

# THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

*The Newsletter of the  
Unitarian Universalist  
Congregation of Salem, Oregon  
December 20, 2006*



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## 'Tis the Season. . .

The last morning service before Christmas, on December 17, was an eventful one. First the *Guest at Your Table* boxes, containing donations to the UU Service Committee, were collected. Then a cast of children and adults presented their version of *Las Posadas*, a Mexican-American enactment of the nativity story; the culmination was Rev. Rick's offering "room at the inn" in our sanctuary. There was music from children's choir, accompanied by young violinists Mikela Rayburn and Lilla Seitz, and instrumental music by harpists Christiana Hannegan and Janet Neuburg and pianist Zachary Gulaboff-Davis. While musicians played, children brought mitten-gifts to hang on the tree and, in return, received decorations made by Women's Alliance members.



There will be **NO MORNING SERVICE DECEMBER 24**. (Mary Hart and Keith York have kindly volunteered to be there anyway, in case visitors show up, but you are nevertheless encouraged to warn friends who might visit.) Our traditional **Christmas Eve service**, this year titled "The Pilgrimage of the Magi," will be at **7:30 p.m.** There may be cider and cookies afterward, but a few volunteers are needed (please call the office).

There will be the traditional lay-led morning service on **December 31**, with representatives of several generations considering "what is ultimate?"

And you might want, in the first week of the **New Year**, to attend the January session of "**An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation**" on Wednesday, January 3, at 7:00 p.m. in Rick's office. Rick and the Meditation Group plan to offer these introductory classes to both UUCS members and the community several times in the coming months. Learning to meditate can be very helpful to those feeling stressed or overwhelmed, as well as to those experiencing spiritual yearnings.

Note: This page, including the table of contents, substitutes for the **CALENDAR** in this issue.

*This issue was edited by Elsa Struble. NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: 11:30 a.m., January 7, 2007. Send news to editors@uusalem.org, put it in workroom newsletter "mailbox," or mail it (marked "newsletter") to church.*

## Reverential Ramblings

In early December for the past couple of years my family and I have joined several hundred others in an Advent Walk at the South Salem Golf Course – a silent, lantern light procession that marks the coming Christmas season. (Salem residents Lela and Wilbur Jackson experienced this traditional ritual in Germany and introduced it here.)

We all walk silently as fellow pilgrims along the winding path through the dark woods. You can sense that everyone is at their best – full of hope, kindness and compassion. Seeing the long procession of swaying lights being borne by people moving silently through the darkness is a stirring sight. For me, this beautiful ritual accomplishes what such rituals are meant to accomplish – it elevates my thoughts and feelings and puts me in touch with my true self, it reminds me of humankind's highest hopes and aspirations and gives me a sense that they are widely shared and deeply yearned for by many, that these ideals are not disconnected from our human condition but are holy truths that are exerting a subtle but powerful spiritual magnetism that will someday draw us into a world of compassion, peace and justice.

The carols sung and the homilies delivered next to the manger scene at the end of the procession are explicitly Christian, yet as a Unitarian Universalist – who has what many would regard as a heretical understanding of who Jesus was (a great prophet and teacher, not the unique incarnation of God in human flesh) – I still find much spiritual meaning in this. (After spending three plus years – usually as the sole acknowledged heretic in the mainstream Christian seminary where I obtained my Master of Divinity degree twenty years ago – I am accustomed to doing instant theological translation into a language that has meaning for me.)

This year the eloquent preacher who delivered the homily reminded us that we are called to carry our light into a world darkened by fear, anger, greed and hatred. So true. And this got me to thinking of how Unitarian Universalists are especially called to bear light to certain darkened realms where few others are willing to go.

Too many religious movements claim to have an exclusive monopoly on the truth, so there is mutual mistrust, misunderstanding and enmity between different faith traditions. We, who cherish wisdom from many sources, are called to help create a path of light through the darkness of fear and ignorance separating people of various faiths and persuasions. (This need is especially urgent now, given the growing chasm between the Christians and Moslems of the world today.)

Too many in religious communities reject and condemn those who are gay, lesbian and bisexual. We, who affirm the inherent worth and dignity of everyone, are called to continue creating a path of light that connects those who are rejected to the human family.

Too many in the religious and scientific communities eye one another with disdain. We, who believe that scientific and spiritual truth can and should co-exist, are called to help bear light across such ideological divides.

