



Grist from the Mill . . .

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Issue 4

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek

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We are a Welcoming Congregation serving the Hockessin/Pike Creek/Kennett Square region, meeting every Sunday morning. Childcare is available; religious education is held September to June. All are welcome at our services and invited to stay for refreshments and conversation following the service. Should weather conditions be in question on Sunday mornings, call the UUSMC telephone 369-2712 or check our website (www.uusmc.org). Note that if most area institutions are closing, we will also.

Pancake Breakfast, Artisan Gift Sale, and Holiday Wreath Sale Saturday, December 5

Please join us for this festive UUSMC fundraiser. Doors open at 6:30 AM; breakfast will be served until noon. To those who donated electric skillet last year: we need you again this year! Contact Phil Lowe with questions or offers of help (phillip.lowe@bankofamerica.com). Again this year we will be selling our beautiful Christmas wreaths at the Pancake Breakfast. We need help with decorating the wreaths on Friday, December 4th from 6:30 PM until completion. Please bring wire cutters and if you have an extra pair, please bring to share. We also need donated wire ribbon. Decorative items needed to decorate the wreaths are holly or winterberry cuttings, pinecones, gumballs, teasels, etc. (Fresh cuttings will be kept in water until Friday.) If you cannot help with the decorating, your help in gathering these natural items will be appreciated. Contact Judi Krause for more information at 610-274-8827.

Annual Holiday Yankee Trade Saturday, December 12, 6:00 PM Randy Ploener, Social Events Chair

Hear Ye, Hear Ye! Come One, Come All! Please Mark Your Calendars!

The Yankee Trade is an event that Rev. Nancy Dean brought here from New England. Each person brings a white elephant gift, wrapped, to put in the pile under the tree. After dinner everyone draws a number from Santa's hat. In numerical order, a gift is chosen, unwrapped and shown to everyone. When your turn comes to choose a gift, you open a new one from the tree, but may choose what you like from *all* the previously opened gifts or keep the one you opened. It is really a lot of fun!

This is a Potluck dinner. The Church will provide ham, so stick to drinks, desserts and side dishes! Any Questions? Please call Randy Ploener at (302) 234-8832 or e-mail him at randogumbo@verizon.net. There will be a sign-up sheet in the lobby. There will also be a **Yankee Trade for the kids**. Parents, bring a wrapped gift (under \$10) for each child attending. They will have their own separate Yankee Trade in Room One.

**UUSMC December 2009 Sunday Services
10:30 AM**

December 6 *Be The Star* **Rev. Nancy Dean**

What do you do if you are a star? Shine, of course! We are made of the stuff of the stars, evolved of the same matter, and we have the spark of life within. But do we shine? Do we know how?

December 13 *Finding Joy In Admidst the Sorrows* **Rev. Nancy Dean**

How is it that some people can experience great sadness or tragedy, yet, like Anne Frank in her attic, or Emerson, or the Maccabees in ancient Israel, still remain hopeful? The answer is not easy, but we know that where hope lives joy can blossom. (Hanukkah, Dec. 11-19.) Please join us after the service for our monthly Second Sunday potluck lunch.

December 20 *Our Own UU Christmas/Holiday Pageant* **Rev. Nancy Dean**

Our annual children's holiday service, led by Diana Saunders, Karen Myers, Jennifer Stomberg, and Kristen Tosh-Morelli.

December 21, 7:30 PM *Annual Winter Solstice Celebration* **Rev. Nancy Dean**

Come dressed for the outdoors, enjoy the bonfire, and join the party to follow. The Clarion Brass will play and we will dance and sing in the spirit of passing from the longest night into the lengthening days of the New Year. Bring refreshments to share.

December 24, 6:30 PM *Christmas Eve Candlelight Carol Service, "Rejoice, Rejoice"* **Rev. Nancy Dean**

Our traditional service of singing and memory, with carols and a Christmas message.

December 27 *A Unitarian Looks at Evolution* **Clem Bowen**

What happens when an agnostic, technically trained Unitarian looks at evolution and the diversity and complexity of life on earth? Not necessarily what would seem obvious, at least partially due to some recent UU thinking that bases evolution on science, but allows for sacred meaning and awe.

