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Sunday Service 11 a.m.

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Sunday Services

January 3 Jo-Anne Elder-Gomes *New Year Resolutions as Guilt-making Practice*

January 10 Janice Ryan *Ministry as a University Chaplain*

January 17 Patricia Ellsworth *Friends for Zambia - Building a School*

January 24 Ron MacDonald *Theism on Trial*

January 31 to be announced.



January Board Meeting

The January Board meeting will take place at the Fellowship following the service on the 17th. Board meetings are open to all members.



Budget General Meeting

A general meeting of the membership to approve the 2010 budget will take place at the Fellowship, around 12:30pm,

following the service on the 24th of January. Please make every effort to attend the general meeting as a quorum is required to pass the budget and allow us to continue operation into the new year.



Women's Pot Luck

The monthly women's pot luck dinner will resume in the New Year. The January gathering is planned for Friday, January 22nd at 6 PM. (we'll eat at about 6:30). Location and topic will be circulated within the next few weeks.



New Year Greetings

Traditions are a core element of our psyche. Every creature has its habits, expectations and needs for its emotional well-being. My cat seeks out a warm winter window in the sun. My dog used to wag her tail upon receipt of a kind word. Wild birds, squirrels and chipmunks will grace your space if you feed them, but leave if you neglect them. We humans, too, respond well to kindness and emotional comforts. Our habits and traditions are a main source of comfort and stability to us, especially in times of great stress.

Most of us have happily fêted the recent Christmas season with family and friends, gifts for the children and goodwill to all. Whatever our roots and upbringing, we all have celebrations marking the winter solstice: thanks for the blessings we have garnered; and, the advent of longer days of sunshine announcing a new season of life. These traditions, the lighting of candles, the giving of gifts and the receiving of friends are important to our emotional well-being. We need these traditions to get over the darkness and isolation of winter. Singing traditional songs for the season is another way we assuage our spirits.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is a quote from Garrison Keillor that struck a chord with me. It is the perfect rant. He forcefully bemoans the Unitarian penchant to rewrite Christian Christmas carols. I happen to agree with his sentiments, but I wouldn't have put it so strongly. Lampoon-

ing traditional songs and customs of others goes against the first and third UU Principles: the affirmation and promotion of, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person”; and, “acceptance of one another”. This, the mocking of another’s expression of comfort, is simply not acceptable in polite society.

For the New Year, let’s participate in another long standing year-end tradition. Lets make a resolution to reaffirm our seven Unitarian Principles and to practice them throughout the year. It is difficult enough to be a transcendental contrarian without deliberately stoking resentment in the majority of the population around us. We are truly blessed to have our small community.

May the New Year be kind and fruitful to all of us.

John van Abbema



Makar Sankranti

Makar Sankranti is a major harvest festival celebrated in various parts of India. According to the lunar calendar, when the sun moves from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn or from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana, in the month of Poush in mid-January, it commemorates the beginning of the harvest season and cessation of the northeast monsoon in South India. The movement of the earth from one zodiac sign into another is called Sankranti and as the Sun moves into the Capricorn zodiac known as Makar in Hindi, this occasion is named as Makar Sankranti in the Indian context. It is one of the few Hindu Indian festivals which are celebrated on a fixed date i.e. 14th January every year.

Makar Sankranti, apart from a harvest festival is also regarded as the beginning of an auspicious phase in Indian culture. It is said as the ‘holy phase of transition’. It marks the end of an inauspicious phase which according to the Hindu calendar begins around mid-December. It is believed that any auspicious and sacred ritual can be sanctified in any Hindu family, this day onwards. Scientifically, this day marks the beginning of warmer and longer days compared to the nights. In other words, Sankranti marks the termination of winter season and beginning of a new harvest or spring season.

