



NEWSLETTER

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the
South Jersey Shore



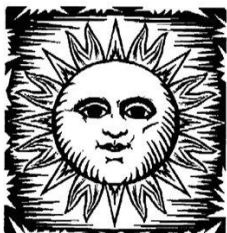
Volume 16, Issue 12

December 2014

December Services

We meet at our UU Center, Pomona Rd and Liebig Street, Galloway NJ (near the north entrance to Richard Stockton College).
Services are at 10:00 am unless otherwise noted.

December 7	<p>DREAMING OF A BLACK (and brown and white and rainbow) Christmas: Reflections on Ferguson <i>Rev. Cynthia Cain</i></p> <p>Where do we go from here? What can white allies do? How can we better understand white privilege and the rage that surrounds Ferguson?</p>
December 14	<p>HANUKKAH: Let's talk about the light <i>Rev. Cynthia Cain</i></p> <p>As Universalists, we acknowledge and celebrate the darkness of winter. Today we will consider Hannukkah and the other winter festivals that bring light in a dark time.</p>
December 21 10 am	<p>Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol <i>Lay speaker Jim Gentile</i></p> <p>The tale has become a clarion call to make this time of year one of generosity and compassion toward those in need. It calls us to be acutely aware of the lives of those who surround us, and of those from whose suffering we turn away. It is a tale of the reclamation of one's humanity from the constructs we have created to shield ourselves not only from this suffering, but from our own suffering. Therefore at this festive time of the year, which anticipates the year's end, "it is more than usually desirable" to contemplate the genius of this 19th Century tale.</p>
December 21 4:30 pm	<p>Winter Solstice Singing Ritual 🎵🎵🎵🎵 <i>"Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light..."</i></p> <p>This alternative holiday celebration welcomes the sun back with music, poetry, readings, and candlelight. The service is intergenerational and all are welcome!</p>
December 28	<p>The Geography of Spiritual Practice <i>Lay speaker Alan Oliver</i></p> <p>Geography at its most basic is the science of "place"- an integration of all factors at a certain location on the map and on the earth. This can be descriptive or it can be transformative as we explore, even to the spiritual level, our particular experience of "place" in our universe.</p>



Deep, deep, deep in the dark of the winter...

For those who have previously experienced WSSR, remember these amazing songs?

*Kore Evohe, Keep the Fire, Benedicta Es, Though My Soul, Imani,
We've Got The Power, Carry it Home, When We Are Gone....
Come and relive the experience.*

For those who have never experienced this singing ritual, you will never forget it!

The Return of Circle Dinners

What are Circle Dinners? Circle Dinners are a way to gather 8 people together for a friendly meal, usually at the home of one of the people involved. Each person or couple brings one of the courses. There is no agenda other than getting to know each other better and enjoying good conversation. There are as many dinners as there are groups of eight who have signed up.

Our congregation is growing, and we no longer all know each other. Circle dinners are a great way for you to expand your circle of community. Please think about participating!

Sign-ups have already begun for the one on **January 17** and the one on **February 21**.

Note: This is not a "couples" oriented activity. Singles are strongly encouraged to participate. One partner of a couple may sign up too, if that's your hankerin'.

Book Lovers Group

The December selection of the Book Lovers Club is *Breakfast of Champions* by the some-time Unitarian Universalist, Kurt Vonnegut. "What follows is a murderously funny satire, as Vonnegut looks at war, sex, racism, success, politics and pollution in America and reminds us how to see the truth." --*Amazon.com*

The discussion will be led by Angela Wexler on Friday, December 19 at 6:30 pm (note the time change --. the group has established a holiday tradition of serving a variety of munchies at this meeting thus the earlier starting time!). All are welcome. Please RSVP to Angela Wexler in order to plan for space and food.



What's happening with Family promise?

Family Promise now has its 9th congregation on board. Welcome to Central United Methodist Church in Linwood, NJ!!!

Consider our Club 172.

For approximately \$17.20, you can provide hospitality and care to a homeless family in our community for ONE FULL DAY and that means they get hot meals, a safe place to sleep, and care by a host of volunteers plus a chance to find a job, secure affordable housing and hope. Make that donation 10 times in a year and you will become a member of **Club 172**.

Regular Meetings

Family Promise of Atlantic County meets regularly on the last Thursday of each month at 7PM at The Absecon United Methodist Church, 100 Pitney Road, Absecon, NJ. Please join us and become a part of this exciting program.

Are You a Chalice Lighter?



There are 3000 of us!!

Chalice Lighters is a program of the Joseph Priestley District, serving Unitarian Universalist Congregations in southern New Jersey, eastern and central Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia and northern Virginia. UUCSJS Chalice Lighters include Jon Luoma, Peg Felix, and Tracy Staab.

