

A brief history

When Somerville opened its doors in 1879 it was founded as a 'non-denominational' institution, meaning there would be no religious tests for admission. Non-denominational Christian prayers were said informally in College from the outset, and from 1912 in the Dining Hall. In 1935 the chapel was opened, following a generous donation from a former student, Emily Georgiana Kemp. Kemp was an adventurer, writer and artist, and came from a wealthy Baptist family. Through her extensive travels she had developed an interest in the world's religions and a wide, inclusive vision of Christianity. It was her intention that the Chapel, although ostensibly a Christian place of worship, would be a welcoming space for members of all religious and secular traditions. The Greek inscription above the main door may be translated as "A House of Prayer for All Peoples" - a verse from the Book of Isaiah, which is also referred to by Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. In keeping with its non-denominational tradition, the College does not have a chaplain, but a 'Chapel Director,' who, along with the Organ Scholar, Choral Scholars and Director of Music, arranges events and services throughout the year designed to reflect Somerville's own characteristically broad range of religious tastes and perspectives.

Sunday talks

In recent years we have moved away from using the Chapel solely as a place for worship and re-modelled it as a space for visiting scholars, commentators and faith leaders to share reflections on a range of social, political, theological, historical and philosophical subjects. Each term a selection of speakers present on a common topic on Sunday evenings as detailed in this termcard. The topic of these talks varies from term to term and where possible we try to include a wide range of religious and non-religious perspectives. After the talk and accompanying music the speaker will usually join us for dinner in hall, which presents an opportunity for follow-up questions and discussions – do consider staying for dinner and taking part in the conversation. The great majority of Sunday evening events are also open to members of other colleges and to the general public.

Booking the Chapel

The Chapel is available to students for use during term, and can be booked for private music practice or for other purposes. To book the Chapel, visit www.some.ox.ac.uk/living-here/the-chapel and follow the instructions.

Chapel Director: Brian McMahon
Director of Music: Will Dawes
Organ Scholar: Nick Machin
Contact E-mail: chapel.office@some.ox.ac.uk



Somerville College Chapel

Termcard



Hilary Term 2017

“What Makes A Text Sacred?”

Weekly Sunday Talks

6pm in the Chapel

Somerville Chapel is a non-denominational and inclusive space. Every Sunday evening during term we host a speaker who gives a short talk accompanied by readings and music from the Somerville College Choir. The programme for this term's talks is entitled "What makes a text sacred?" and includes the following speakers:

1st Week, Sunday 15th January

Brian McMahon (Somerville)

"21st Century Worshippers of Thor: The Sacred Texts of a Neo-Pagan Movement"

2nd Week, Sunday 22nd January

Rev'd Dr George Westhaver (Pusey House)

"Sacramental Reading"

3rd Week, Sunday 29th January

Dr Sarah Shaw (Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies)

"The Earliest Buddhist Sacred Writings"

4th Week, Sunday 5th February

Fr Ian Graham (Holy Trinity Church)

"An Orthodox Approach to the Scriptures"

5th Week, Sunday 12th February

John Ritzema (Worcester)

"Who were the 'Church Fathers' and why do they still matter?"

6th Week, Sunday 19th February

Professor Nicolai Sinai (Pembroke)

"The Dual Qur'an"

7th Week, Sunday 26th February

Fr Dushan Croos SJ (Campion Hall)

"The Golden Legend and the Conversion of St Ignatius of Loyola"

8th Week, Sunday 5th March

Readings and Music for Lent and the Spring

Other Chapel Events in Hilary Term

In addition to the 6pm Sunday gatherings, this term the following events are taking place:

- **Catholic Mass.** There will be a Catholic mass on Tuesday of 5th Week (14th February) at 6:00pm, open to all. This will be a short service led by one of the University's Catholic chaplains. All welcome.
- **Daily Quiet Time**, each morning from 9:00-9:30am the Chapel will be open for quiet prayer and reflection.
- **Rosary Group.** Meeting on Tuesday mornings at 8:30am to say the Rosary together. Although this is generally considered to be a Catholic and High Anglican tradition, all comers are very welcome either to join in the prayers or sit in quiet reflection.
- **Friday Evening Prayers.** Fridays, 1st-8th Week, 5:45-6pm in the Chapel. An opportunity to share intentions for the coming week, and to explore ways of praying drawn from different faith traditions.
- **Christian Union Meetings.** Somerville has an active and thriving Christian Union which runs its own events year-round. If you are interested in getting involved, contact Nuala Marshall (nuala.marshall@some.ox.ac.uk).
- **Another Gaze.** This film club meets in the Chapel at 8pm on Wednesday evenings during term for screenings of feminist and LGBTQIA+ related films and discussion. All welcome. *Please note that in 1st week only the club will meet on Tuesday evening rather than Wednesday.*
- **Termly Choir Concert.** This will take place on Thursday 9th March. Full details of the programme will be announced nearer the time.

The Chapel also has an events group, which helps to arrange the Sunday talks series and suggests which speakers to invite. If you are interested in getting involved, please speak to the Chapel Director.