on itself as breathing things
hunker down, burrow in, drop to the bottom
and store up nurture for the long cold.
Animals that we are, we feel in our bones
the shuttering of the windows.
Though freed from the need to burrow in,
may we still find guidance in the rhythm
that beats through our hearts.
In this season of waiting, may we let ourselves
slow down our pace,
ease out from beneath the burden of our speed
and bustle, our fretful worry
so that gratitude can saturate our days
and colour our nights.
In this season of closing down, closing in,
may our hearts stay open,
urging open our doors to the stranger,
our hands to the helpless,
and our spirit to all that calls us endlessly back to life.

Kathleen McTigue

Christmas Spirit

Fill your heart like a vessel with the Christmas spirit.
Take the time to let your vision clear and your
concern deepen. Allow your heart to overflow with
all the authentic gifts that this season has to offer.

The blessings and the wealth of Christmas can
overflow from each of our hearts, if we take the time
to fill our hearts first.

We are a world of materially rich men and rich
women who are spiritually impoverished by our very
wealth. The signs of that impoverishment are all
around us. They push and shove to get our attention,
especially at this time of year.

But let us stop the rush and allow the spirit of the
season to enter our being. Let us clear our vision and
deepen our concern. Let it move us away from an
isolating concern for self to a relationship of love and
care and wonder and joy with all of life around us.

Donna Morrison Reed

Prayer for Candle Lighting on Christmas Eve



Let us be still in the darkness of our sacred space,
and listen to the quiet around us.

For even in the quiet,
there is the gentle being with others.

Let us feel the warmth of our community,
knowing we are not alone.

For in the quiet shadow
is the glow of life within all.

Let us know in the darkness
the gift each candle bears,
a small flame, a diminutive light -
Yet the wondrous gift to kindle another's glow.

Let us be in awe at this moment
as we each take up the flame
and the light envelopes this room,
as hope for peace and goodwill fill this night.

So may it be.
Lisa Rubin



Winter Solstice – The Pause between Breath

The Earth has been withdrawn inside herself.
Winter brings the hardships of
cold and shortness of daylight.
Very little growth has happened,
but deep within the Earth,
roots have been growing,
bringing stability and nutrients
to the plants and trees.

New buds are slowly forming
on the trees and bushes
and deeply buried bulbs
are beginning to send up their first hardy shoots.

All of nature has slowed down,
waiting for the energy to change
and for warmth to return.

Glennie Kindred

DECEMBER DIARY

(* = further details elsewhere in Bulletin)

Tuesday 2 December

7.30pm – Chapel Poetry Group meet *

Wednesday 3 December

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

Thursday 4 December

7.30pm – Concert by Matthew Fletcher*

Sunday 7 December

11.00am – Morning service - *'Hope and Good Will and a Place for the Passing Bird'*
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill

7.00pm – Evening service - *'A Service of Music, Words, Reflection and Silence'*

Led by Margaret Perry and Ingrid Tavkar

Tuesday 9 December

7.30pm – Social Action Committee meets*

Wednesday 10 December

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

Thursday 11 December

7.00pm – Management Committee meets*

Sunday 14 December

11.00am - Morning service - *'Carols, Readings, Poems, Stories'*
Led by Rev. Patrick O'Neill, Mathew Fletcher (Choir Director), and the Chapel Choir

12.30pm – Pot Luck Lunch in the side aisle*

7.00pm – Evening service - *'Meditation'**

Led by Ingrid Tavkar

Wednesday 17 December

5.45pm – Tai Chi class in the Chapel*

Thursday 18 December

10.00am-2.00pm – Christmas Decorating in the Chapel*

Sunday 21 December

11.00am - Morning service – *'There's No Place Like Home'*

7.00pm – Evening service – *'Winter Solstice Celebration'**

Led by the Wheel of the Year group

Wednesday 24 December

6.30pm – **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**
'The Road to Bethlehem' *
Led by Rev Patrick O'Neill

Sunday 28 December

11.00am - Morning service – *'The Fine Art of Reckoning'*
Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill

7.00pm – Evening service – *'The Fine Art of Reckoning'*

Led by Rev Dr Patrick T. O'Neill

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