Beyond this, each one of us is being called by the unique circumstances of our life to carry the light of compassion and understanding to some special place where no one else will take it. Will you?

Love, Rick

### Lunch & Discussion with Rick

All are welcome to attend the Brown Bag Lunch and Topical Discussion with Rev. Rick at noon on Friday, January 5: The focus of our discussion this month will be “Your Religious Past, Your Spiritual Future”

# LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

## Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem

### December 20, 2006

#### Lise's Letter

I think it was about 10 years ago that I was first introduced to Winter Solstice as a holiday. Until that time I had merely observed the date as the beginning of winter and an opportunity to renew my hope that snow might appear. What changed my focus for this event was a candlelight service I participated in as a choir member. The theme was dark and light and we sang songs and listened to readings that celebrated both the dormancy and growth (think seeds and babies in utero) that can happen during the dark winter days and nights. The service also shared the excitement and renewed hope that would arrive with the coming of longer days. Having come from a Christian tradition, I had always been a Christmas person; this service gave me the perfect opportunity to begin learning about another tradition that is so important to many UUs throughout our association.

In the book *Circle Round, Raising Children in Goddess Traditions*, the authors discuss how Winter Solstice marks the time when the earth has gone as far into darkness as it can. "We are ready for the light to come back, and we must do all we can to help it." This is why this holiday is celebrated with so much light—ancient people believed they had to keep vigil for the coming sun, welcoming and encouraging it with candles, fires, dance and song. They feared that the birth of the new sun and the resulting brighter, longer days would not come to pass unless such rituals were performed. As we now recognize, many of the religions that developed after the Pagan and Goddess traditions incorporated the tension between dark and light into their own holidays and rituals. Think of lights on Christmas trees, Kwanzaa candles, and the Hanukkah Menorah.

*Circle Round* has many stories, crafts and traditions that celebrate the Winter Solstice. As our own UU tradition encourages us to draw wisdom from many sources, I'd invite you to try one below (or check the internet for options). If you happen to read this a few days after Winter Solstice, never fear, the days will still be short

enough to appreciate the ritual and meaning of this holiday.

#### Winter Solstice Sun

Glue together one piece bright yellow construction paper, and one black piece. Draw a picture of the sun on the paper, decorate it with glitter and cut it out. On Winter Solstice hang it on your door with the black side facing out. After the sun rises the next morning (maybe you'd like to get up early and watch it rise), flip it to the opposite brilliant yellow side in celebration of the sun's return.

#### Clean House

Have the entire family help clean house (really!). When you throw out the litter from your dustpan or vacuum cleaner bag, think about the things (habits, material objects, fears) you want to get rid of in the new year. Steep some bay and rosemary leaves in hot water; use the scented water when cleaning the floors to bring protection for the coming year.

#### Religious Education Dates to Note

**Children Sun. Dec. 24** – No children's religious education in AM. RE classes will resume in AM on Sunday, January 7, 2006.

**All Sun. Dec. 24** – Evening Christmas service at 7:30 PM. This is the only service today.

**Youth/Adult Wed. Jan. 3** – Meditation class for beginners, 7 PM.

**Youth Mon. Jan. 8** – YRUUs (Young Religious UUs, ages 14-20) starts again after the holiday break, 7-9 PM

**Director of Religious Education: Lise Adams Sherry \*\*\* LISE WILL BE GONE FOR SCHOOL THE MONTH OF JANUARY.**

Office Hours: Mon. 1:30-6:30, Wed. 9:30-2:00

Church office: 503-364-0932

**Associate Director of Religious Education: Mark Babson**

## Readers Forum: January 7

Our Sunday morning book discussion group, the Reader's Forum, begins again on January 7 at 9:15 a.m. Please join us before church in Hanneman Hall for coffee and conversation. The conversation is lively and far-ranging, so even if you haven't read the week's selection, you'll still fit right in. Copies of our selections are available at the UUCS office.

Our first book of 2007 is *Global Values 101: A Short Course*. It was edited by Kate Holbrook *et al* and published by Beacon Press, Boston, 2006.

*Global Values 101* grew out of one of the most popular courses ever offered at Harvard University, in which some of the most original thinkers of our day sat down with students and explored how ideas have made them—and can make us—more engaged, involved and compassionate citizens. This collection offers a series of essay-length interviews with some of these innovative thinkers. Please join us as we discuss some of the issues that affect all of the citizens of the world—war, religion, the global economy, and social change.