Sunday Flowers: Flowers make a lovely addition to our services. You may donate a flower arrangement to honor a special person, an occasion, or just because. The donating member may bring the arrangement home after the service. Simply sign up in the lobby or contact Debby Damiani, our office administrator. Write your check for \$30, \$40, or \$50 to UUSMC and write flowers and the date of the chosen service on the memo line. Place your payment in the box outside of the office or in the collection plate. Flower orders will be placed on Monday so payment must be received by the Monday prior to the Sunday requested. Alternatively, you may bring in an arrangement from another source or one you've made yourself. If you'd like to bring in your own arrangement, please provide the office with advance notice so dedication information can be printed in the order of service (administrator@uusmc.org). Thank you to the following people who donated flowers in November: Roberta Headley, Tom Riley, David Smith.

First Monthly Drum and Dance
Saturday, December 19
Phil Lowe

Come enjoy a pre-holiday percussion extravaganza! This family-friendly (children love drumming!) event is a pick-up drum circle with guests from the Newark Arts Alliance and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark. There will even be some belly dancers! Please bring any percussion instruments you have and if you don't have any there will be some for you to experiment with. No skill needed, if you can count to four you're in! This potluck event will run from 5 PM until everyone can't take anymore. Come join in the community of rhythm!

Third Annual UUSMC Chili Competition
Saturday, January 9, 6PM
Randy Ploener, Social Events Chair

Back by popular demand, Saturday, January 9 will be UUSMC'S third annual chili competition. The competition runs from 6-9:30 PM. This is a blind tasting contest in which the attendees will vote for their favorites to determine the First, Second, & Third place winners, who will be awarded prizes: 1st place is a gourmet dinner at Chez Randall's, 2nd place is a one-year subscription to *Chili Pepper Magazine*, and 3rd prize consists of a trio of hot sauces. Please limit your entries to one per person. Besides chili, side dishes, beverages, or desserts would be greatly appreciated. Please sign up on the bulletin board.

Come join the party! Friends and extended family members are welcome too. You are guaranteed to have lots of fun, childcare will be provided. Any questions contact Randy Ploener at randogumbo@verizon.net or (302) 234-8832.

UU History—The Christmas Tree Comes to America!

The year 1996 marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Follen, a one-time professor at Harvard, and the founder of our Lexington, MA Unitarian congregation, which is named for him. Charles Follen has the distinction of being the person who introduced the Christmas Tree to this country. Born in Germany, he had experienced this tradition born out of that culture, and when he came to the USA, he introduced this wonderful celebration in 1832, following the birth of his son. As Ken Gewertz writes: "*The event took place in December 1832. That is the date of a description by Harriet Martineau, an English Unitarian and journalist who was visiting Boston at the time.*" To learn more about this important person in our American and Unitarian history visit <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1996/12.12/ProfessorBrough.html>.

Poinsettia Orders for the Holidays Poinsettias at \$10 each will add color to our Sanctuary for the December holidays. A flower sign-up sheet is in foyer. Poinsettias can be taken home after the Christmas Eve Service. Please make checks to "UUSMC" with "poinsettias" in the memo line. Orders will be accepted through December 19th.

Leadership Leaders and those interested in being leaders of our congregation will find much of interest in the publication *InterConnections*, found at interconnections@uua.org.

Hello All!

First, I'm happy to announce that we will be providing the Holiday Drop and Shop again this year. For those who don't know what this is, on December 11th and December 18th there will be sitting service at the church from 6 PM to 9 PM. You can drop the kids off and get some holiday shopping done while they have pizza and entertainment. For more information on this event (cost, volunteer opportunities) please contact me (Stefanie) or a member of the Religious Exploration Committee.

Planning for the pageant is well underway. Please be sure your children make it to all their pageant or choir practices between now and December 20. The dress rehearsal is scheduled for Saturday, December 19 at 9 AM.

There will be no RE on December 27. If someone would like to lead a Chalice Club for those children that may be in attendance that day, please contact me for details.

I would like to remind everyone to continue collecting for Guest at Your Table. I will be accepting boxes starting this weekend and I would like to have them all in by December 20 (the day of the pageant). We had such a successful Heifer collection last year, and I'm hoping our Guest at Your Table will be just as successful :)

Last, but not least, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season!!

*Cheers,
Stefanie Anderson*

Props to Our Youth!

Members of the **senior youth** have been participating each month in a service project at The Breakfast Mission in Wilmington. Please congratulate these important members of our community and thank them for demonstrating our UU values! They rock!

From the **Chalice Children**, **Fiona Saunders** ran three miles with Girls on the Run. **Miranda Stomberg** had her first flute concert, and **Brody Herman** made honor roll. Way to go!

In the **Questers**, **Gabrielle Herman** made honor roll. Congratulations!

In the **Rainbow Walkers** and **Friendship Finders**, **Reece Berry** and **Stefanie Matsen** both got good grades on their report cards. Nice work!