During its 26 years of supporting growth initiatives in the JPD; Chalice Lighters have funded grants to more than 50 societies totaling over \$2.25 million. UUCSJS received 3 grants totaling \$60,200 for building our UU Center. The first grant, \$20,208 supported the purchase of our land, and the second was a "double" grant of \$40,000 for support of our building costs. Just as Chalice Lighters were there for us, we hope that as many of us who can contribute, do so now, toward the expansion of Unitarian Universalism in our District.

A Chalice Lighter pledges to respond with a contribution when the request, or Call, is received. The Call announces that it is time for you to add your spark to our flame somewhere in our District. Individuals each contribute a small amount, adding up to a significant investment in spreading the concepts of our free religion.

UUCSJS will have our Chalice Lighter Sunday on December 7. More information and opportunities to sign will be available after the service. Barbara Miller is currently the Chalice Lighter Ambassador. It's such a grand title and requires very little work. If you are interested in becoming our Chalice Lighter Ambassador, please contact Barbara at uucsjsmusic@comcast.net

Margaret Circle

Happy Holidays! The ladies of Margaret Circle will be having our annual winter luncheon on 1 pm on Thursday, December 4. If you would like to be included, please RSVP Shelee by email at sheleer955@hotmail.com.

Support our congregation by doing what you already do – buy groceries! with gift cards for your local Acme or Shoprite!

Buy **Gift Cards** any Sunday for **Acme & Shoprite**.

Using these gift cards for groceries nets the congregation 5%.

We also have Fair Trade coffee, tea, and chocolate!

As I write, it is Thanksgiving morning. I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to work with this fine congregation as you solidify your mission here in the South Jersey Shore and as a vibrant and dynamic part of Unitarian Universalism in our region. I am so excited for you and so hopeful for your future. I feel that we have accomplished some things already, and that we've made strides toward other goals. So far, I have met one-on-one with almost twenty individuals to ask appreciative questions about their experiences at UUCSJS. What I have learned has enabled me to piece together a kind of puzzle of your past and present, and to help with a vision for your future.

Along with areas of remarkable accomplishment, there also have been some causes for unrest and distress. This is to be expected in any community-building process. What lies ahead for us, as leaders and active members at UUCSJS, is to discern what needs to be forgiven, what needs to be resolved, what still needs to be addressed (perhaps by setting boundaries or learning about the work of safe congregations), and how we can frame the issues that caused unrest so that you can move forward as a community of trust and love. My job here will be to help you do that.

All of this brings to mind the struggles in Ferguson and all over the United States since the killing of Michael Brown. It reminds me of how Jesse Jackson, when he came to my community in California after the police killing of an unarmed teenage girl, said over and over, you can't heal a wound until you "get the glass out of the wound." There are so many ways in which the glass is so deeply imbedded in the wounds of people of color in this society that healing of any kind is unthinkable without deep systemic change. This issue is dividing not only people of color and white folks, but white/Caucasian people from one another, as I see my liberal and progressive friends who support the protesters in Ferguson, who understand their rage and their continued unrest, having bitter arguments with their own friends and families on social media over this issue.

I will address this issue from the perspective of white privilege on December 7. Meanwhile, I hope you will read some of the many thoughtful and enlightening blog posts and commentaries made by UU clergy and laity, available on UUworld.org, uua.org, and clf.org, and of course, many other progressive sites around the web.

I'm grateful, although I grieve the seeming lack of progress on institutionalized racism, that my own children are enlightened. I'm proud that my daughter posted these words on her Facebook:

Take a break from planning your next semiformal or date party and educate yourself on what is happening and what you can do to be an active and engaged citizen. Allyship is not easy, it is WORK. It requires humility and dedication, and it is the least you can do. If you jumped at the opportunity to complete the ice-bucket challenge I hope you can spend at least half as much time thinking about what is happening in Ferguson and around our country. Our brothers and sisters are rightfully outraged. We are outraged. Stop turning away from injustice.

If you don't know where to start, this was published in August when everything began and has been helpful to many:

www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/ferguson-on-how-white-people-can-be-allies.html

There is so much to be grateful for today, and to be hopeful about. Although it feels today as if we are starting the Civil Rights movement all over again, the issue has come to the surface. Now we can address it. I pray it will stay present in our hearts and minds, until we can truly begin to heal the wounds, no matter how long it takes.