**Discussion Topics** (these follow sections of the book)

**Jan. 7:** History and Investigations

**Jan. 14:** Labor and Economy

**Jan. 21:** Diversity and Equality

**Jan. 28:** Brutality, Bloodshed, and Resolution

**Feb. 4:** Religion and Ethics

**Feb. 11:** Distance and Proximity

*Don Wolf*

## Addiction Ministry

After a recent sermon on the subject of addiction, a number of members stepped forward and indicated a willingness to help create an addiction ministry program for our congregation and the surrounding community. Our minister, Rick, would like to meet with all who are interested in working to establish such a helping ministry. Please join us at the **planning session** on January 15, 2007, at 7 p.m. at UUCS.

## Web Addresses

Kendra Kimbirauskas, our speaker at the December 10 service, suggests the following web sites for information on local food and on reaching your legislators:

The Eatwell Guide - a place to find farmers near you

<http://www.eatwellguide.org>

Find a Farmers' Market

<http://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/>

Find your State Legislator

<http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/home.htm>

Kendra is a consultant with the GRACE Factory Farm Project ([www.factoryfarm.org](http://www.factoryfarm.org)). Her email is [kendrakimbirauskas@gmail.com](mailto:kendrakimbirauskas@gmail.com); contact her if you are interested in receiving periodic updates and action alerts.

## Circle Suppers

Circle Suppers are scheduled again for Saturday, January 27. These small-scale potlucks in the hosts' homes are a wonderful way to get together with other UUs in the intimate setting of private homes. This is how they work: folks sign up as guests or hosts, coordinators divide the people into appropriate sized groups, then the hosts call and arrange what each guest should bring. As a new addition to the past procedure, we would like to encourage hosts to invite someone you would like to get to know better, and put them on the list as one of your guests.

Sign up sheets will be available in Hanneman Fellowship Hall after services until January 21, or you can call one of the coordinators: Leah Knudsen or John Gorman.

**Sorry about the staples:** The 17-inch paper was getting stuck in the copier when Elsa was printing the last issue, so she ran many copies on 8.5 x 11 paper, was careful to put the staples as the post office wants them—but chose the wrong corner for many! We THINK the copier is fixed now.

## Gifts

My family tradition includes gift giving and receiving at Christmas. We seldom received anything elaborate, and in a family of seven nobody ended up with stacks of gifts. However, with that many family members, a few gifts each did add up to a huge pile under the tree on Christmas morning. In my family my dad would hand out the gifts one at a time, and we would wait for each to be opened before moving on to the next. As the years went by, Dad became Grandpa and he would hand gifts to young grandchildren, who would deliver them to their recipients. Which was good, because that reduced the number of gifts that got “tossed” across the room, potentially landing on a grandbaby on the floor!

Most of my family lives far away, and we seldom are together at Christmas time anymore. We do continue to exchange gifts none the less. As my siblings and I began to establish our own families, we had various discussions about how to “handle” Christmas. The same conversations were happening in Gil’s family as well. Perhaps we should only do gifts for the children? One year the adults drew names, so that we were only responsible for one adult gift. Is the grandparent generation included in the gift exchange? Etc. Etc. Neither the Nicholsons nor the Nelsons ever settled onto a solid, mutually agreed upon plan.

Along the way, I realized that I wasn’t willing to stop giving some sort of gift to each of my family members once a year. The gifts are small, inexpensive and/or homemade. Often they are not much more than a token gift. I have been known to type up a couple of my favorite recipes. I can splurge on some fun paper, or perhaps include a sample of the “Yummy Baked Carmel Corn”. This year they will receive my Vegetable Soup Recipe, with all of the variations that Gil, Ben and I have come to enjoy. Last weekend when I made a big pot of this soup, I found myself wishing that I could enjoy it with my siblings.

I try not to participate in the hugely commercialized, “buy-me, buy-me” culture that surrounds us at this time of year. I do, however, enjoy the ritual of slowing down and taking the time to think about those that I love. I want to find a way to let them know that I think about them, and that I miss them. I want to inject a little bit of me into their lives for the upcoming year. Each time that one of my teenaged nieces cranks up her cool new battery-free flashlight she will remember that she has a connection with somebody far away who loves her. I know, she might forget who gave it to her, but I won’t. And I think that her family will enjoy having a new recipe to add to their “feeding a family” routine. For me, gift giving and gift receiving are about honoring my connections with people that I love.