All over the country, Makar Sankranti is observed with great fanfare. However, it is celebrated with distinct names and rituals in different parts of the country. In the states of northern and western India, the festival is



celebrated as the Sankranti day with special zeal and fervor. The importance of this day has been signified in the ancient epics like Mahabharata also. So, apart from socio-geographical importance, this day also holds a historical and religious significance. As, it is the festival of Sun God and he is regarded as the symbol divinity and wisdom, the festival also holds an eternal meaning to it.



Growing a Community

Editor’s note: the following is taken from Linda Thomson’s December correspondence. The full newsletter is available at <http://cuc.ca/programs/mailings/dec2009/>

When I talk about congregations with leaders I often hear about questions and anxiety regarding growth issues. “We’ve lost a few members.” “We’d like to grow, and have tried a few things, but we’re not having results.” At this point I ask a few questions so that I can better understand what I’m being asked. “What do you mean by growth?” “Why do you want to grow?” “How do you measure growth?” The answers I receive to these questions tell me a lot about next steps for the congregation we are discussing. Sadly some congregations are only interested in enough growth to maintain the status quo membership levels in the congregation, “I like a small congregation, this is a good size and I’m comfortable here” is, sadly, synonymous with saying “I’ve found the congregation and it’s ok to close the door now!” Others are interested in being able to maintain their organization, and tell me that new members would help replenish their membership roles, adding new volunteers and new pledge units. This tells potential new members, “We are more interested in what you can do for us that in how we can serve you”. Of course congregations need at least some new members each year if they are going to be sustainable. Studies have shown that the average congregation has a normal annual membership loss of about 5%. So unless you are welcoming at least that percentage into new membership each year, you will actually be declining in overall membership. However I’d like to encourage us to think beyond the 5% figure. Because if we don’t, what we’ll effectively be doing is keeping things to ourselves, and we’ll be saying this is nice, but it’s not really important’. If we believed we’d found something really important, like a cure for the common cold, we’d be telling people about it and we’d be encouraging them to try it. I think our congregations are that important!



If you share my belief in our congregations there are resources available to support yours as your leaders work to increasing its vibrancy and vitality.

There are some things we know that can help make visitors feel welcome including careful use of language (avoiding acronyms), an attractive and accessible building, members who strive to find the right balance when greeting visitors so that they feel genuinely welcomed and invited and sincere invitations to come again'. We need members who are willing to invite their friends to attend with them, and outreach programs that help people know a bit about us. And then when visitors do come we need to consider how we treat them. Do we encourage them to take a green mug and then ignore them? The chart below compares low and high growth (vs. no growth) congregations on several indicators.

Comparing Low Growth and High Growth Congregations on several welcoming & hospitality indicators	Low	High
Number of Visitors per month (as percentage of congregation)	10%	20%
Number of interactions with visitors on first visit	0-2	3+
Number of ways/roles offered, as ways to get involved, to visitors	27	55
Number of congregants who establish friendships with new members	2	7
Number of ways to communicate congregational events	3	9
Number of ways to explain and orient newcomers to congregation	2	6
Visitors are personally invited to become involved in events rather than being left up to the visitor	No	Yes
Percentage of second-time visitors likely to become members	21%	38%
Percentage of third-time visitors likely to become members'	33%	55%

There is no magic solution that would help us sidestep the ongoing work of welcoming and hospitality. Some of these are easier to do in larger congregations, but some consideration of the material that is available (some links are posted at the top of page 4) and where necessary adaptations, will provide congregational leaders with a starting point to the conversation. I encourage you to think a bit beyond your current comfort level to a membership number that startles you a bit. I believe our congregations are that important!



The Great Turning

From Empire to Earth Community

by David C. Korten

editor's note: Haifa sent the following with this covering note:

In late Spring of 2009 the Rev. Kitsy Winthrop gave a Sunday Morning Service that spoke about community (June 28th, "Going Upstream"). It spoke to me about individual intentions to work together for a more just world by empowering ourselves to connect to our world community at a deeper level. It was an inspiring talk that she gave that day. She also donated to our Fellowship library a hardcover copy of David C. Korten's book "The Great Turning from Empire to Earth Community". I am attaching for the newsletter readers a description of the book as written on the cover jacket that gives a good summary of the book.