Fondly,

Cynthia

Rev. Cynthia's Office Hours

Wednesdays 10-2 and by appointment

Upcoming time that Rev. Cynthia will be away in Kentucky:

✈ **Tuesday, December 18 through Friday, December 28**

Read more of Rev Cynthia's reflections at
www.ajerseygirlinkentucky.blogspot.com

Board of Trustees HIGHLIGHTS

November 2014

The **regular monthly meeting** of the **UUCSJS Board of Trustees** was held on Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 6:30 pm in the Lounge at the UU Center, President Art Wexler presiding. Chalice lighting words were spoken, and joys and concerns shared.

• Announcements

—The next **Board Talk-Back** will be held Sunday, December 14 at 11:15 am in a lower level classroom.

—**Heidi Jansch, "Associate Credentialed Religious Educator" Status.** Board members were pleased and proud to recognize Heidi's achievement in successfully completing the UUA's Credentialing Program. Her new title: *Associate Credentialed Director of Religious Education*. Mazel tov!

—**JPD (Joseph Priestley District) Presidents' Roundtable.** Wexler announced he will be attending this event on Saturday, November 22 at the UU Congregation of Columbia, MD, a chance to get to know others, network, and share ideas.

—**2015 Murray Grove Retreat.** Children's Religious Education committee chair Betsy Erbaugh has announced the next congregational weekend retreat at Murray Grove will take place June 12-14, 2015.

—**Early MWA Deadlines for Thanksgiving, Christmas.** Midweek Announcements (MWA) will be coming out one day early before the two Thursday holidays. Therefore, the deadline for MWA copy to reach the Office Administrator for those two weeks will be Tuesday at 7 pm, instead of Wednesday.

• Reports

1) **Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Karen York distributed her written report showing figures for **October 2014**, as follows: **Income, \$14,136** (*year to date*: \$66,137), and **Expenses, \$16,847** (*year to date*: \$68,137), for a net of income over expenses of **-\$2,711** (*year to date*: **-\$2,076**). While this month expenses exceeded income, November will include receipts from the annual Service Auction on the 15th.

—**Capital Campaign 3.** As of November 16, "CC3" (the *Moving Forward* campaign), has received 38 pledges totaling \$112,600, the treasurer said. She reported we have made a payment of \$23,695 on mortgage principal, with an additional \$1,080 in the Reserves account earmarked for CC3; we anticipate making another payment close to \$23,000 before the end of 2014.

—**Auction Fundraiser.** This year's event, held on Saturday, November 15, raised \$11,650 in income, exceeding our budget estimate of \$11,000, the treasurer said. There may be additional auction items and event spaces still available for purchase.

—**Other.** President Wexler offered to follow up on the need for re-inspection of the UU Center elevator. The secretary noted the treasurer's spreadsheet (July through October) shows that 68.4% of the yearly budget for Office Supplies has already been spent; Pereira offered to follow up.

—*A motion to accept the written report of Treasurer Karen York as presented was passed unanimously.*

2) **Minister's Report.** Rev. Cynthia Cain confirmed that Rev. David Pyle, District Executive of the Joseph Priestley District (JPD), will be coming on Sunday, January 25, delivering the message that day and then meeting with UUCSJS leadership in whatever configuration we request. Cynthia passed out a preliminary "Summary of Interim Findings," setting out her observations at this point after meeting with almost 20 people suggested by the Board and Transition Team.

"This is NOT a finished 'anything,'" she emphasized, and requested reactions from all of us to what's written. The next phase of the interim process will include recording a history of

the congregation, and Cynthia said she was excited to learn from Paul Utts there are some 60 past newsletter articles that can help with this task.

Rev. Cain also passed out copies of the article, "Ten Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry" (by Mark Lau Branson; from the *Alban Weekly*, 2/5/2007). She commented that acquiring the habit of practicing "appreciative inquiry," which can be counter-intuitive in our culture, encourages us to discover and focus on what's right and positive, rather than wrong or negative. Embracing appreciative inquiry—and having a Covenant of Right Relations and Disruptive Behavior Policy in place—can provide a constructive framework for moving forward on congregational issues and concerns in preparation for seeking a new, and hopefully full-time minister.

The Board will hold a special meeting on Monday, December 8 at 7 pm at the UU Center to prepare for Rev. Pyle's visit to the congregation on January 25.

• Discussion/Action Items

1) **Inactive committees.** President Wexler introduced a discussion on congregational committees from a variety of angles. The UUCSJS Bylaws list committees that are no longer active, he said, but in a larger sense, are our committees the right ones to involve folks in the life of the congregation? Board members recalled that we had tasked the Committee on Ministry, now temporarily replaced by the Transition Team, to consider our committees with a view toward possible structural change.

