



Services begin at **10:30** in person and on **Zoom**

December 1 ~ “Advent” ~ “What are we waiting for this year?” In the Christian tradition from which Unitarian Universalism emerged, Advent marked the beginning of preparation to celebrate Christmas. Rev. Barnaby reflects on how active waiting is among the most important spiritual practices no matter what we believe, especially in times of upheaval and transition. Is the accent in our title this year on “are”, “we”, or “waiting”? (Philia the Owl will weigh in with some magical and, as usual, wry perspectives).

December 8 ~ “Sacred Circle Dance” ~ Dance and the Environment, Daisy McCoy, facilitator. We come together to think about important topics and to support each other in our spiritual life. We usually do this with provocative sermons and readings, music, and meditation. On December 8 we will also use dance to think about our natural world and our responsibility to it. We draw on various sources to for inspiration. As UUs we have principles and values that guide us.

The 7th principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Or in simpler language for children from the UUA: We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things. The new value emanating from love simply says interdependence. We will explore the meaning of this interdependence by word, music, and dance. Dances will be taught, and all are encouraged but not required to participate.

December 15 ~ “Winter Solstice”~ Jodi Bailey will lead a Winter Solstice ceremony with elements from Druidic and Pagan traditions that explore ways we can feel nourished, validated, calmed and embraced in the womb of the darkness of winter. Please join us!

December 22 ~ “Coffee and Conversation”- Join us for a casual Sunday morning gathering with coffee and conversation.

December 24 ~ “Annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service”- If We Could Visit Bethlehem: Imagining non-Biblical visitors encountering the Holy Family at the time of events described in the Bible is a longstanding Christmas ritual. As we come together to sing Christmas carols, honor seasonal candle-lighting rituals, and readings that celebrate hopeful new beginnings, Rev. Barnaby will introduce us to a vision of the UU baby naming ceremony that almost certainly happened but somehow got edited out of the Bible.

December 29 ~ Interfaith at United Community Church, more to follow. Please watch the weekly ebay for more info on this.

January 1, 2025 ~ 3 to 5 pm ~ Come celebrate the New Year in community as we dance together. All dances are taught and no experience is expected. Circle dance grew out of folk dances from many cultures. Some of the dances will be traditional and others will be to current music but choreographed using traditional steps. Some dances will be slow and meditative while others will be exuberant and joyful and many will be in between. For more information email daisymccoy50@gmail.com.

I invite you to read this version passed on to us recently by the UU Ministry for Earth. If you link to it, you will see that the **prayer leader** begins:

“Today we have gathered and when we look upon the faces around us we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living beings. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give our greetings and our thanks to each other as People.

Everyone: Now our minds are one.

Leader: We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of Time. To our Mother, we send thanksgiving, love, and respect.

Everyone: Now our minds are one.”....

The specific gratitude expressions go on and on through the indigenous spiritual and natural world. But I especially love that they conclude:

Leader: “We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it is not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send their greetings and their thanks in their own way.

Everyone: Now our minds are one.”

Sometime during this month, I hope each of you will follow the link to the full text of this prayer and print it out. If you would like me to provide you with a print out, I'm happy to do that too. Either way, I hope you are inspired to fashion a personal expression of gratitude that adapts the prayer to something that could center you on the “here and now” as you start your day. And, then, try to imagine leading the congregation in a way that we

respond “Now are minds are one.” Let us take on the spirit of the Abenaki way of acknowledging the homeland we now share. It will help us understand that our relationship to it must be treated as sacred.

Blessed be, Rev. Barnaby

Our December Donee is: Migrant Justice, a Burlington-based advocacy group for just treatment of the often undocumented and unfairly exploited migrant farmworkers who do so much to sustain Vermont agriculture, and for those related to them in the Latin American immigrant community. Having already experienced a period of intensified harassment and cruel treatment of the people it services during the first Trump Administration, Migrant Justice is currently gearing up for more of the same starting in January with President Trump returning for a second term after demonizing immigrants during his campaign.

Want to Help Select our Donees? Our Donations team needs up to three more participants in the process of recommending groups we should support, which month is the best to spotlight them, and even ways we can get to know them better through worship or social action activities as we share the donation. Get in touch with Rev. B right away if you think this small group activity could be up your alley.

Community Christmas Dinner

Again, this year the Dinner will be at the United Community Church but it is sponsored by Beth El Synagogue and Kingdom Community Service which includes our Congregation. We will be cooking desserts and preparing other foods in our kitchen downstairs in the week before Christmas. If you are able to help with this, please contact Daisy at daisymccoy50@gmail.com All are welcome to join the community in a traditional turkey meal on Dec 25 from 11:30 to 1. Volunteers are also needed at the meal on Christmas Day especially for the cleanup after 1.



Christmas Co-op Community Gift Program

If you have chosen a tag and are participating in the Christmas Co-op program this year, gifts are due back to Mayo's furniture in St. Johnsbury by December 8th. Or you may bring it back to the meeting house and we will get them delivered. Please let Lorie know if you need to leave your gift off at the meeting house by December 8th, if you are unable to bring it in on that Sunday please email. stjuuc@gmail.com

The Caring Network

The Caring Network is a small group that meets monthly to consider how we can be of support to members and friends in times of sorrow and concern, as well as how we can celebrate with you in times of joy. Please feel free to contact any one of us if you find that you or another member of the congregation may need a listening ear, a prayer, a helping hand, a bit of financial assistance, or simply a kind thought. Any information shared will remain confidential.

Jane Brickett (603-788-2220) silofarm@gmail.com

Brendan Hadash (802-748-8074) bhadash@sover.net

Joanne Giannino (508-577-7869) jojouu63@gmail.com

Rev. Barnaby Feder (802-989-9303) revbarnaby.stj@gmail.com

Universalist Unitarian Congregation of St. Johnsbury
47 Cherry Street St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819
(802) 748-2442 . stjuuc@gmail.com . www.stjuuc.org