When I sat down to write this article I planned to write about the gifts that I receive from UUCS, as well as the gifts that I try to give back. However, I got sidelined in my own reminiscing about the power of gift giving. So I will conclude by saying that my gift to you at this time of year is an invitation to stop and notice the meaningful connections in your life. And with that invitation comes a reminder to honor those connections in a way that is meaningful to you.

Merry Christmas,  
*Diana*

## **The AGM of the PNWD of the UUA will be in ID, February 16-18, 2007**

Not all that familiar with acronyms? Can’t say as I blame you. The world is overpopulated by acronyms, IMHO. But these acronyms are of interest to you and will be both fun and enlightening.

The Pacific NorthWest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association will hold its 2007 Annual General Meeting in Boise, Idaho from Friday evening, February 16 through mid-Sunday, 2007.

Rev. Bill Sinkford, president of the UUA will keynote the meeting with a talk entitled “Knowledge, Compassion, Commitment.” Workshops will explore such topics as religious education, the Green Sanctuary Project, addiction problems, conflict management, several aspects of church

finances, and writing your values legacy. Pluses include cooperative quilt making, letters from Christine (the wife of a Transylvania minister in the 1930s), and a general Consultation Forum.

The meeting will be held in the Grove Hotel in Boise. The UUUCS (you should know that acronym) is allowed four voting delegates. Since the annual business meeting is held when nothing else is scheduled, attendance as a delegate doesn't deprive you of any of the other events.

If you are interested in attending and/or being a delegate, contact Diana Nicholson-Nelson or Chuck Howard. Do plan to attend. You'll have a great time attending the meeting and being with lots of other UUs, IMHO (In My Humble Opinion).

*Chuck Howard*

## **Welcome, New Members**

On November 19 we welcomed Ronald Cummings, Harvey and Jeanne Price, Pamela Prichard, Anna Stavinoha, Judith Van Osdol, Linda Vincent, Linda White, and Barbara Zimmerman into membership. Some thumbnail biographies appeared in the last newsletter; here are the rest.

**Linda Vincent** retired and moved to Salem from Bristol, RI. She enjoys living near her grandchildren Trevor (4) and Shelby (1). She has lived in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Oregon, North Carolina, and Virginia. While in Richmond, she attended a UU congregation. In Oregon, she lived in Eugene for 11 years and graduated from the University of Oregon.

**Anna Stavinoha** first joined a UU congregation in Austin, Texas, and later was a member of the congregation in Houston for a number of years. She enjoys outdoor sports such as hiking and biking and is a Reiki Master.

## **Christmas Bazaar**

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the bazaar. We appreciate your effort, your time, and your gifts. And thanks to those who purchased items. We raised over \$1,000 at the bazaar. The proceeds will provide window covering for four windows in the sanctuary to reduce the glare on bright sunny days.

*Marge French*

## **DRE Spends Month in Chicago**

Director of Religious Education Lise Adams Sherry will leave on January 2 for her second of four seminars conducted each January for prospective ministers at the

Meadville-Lombard School of Theology in Chicago. This modified residence program is designed to provide intensive instruction to candidates following reading and conference in their home communities.

One of Lise's professors will be William Schultz, former UUA President and more recently the CEO of Amnesty International. In "Evil, Trauma, and Ambiguity," Schultz will cover problems in public ethics, such as abortion rights, militarism, and the existence of poverty.

## **More on Meadville**

Considering Ministry? The Meadville Lombard Theological School announces the Spencer and Susan Lavan Scholarship for Excellence – a full, merit-based scholarship for an incoming residential student in our Master of Divinity Program in the fall of 2007. The application deadline for the scholarship is March 15, 2007. Please see the Meadville Lombard Website ([www.meadville.edu](http://www.meadville.edu)) and the UUWorld website for more information on the scholarship and the Master of Divinity Program.

## **Enneagram Workshop**

On January 13, the Michael Servetus UU Fellowship in Vancouver, WA, is offering an all-day workshop titled "Introduction to the Enneagram: Discovering the Nine Points of View in Love, Work and Spiritual Development." Their material states, "the Enneagram offers a roadmap to address the specific challenges of each personality type and to develop the unique virtues of that type that are waiting to be discovered."

## News of the UUCS Community

Christmas is all about joy, and it's that emotion that **Christi** and **Mark Olsen** and their children are experiencing at the official adoption of their foster daughter, **Leneisha Whitefeather** this week! Christi writes, "The longest time she had ever lived with anyone before us was three months. She came to us last June when she was seven, with serious needs that we feel we can continue to meet. She finally gets a family to call her own for Christmas!"