In his classic international bestseller "When Corporations Rule the World", David Korten exposed the destructive and oppressive nature of the global corporate economy and helped spark a global resistance movement. Now, he shows that the problem runs deeper than corporate domination – with far greater consequences.

Here, Korten argues that corporate consolidation of power is merely one manifestation of what he calls "Empire": the organization of society through hierarchy and violence that has largely held sway for the past 5,000 years. Empire has always resulted in misery for the many and fortune for the few, but now it threatens the very future of humanity. Korten points to global terrorism, climate change, and rising poverty as just a few of the signs that the burdens of empire now exceed what people and planet will bear.

"The Great Turning" traces the roots of Empire to ancient times and charts the long evolution of its favored instruments of control, from monarchies and bureaucracies to the transnational institutions of the global economy. Korten also tells the parallel story of the attempt to develop a democratic alternative to Empire, beginning in Athens and continuing with the founding of the United States of America. But this remains an unfinished project — Korten documents how elitists with an imperial agenda have consistently sought to undermine the bold and inspiring "American experiment," beginning in the earliest days of the republic and continuing to the present day.

Empire is not inevitable, not the natural order of things — we can turn away from it. Korten draws on evidence from sources as varied as evolutionary theory, developmental psychology, and religious teachings to make the case that

“Earth Community” — a life-centered, egalitarian, sustainable way of ordering human society based on democratic principles of partnership is indeed possible. And he details a grass-roots strategy for advancing a momentous turning toward a future of as-yet-unrealized human potential. “The Great Turning” illuminates our current predicament, provides a framework for grasping the potential of this historic moment, and shows us how to take action for the future of our planet, our communities, and ourselves.

Winter Gifts

Church of the Larger Fellowship

www.clfuu.org/catalog/

Receive a 20% discount on chalice pendants and lapel pins through January 2010 when you mention the words “Newsletter Fillers”

Looking for that special gift for the Unitarian Universalist in your life? The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) offers UU gifts for friends, family & volunteers of all ages!

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) sells several styles of chalice pendants & lapel pins for all genders and all ages.

To reach a real person, contact The Church of the Larger Fellowship:

e-mail clfshop@clfuu.org
phone 617-948-6150

Purchasing UU gifts from the CLF is another way to support the work of Unitarian Universalism throughout the world. All proceeds from the CLF Shop support the many ministries of the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

Garrison Keillor

editor's note: the following excerpt from a Garrison Keillor opinion piece has received a lot of attention in various Unitarian circles. The full article and carefully considered critiques may be found using your favourite search engine.

Don't mess with Christmas

by Garrison Keillor

It's a Christian holiday, dammit, and it's plain wrong to rewrite “Silent Night.” Unitarians, I'm talking to you!

Unitarians listen to the Inner Voice and so they have no creed that they all stand up and recite in unison, and that's their perfect right, but it is wrong, wrong, wrong to rewrite “Silent Night.” If you don't believe Jesus was God, OK, go write your own damn “Silent Night” and leave ours alone. This is spiritual piracy and cultural elitism and we Christians have stood for it long enough. And all those lousy holiday songs by Jewish guys that trash up the malls every year, Rudolph and the chestnuts and the rest of that dreck. Did one of our guys write “Grab your loafers, come along if you wanna, and we'll blow that shofar for Rosh Hashanah”? No, we didn't.

Christmas is a Christian holiday – if you're not in the club, then buzz off.

Epiphany

To our Christian friends, we bid a happy Epiphany, the “12th day of Christmas” which falls on the 6th of January, however, the celebration will be transferred to the Sunday, January 3rd, in most countries which observe the festival. The date celebrates the visit of the three kings or wise men to the Christ child, signifying the extension of salvation to the Gentiles.



This space wants your material!