Autumn Fund Drive Wrap Up

Our Board of Directors, on the advice of our Finance Committee, decided to conduct a fund drive this autumn that we called An Inconvenient Fund Drive. This was an effort to close our operating budget gap of about \$23,000.00. Unfortunately, we were only able to gain new commitments amounting to \$9,042.00. The leadership will now look for ways of saving money and bringing in additional revenue, both very daunting tasks. We want to express our great thanks to the 25 members and families who participated in the autumn fund drive. We know that this is a challenging time economically for most of our families, and we should recognize these additional financial commitments for the wonderful generosity they represent. If you would like to make a financial commitment to the church please contact us pledge@uusmc.org.

If all the year were playing holidays; To sport would be as tedious as to work.

--Wm. Shakespeare

Holidays like Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, are often thought of as gift holidays, but since there is not much of a material nature that most of us need, we can readily assume that the reason we hold on to these traditions has a greater purpose, and a greater impact on us mentally and spiritually than gifting alone would give. We must be getting something special from these times of celebration; something that lifts us up and out of the daily round.

As a group, we UUs are a hard-working, caring, and generous people who want to show that we are indeed people who care. The holidays provide us with a wonderful opportunity to show this caring spirit as we bestow gifts on the people we love, and contribute variously to the larger spirit of the holidays. So, while the gifting is all part of the fun of festivals like Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Christmas, we know that these holidays have a greater purpose.

Sometimes what we can overlook in the process is the on-going needs of those we care about and love; like the real and ever-present needs of our families, as well as needs within our larger community—especially in a year of financial hardship like this past one has been.

The quote above from Shakespeare is a reminder that we would not value these holidays if they happened with any great frequency, so it is no surprise that even while we may find much joy in them, we also can feel them as stressful.

I hope in this season of joy and goodwill that we will keep in mind that what we truly value the most, what we all really do want and need all the time, is that which comes from our hearts and cannot be found in a mall, or wrapped up in a gift box. We want to know that people care about us, that we are loved. And that is a gift that costs something of greater value than money, a gift of our time and attention.

May you find this holiday season to be a time warm and bright with the love of your friends and family, and may you feel the blessings of these shared days throughout the New Year to come.

Happy Holidays from my family to yours.

*Peace and love,
Nancy*

Who is your Lay Minister?

We have here in our congregation a wonderful cadre of members who are the Lay Ministers. The role of the Lay Minister is to be an additional point of contact for our members, especially when Rev. Dean is unavailable. Each Lay Minister has a list of members they will contact. The Lay ministers try to contact members two or three times during the year, and members should feel free to contact them if you have any questions. Our Lay Ministers are: Brian Hanson, Mary Pat Knauss, Tina Guerrette, Liv Reichle, Ann Roschinsky, Esther Steffens, and Donna Salek.

UU World, Winter 2009

My new copy of *UU World* came yesterday, and as usual I've been absorbed in reading its many articles. This issue I was drawn to the Reflections section, and found myself enjoying an essay by Doug Muder called "Ghosts of Unitarian Christmas." Not surprisingly, given the title, this is a recasting of the wonderful old Dickens story, *A Christmas Carol*. In this version, the ghost of Christmas past describes some of the contributions that Unitarians have made to Christmas, and one of the conversations is with Charles Dickens himself. He says, "When I wrote *A Christmas Carol*, I wasn't really recapturing the lost spirit of Christmas. I was conjuring it out of whole cloth. My Christmas wasn't about the birth of one sect's savior, it was about the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people. It was about compassion and friendship and family. Universal values."

What an intriguing realization. Charles Dickens, who spent so much of his writing career documenting the dreadful conditions under which ordinary people then lived and worked, created a new and idealized world of Christmas in this holiday story, and the traditions he invented there went on to become the beloved framework of Christmas as we know it today. These include the trappings of Christmas, of course, the flaming plum pudding, the blazing fire, the conviviality. But even more, his Christmas tradition includes, as Muder says, "the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people...compassion and friendship and family." Those values are hugely important still, and I hope they'll be part of your Christmas.

Thank you, thank you.

I want to express my thanks to the remarkable people who are ready and willing to help out, over and over again. My apologies to those I've missed—please let me know.

Many projects are underway for our UUSMC holiday celebration. Still to come as you receive the December *Grist* are the Pancake Breakfast and Christmas Wreath Sale on December 6 and wrapping packages at Amazon on the 22nd. Also, in November we had the collection of Thanksgiving food boxes for distribution to the needy, and the Friend At Our Table program.

