

UCSI

NEWSLETTER

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**the pulpit, Dr. Clark, playing.
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MEMBERSHIP: JOIN US ON OUR JOURNEY

After a newcomer has expressed more than a passing interest in our church, she or he is invited to participate in a program called **Path to Membership**. It's a five hour Saturday AM/PM block of guided interaction and a ton of information (video) about Unitarian Universalism. Attendees at the recent (11/12/11) Path to membership included four newcomers, Rev. Karlson, Raffaella Iosue and me.

Why, you ask, would a church trustee attend this program? In addition to the quick refresher (video) in the history and development of our denomination, the interaction between minister (Susan), members (Raffaella and me), and newcomers builds a foundation for the growth and development of our near and long-term future.

The next **Path to Membership** program is scheduled for **January 14, 2012**. Consider attending be you newcomer or member. Our shared future depends on our building together and this is a good way to renew connection to each other and to our religious roots.

Steve Nutt, Chr. Membership Committee



Jolly Holly Fair
Sat. Dec. 3rd

No, it's not too late to do something fabulous for this year's Jolly Holly: *Come to the Fair and Eat, Shop, and be Merry!*

Donations Deadline for booths called Hand Crafts, Boutique, White Elephants: *Friday December 2nd at the very latest 8PM.*

photo: wine bottle gift bag handmade for the fair

Mission Statement

The mission of our religious exploration program is to provide a joyful, safe and nurturing environment, which encourages:

- spiritual growth through the practice of free inquiry
- respect and appreciation for diverse cultures, beliefs and world religions
- guided exploration of Unitarian Universalist principles
- the power to make ethical choices
- service to the wider community

**AGE OF REASON
CEREMONY, Nov. 20, 2011**

Six members of the Explorers Class completed their special program and were acknowledged in a special ceremony on Sunday, Nov. 20th.

From lighting rainbow candles symbolizing the 7 principles to passing under a "palm arch" giving and accepting responsibility the young people demonstrated their knowledge of and love for their faith.

RE December Schedule:

Early Childhood (2-6yrs)

December 4th : First Sunday Topic TBA
 December 11th: Picture Book Bible Tales: *Light One Candle*
 December 18th: Picture Book Bible Tales: *This is the Stable*
 December 24th: Christmas Eve Multi-Generational Service
 December 25th: *NO CLASSES, Merry Christmas!*

Explorers (7-13 yrs.)

December 4th : First Sunday Topic TBA
 December 11th: Traditions with a Wink: *Topic TBA*
 December 18th: Traditions with a Wink: *Topic TBA*
 December 24th: Christmas Eve Multi-Generational Service
 December 25th: *NO CLASSES, Merry Christmas!*

Youth (14-18 years)

December 4th : First Sunday Topic TBA
 December 11th: *Youth Meeting*
 December 24th: Christmas Eve Multi-Generational Service
 December 25th: *NO CLASSES, Merry Christmas!*

DECEMBER EVENTS

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Special program after services on Sunday, December 11th

Last fall, the Rev. Susan Karlson and her family visited with SEWA Bharat in Delhi. SEWA Bharat is one of the Unitarian Universalist Association's Holdeen partners. Susan met some of the women empowered to get a fair wage and market for their exquisite handicrafts. She also met the young women learning different kinds of design and receiving training through SEWA as well as visiting the classrooms. Let's have tea together, watch a short dvd about this empowering movement for women

December Worship Services

December 4th *A Soul Filled with Light—Bodhi Day* celebration of the Buddha's life and teachings.

December 11th *This Little Light Of Mine—As Winter Draws Near* we rejoice in winter beauty and the many festivals of lights.

December 18th, *Occupying the Land Where We Live* reflecting on the nature of freedom and struggles as we near Hanukkah.

Saturday, December 24, 6 p.m.

The Last Straw: A Christmas Eve Service our annual Christmas Eve service for people of all ages, filled with carols and stories. Please bring children's mittens, socks, gloves or hats for our gift tree.