Christi also asks if anyone is home-schooling or knows of liberal home schooling organizations, particularly for social opportunities and activities.

Condolences to **Barbara Hanneman** on the death of her daughter **Laurie Speight** last week from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Laurie bravely chronicled the inevitable progression of her disease for the past three years, and we shared her writing with you in this column. She was grateful for the richness of her life, and especially for friends and family. Her husband Joe reported that, although she did not live to see her first grandchildren, she was able to see ultra sounds of the two cousins-to-be.

It is fitting that Laurie is the "poster person" in the ALS Association of Oregon's annual fund campaign, for she was a major fund-raiser for the organization, and knew the immediate benefits the group brings, from communication devices to motorized, adapted wheelchairs. (New donors can find information at 1-800-681-9851 or [alsa-or.org](http://alsa-or.org).) A Celebration of Life for Laurie was to be held at the church December 19.

Another **Soup Kitchen**, feeding more than 45 homeless people, was held December 3 at Jason Lee Methodist Church. Coordinated by **Shelley Kennen**, many of you responded to the appeal to fill the bare cupboard we faced just days before. Soup cooks included Don Wolf, Loraine Stuart, Petra Berger, Angie Denning, Elsa Struble, Suzie Thompson, Dennis Ehrp, Lois Stanley, Shelley Kennen and me. The servers were Lois Stanley and her granddaughters Kira and Paige Stanley, their friend Michael Fifer, and

also Ri Britton, Jill Baker and Dennis Ehrp, Sandy Thiele-Cirka, Ken and I. January 7 is UUCS' next turn to provide and serve soup and then not again until June. Please contact Shelley Kennen if you would like to help. Both home-made and canned soup are welcome.

**Donna Canning** expresses her appreciation to all of you who have called, visited, sent greetings to her during her post-operative recuperation. She reports that she's "doing fine!" She also shared that her grandson, **Chaz Bogner**, Elizabeth Bogner's son, has completed training for his LPN certificate following studies at Lane Community College! Congratulations, Chaz!

Good news: **Shirley, Durwood**, and **Christine Gregory**, driving two van-loads of belongings, arrived safely in their new community, Midland, Texas, four days after leaving Salem. They send their heartfelt thanks to the many UUCS members who helped in the loading process.

The **Ruona/Maluski** family can now be reached in South Korea. They'll be in Cambodia and Viet Nam for Christmas

Congratulations to **Loraine Stuart** on her approaching 80th birthday! During the social hour after the last Sunday service, she was surprised by the choir's singing for her and by a big cake, which was enjoyed by all.

Congratulations to **Cherie Ulmer** for directing the acclaimed South Salem High School production of "A Christmas Carol," which completed its run last weekend at the Reed Opera House! Four UUCS youth were featured in the cast: **Christiana Hannegan, Chloe Nord, Miles Brownson**, and **Nicky Brownson!**

Sharing of personal joys and concerns, accomplishments and even failures, is what brings us together and strengthens us as a caring community. If you have issues to share, please contact me.

*Joan Erickson*

**December Board meeting** was cancelled due to bad weather. Next meeting 1/11.

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***THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST***

December 20, 2006

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**SUNDAY SERVICES**

**10:30 a.m. (except Dec. 24)**

**December 24, 7:30 p.m.**

**Candle Light Christmas Eve Service: “The Pilgrimage of the Magi”**

**The Reverend Richard R. Davis**

**December 31**

**What Is Ultimate? Christiana Hannegan, Susan Scott, & Phil Smith**

These members of the congregation will be sharing their perceptions, and there will be time for congregational response

**January 7**

**A Primer on Spiritual Growth**

**The Reverend Richard R. Davis**

Sometimes it’s good to get back to basics, say, at the beginning of a new year. Let’s explore the fundamental geography of spiritual growth – Is there such a thing? How can we recognize it? How might we nurture it?

**Children’s Religious Education Classes resume today.**

**January 14 Tales From Faraway But Not So Long Ago**

**Brian and Annie Reeder, Don Cleveland, Leroy Kline & Rev. Rick Davis**

This past June the five of us (listed above) were fellow pilgrims to the birthplace of Unitarianism in the land of Transylvania (now part of the country of Romania). We were especially enriched by our stays with members of our Partner Unitarian Church in Simenfalva, Romania. Each of us has a unique story to share. Please grace us with your presence.