All of these events require planning and execution. My thanks to Phil Lowe and Matt Nolan for putting together the breakfast and arranging for the artisans who participate, to Judi Krause for arranging and coordinating the wreath sale, to Dawn Bowman for coordinating the package wrapping at Amazon, and to Karen Myers and the Social Action Committee for carrying out the Thanksgiving collection. My thanks also to everyone who has participated in these projects. It seems that when we volunteer to help with a project, we get double benefit. There's the fun of the project itself, and there's the glow of knowing that we've accomplished something good for UUSMC and for our community.

May your holidays be filled with peace and joy!

--Jay

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Kathie Stamm, Chair

Share Our Warmth This year, so many families have been hit hard by layoffs and downsizing. We can help warm their bodies and hearts with gifts of scarves, mittens and hats. Our shelters have a large number of families, and welcome donations in all sizes, babies through adults. Please remember those in need while you are shopping and bring your donations to the church on the first three Sundays in December.

Heifer International Looking for an idea for alternative gift giving for those hard-to-shop-for people this holiday season? Why not stop by the Heifer International (HI) table after the service on either December 6th or 13th. Here you'll be able to honor your friends or family by "buying" an animal, an animal share or even trees in their name and then picking out a holiday card to let them know. Your donations will then be used by HI to help families worldwide escape poverty and hunger by providing them with sustainable means of supporting themselves. If you'd like more information on HI please visit www.heifer.org or contact Lauri Rickard at 610-255-4759.

Holiday Cards We will be selling holiday cards in the foyer after services. Proceeds benefit the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, to assist in its work supporting human rights and social justice around the world.

Share Our Plate The Share Our Plate charity for November and December is the Evergreen Center. The Evergreen Center provides specialized care for people with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, along with respite care for their families and caregivers. The Center's fees are on a sliding scale. One half of the undesignated Sunday plate collection will be given to this worthy charity.

Social Action Committee Meeting All are welcome to join us at our next Social Action Committee Meeting on December 13, promptly after the service in the library.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Judi Krause, Chair

Please start saving your items for the Attic Treasures Sale as you clean out in preparation for, or after, the holidays. Keep in mind that we cannot accept electronics and exercise equipment, or adult clothing.

The sale will be held on April 17, 2010. Your help will be needed to price and set up the sale items. There will be more details available in March.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Vicky Tosh-Morelli, Chair

Anyone interested joining our UUSMC need only contact Rev. Nancy Dean at any time to set up an appointment. There will be a chance to speak with Rev. Dean and/or Vicky Tosh-Morelli of the Membership Committee on some Sundays after services.

CARING COMMUNITY

Felicia Shaw, Chair

Our thoughts and prayers are with the following members of our community:

- ❁ Congratulations to Bill and Helen Garlington on their 60th wedding anniversary.
- ❁ Congratulations to Susanna and Thad Gough on the birth of their son, Noah.

If you have health problems or concerns or know of someone who does, we'd like to help. Please let Felicia Shaw know. You can reach her at (302) 994-2768, or send an email to felicshaw@comcast.net.

UUSMC BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS

Cyndy Falcoff & Amy White, Coordinators

The Sunday After-Services Book Group will meet Sunday, December 6th. The book for discussion is *The Secret Life of Bees*, a novel written by Sue Monk Kidd. This wonderful and unusual story explores the notion of divine female power and the discovery by one motherless daughter of what family really means. Filled with unforgettable characters, this “coming of age” story is a winner with much to savor and discuss. There is also a DVD of the movie made from this book that might be worth seeing before our discussion. It is always interesting to compare the book with the movie. All are welcome, regardless of how much you have read or even if you just see the DVD.

On the horizon is our next book for discussion in early February, *Russel W. Peterson, Governor of Delaware, 1969-1973* by Christopher L. Perry. This book is an oral history as told to Chris Perry combining a brief biography with the recalling of a momentous time in Delaware’s history and the controversial governorship of Russ Peterson. Thanks to the generosity of Jane Frelick, we have been provided with a large number of these books, which will be available in the library, for all to read and exchange between now and our February discussion. Other experiences, memories, and interests pertaining to Delaware’s history, including “remember when” photos and other related books, will also be included in our February discussion. Date to be determined.

For further information, contact Cyndy Falcoff, cjofal@comcast.net.

Calendar

December 2009

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Contact the Joseph Priestley District Website for information on UU activities in the region:
<http://www.jpduua.org/pages/archive-jpd-packet.php>

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