December 25, No Worship Service

(see page 5 for more)

January 1st, *Burning Bowl Ceremony,* our annual symbolic endings and renewal of intentions.

EXPLORE MIGRATION AS A MORAL ISSUE

Join the Social Justice Committee to explore "Immigration as a Moral Issue"—the UUA study/action issue for 2010-2014. Here's how: Join the Busy Common Reader Book Club. We have started reading both *They Take Our Jobs and 20 Other Myths About Immigration* by Aviva Chomsky and *The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories From The Arizona Borderlands* by Margaret Regan. But anyone can join anytime. This is a virtual book club – we share our responses through an email group.

- * Join us for our regular Saturday breakfast meetings. Usually this is the first Saturday of the month but because of the Fair, we will meet this month on Sat., the 10th, from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM in the Library.
- * Help us plan our upcoming Immigration as a Moral Issue workshops. Workshops are planned for Saturday, January 21st and Saturday, February 25th from 9 AM to 1 PM in the Fellowship Hall.

HELP KEEP OUR COMMUNITY FOOD BASKET FULL!

The UCSI provides regular donations to food pantries on Staten Island. Please bring canned and non-perishable food items on Sunday and drop it in the special container in the Library to continue our service to the community.

When I was ordained to the Unitarian Universalist ministry more than eight years ago, my mentor, the Rev. Dr. Fred Muir, gave a sermon where he talked about three responses we can have to life's situations. The first one is "damn", then "help" and next, "thank you." The second response is the one that calls to me this time of year when many of us feel even more harried than usual. It is the time of year when the jovial Jolly Holly Fair comes around that summons up all the resources we have to put on this one wonderful day. Couldn't we all use a little "help" during this season?

There is a story about a monk and a scorpion. As the monk lifts the scorpion from the water, the scorpion stings him and falls back in the river. The monk immediately lifts the scorpion that stings him again. An observer asks the monk why he continues to rescue the scorpion. The monk replies, "it is the scorpion's nature to sting and it is my nature to have compassion and to help." I remember that story when I feel distress. Sometimes it is not my natural inclination, but it is a spiritual discipline I try to practice.

It is often easier to help those outside our immediate circle rather than consider the needs and wants of our immediate family and friends. Perhaps you can identify with me when I say my *most* challenging task is to set aside time to enjoy the beauty around me, and the people that feed my soul.

Balance is a good thing during this season. We may need to holler "help" or kick off our shoes and live in the moment. We are much more likely to respond to situations with "thank you" if we can take the time to be grateful moment by moment. This season I urge you to take some time to say "help" if you need it, to relax and care for yourself. I know this will be a difficult holiday for many people in the church this year who have lost a loved one or who are worrying about the health of someone in their family or themselves. Consider that we give freely out of a spirit of generosity when we take time to remember that we are also part of the interdependent web.

I find inspiration from the words of those two benefactors collecting for charity from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. They explain, "We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices." Let us recognize when "help" is sorely needed and do what we can with our mitten tree collections for the homeless (see Christmas Eve service) and our donations of canned food. May we remember loved ones and what is truly important throughout the entire year. I hope you will include this church in your thoughts and prayers for its continuing mission and vision to reach out to one another and beyond our doors. May you find deep peace during this season of Good Will!

Simply,
Susan

DECEMBER EVENTS, CONT'D PAGE 5

Join the Membership Committee!

Help make the experiences of long-time, new, and potential members reflect the warmth and caring nature of UCSI members. Meetings are on the 1st Tuesday evening of the month at a member's home. Steve Nutt, membership@uucsi.org.

Christmas Dinner

We know that some people have no family in the area or no place to go for the holidays. Whether you are visiting family or plan to get together with others, consider joining the Unitarian Church of Staten Island for a holiday dinner. Join us for a **Christmas Night dinner around 6 pm. Bring a dish to share with everyone.** An e mail invitation will be sent out. Call (718) 447-2204 to RSVP so we know how many people plan to come. Two of our members volunteered to roast a turkey. Vegetarians, Rev. Susan and Alan will insure that there are plenty of vegetarian and vegan recipes.