Rev. Cynthia observed that "appreciative inquiry" would say it's about relationships, and we might ask, are there *barriers* to people being active. Karen York said she asks herself, are members of the congregation finding ways to get engaged, and her answer is, yes. Jon Luoma commented he's in favor of moving away from the term "committee" to "team" or "task force," because people don't want to do committees; they seem too much like work.

No conclusion was reached, and further discussion about the structure of committees will be part of our ongoing dialogue during the interim period.

• Updates

1) **Family Promise (FP).** Doug Dickinson reported on behalf of the FP team that on Sunday, November 23, we will sponsor a fundraiser featuring homemade cookies in boxes decorated by RE students and others. Dickinson announced that Central United Methodist Church in Linwood has come on board as a Host Congregation. Two more churches are nearing a decision; 13 are needed to begin operations, assuming budget and other resources are in order. The UUCSJS team will hold its next fundraiser, "Souper Bowl Sunday," on February 1, featuring sale of homemade soups in quart containers.

2) **Website.** Beginning with holding a stand-up meeting in the front of the Sanctuary, Jon Luoma reports an impromptu technology team is now in place to evaluate our congregation's web presence. The group began with overall concepts, Luoma said, before beginning to consider design issues, execution, or maintenance. Enlisting Mariann Maene and Michael Cluff, Luoma said the team also includes Betsy Erbaugh, Charlie Roberts, Geoff Stuart, and Elizabeth Hall. Please tell Jon Luoma if you would like to contribute to this important effort to improve our profile on social media and the internet.

• **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.

— Judy Pereira, *Secretary*

The **NEXT REGULAR MEETING** of the UUCSJS Board of Trustees will be held on **Wednesday, December 17, 2014 at 6:30 pm** in the Lounge at the UU Center, 75 S. Pomona Rd., Galloway, New Jersey

The Things I Am Most Thankful For (with Reflections on the Writing Process)

by Oscar Erbaugh, 7

At school, I wrote things that I am thankful for because Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate things that we are thankful for. First, we think about who and what we want in the story. Second, we write down our thoughts, then type them into the computer and print. Third, we check for errors in punctuation and spelling. Last we edit and put information where it flows better, smooth it out, make sure it makes sense, and double check it to make sure you and other people know what it says.

Let me tell you about the things I am thankful for. First off, I am thankful for my sister. We play together. It makes me happy when we play. Second, I am thankful for my toys. I like to play with them... especially my action figures. Third, I am thankful for my swing. My mom, my sister, and I painted it blue and got a red and white string to make it look like the American flag. I stand up on it, hold it, and... swing! Last, the thing I am most thankful for is my tablet. I like to play on it. I am thankful for many things.



Up to our necks

As a nation, we are buried up to our necks in a history of violence against people of color.

By Meg Riley

When I opened my door, I saw dozens of police cars and fire engines with lights and sirens blazing. Stunned, I walked out into my sleepy Minneapolis neighborhood to find clumps of neighbors talking in quiet voices. One of my neighbors, digging a trench to fix a leaky pipe, had been sucked into a sinkhole, and was buried up to his neck in dirt. It took several hours of work before the man was safely excavated and taken out on a gurney—alive, thanks to the hard work of first responders.

So often we thank first responders for the brave work that they do, caring for those who need help. Some of you are first responders, and I thank you now. And yet, if I lived in a different neighborhood, one where primarily black people lived, I might not have walked out sleepily to find out why police were congregated near my house. Rather, I might have chosen to stay inside, fearful not of criminals on the loose, but of the police themselves...

This article is excellent.

Read the rest at uuworld.org:

www.uuworld.org/life/articles/298715.shtml

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Happy Holidays in Children's RE

'Tis the season to alter our regularly scheduled programming.

In addition to our religious education classes, our Music Director Barbara Miller will be reviewing a few of the songs from the Winter Solstice Singing Ritual with the children at the beginning of their RE time for the first two Sundays in December. The children are welcome to join in on these songs if they attend the WSSR service on December 21 at 4:30 pm.

The Children's Religious Education schedule for this month:

- December 7 - RE Classes and OWL
- December 14 - RE Classes and OWL
- December 21 - 10 am - No RE classes/NO OWL - children in attendance will be welcome to an all ages lesson on Charles Dickens
- December 21 - 4:30 pm - Winter Solstice Singing Ritual - Intergenerational service - No separate children's program
- December 28 - RE Classes, NO OWL (Twilight Zone Lesson for grades 7-9)

Best wishes for a safe and happy winter holiday!

In Fellowship,

Heidi Jansch

UUCSJS Director of Religious Education

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore

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Board of Trustees 2014-15

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Visit us on the Web: www.uucsjs.org

December 2014

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