If you can, bring a large or extra-large hoodie or large men's gloves to the Greening for the men who sleep in the PH coordinate with Rev. Susan.

Special Note: On behalf of all UCSI members & friends, the Buildings and Grounds Committee thanks Mark Semanchik and Stan Hellman for the gorgeous railing next to the ramp leading to the Memorial Garden.

Spiritual Cinema, December 10th at- 6 P.M. in the Sanctuary [note time change]

December's Spiritual Cinema is Frank Kapra's classic movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," with Jimmy Stewart. In 2005, the American Film Institute voted the film the single most inspiring film ever made. A film paralleling our current situation with many people struggling to keep their heads above water, (the 99%), and the Mr. Potters representing the greed of the corporate world. This film has become a classic at this time of year, which reflects various holidays that speak of the importance of "hope" in all our lives. Come see if Clarence will get his wings (an angel looking for a promotion). Most importantly come share in the collective experience of celebrating the "wealth" of gratitude and generosity and its importance in our lives.

The Greening of the Church, Friday, Dec. 16th, 6-8pm

On Christmas Eve our sanctuary is festooned with evergreens and ribbons - the annual Greening of the church is how we prepare the church for our lovely service. Come help make our church reflect the glow and glory of the season. Join us bringing boughs of pine with holly, and any decorations you may have to aid in making the church beautiful. Everyone is welcome!

Following the Greening, join Rev. Susan and Alan for an Open House holiday party at the Parsonage from 8-11 pm. All ages are welcome. Our dog, Lily and cat, Blue, will not be part of the festivities for those with allergies to animals though they will be with us in spirit.

THE LAST WORD

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In this time that is sacred to every source of Unitarian Universalism, you and your friends and family can find a place at the Unitarian Church of Staten. In this darkest time of the year, come find light in our caring community.

December is a magic time at the Unitarian Church of Staten Island.

The Jolly Holly Fair transforms our little Parish Hall and Sanctuary into a town square, complete with the best café in town! The Fair is our front door. For some – whether we come back each year for the Community, the Elephants or the Chili – it is just about the only ceremony we participate in each year. For me the Jolly Holly Fair – not so much Black Friday – is the beginning of the Holiday gift gathering season.

The many hands that come together for the Greening of the Church perform a different kind of miracle. December 16th, volunteers and donors of boughs, pine cones, garland, ribbons and bows will come together and transform the Sanctuary into a woodland holiday bower. It's amazing, random and stunning. And this year we are invited to stop by the Karlson-Kindler home to celebrate the season.

And of course, join us Christmas Eve for carols and candlelight. And Christmas evening for a holiday leftover pot luck.

This year is still a tough time for so many. The excess of the holiday season can make our unmet needs harder to bear. The blessing of our generosity is even more of a miracle now. Together our small actions make a big difference.

The mittens, hats and scarves you bring for our Christmas Eve mitten tree will warm the hands and heads of children who would otherwise go cold.

The warm sweaters, hoodies, caps and gloves you bring in any Sunday in December will warm the bodies and hearts of the ten sheltered men who call our parish hall their temporary home.

Even more at this cold and hungry time of government hunger program cut backs, the non-perishable food you bring to our food basket makes the difference between hunger and nutrition for people served by (I don't know – need to check with Sally.)

Thank you for all the miracles in which you take part. Happy Solstice, Hanukah, Christmas and Kwanza,

Rona Solomon

RAFFLES

Buy tickets at the fair

Choose your preferred prize

RAFFLES

A beautiful handmade rug

A Kindle

Cash

at the JH Fair

December 3, 2011

Mr. & Mrs. Santa

Crafts Show

Yummy food