

The Quest

DECEMBER 2023
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Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
of Sussex County

PROGRAM INFORMATION FOR DECEMBER



Sunday services are both in-person and online, and they start at 10:30. (Religious education classes are in-person only.) Google Meet codes/phone numbers and PINs, which are the same every week, are online at meet.google.com/kww-ugyh-spj or by phone at 413-679-2794, PIN 139 523 137#.

Dec 3. Speaking for Heart and Head. This message fulfills Linda Hendrixson's Spring Fling purchase. She requested a sermon on Rev. Doak's favorite book of the Bible. What book, and why? Led by Rev. Doak Mansfield.

Dec 10. A Merry Band Indeed. UUFSC will welcome new members on this occasion. Rev. Doak says, "My message will offer the why and how one becomes an 'official' part of a UU congregation. I want to give some considerations to the proposed UUA changes. And I will teach the secret handshake!" Led by Rev. Doak Mansfield.

Dec 17. Ceremony of Lights: A Communal Celebration of the Holidays. This inter-generational service will celebrate the various holidays and special events that occur around this time of year: Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and the winter solstice. Join the celebration as we hear the stories of these holidays, look at the symbols of light that are central to their celebration, and celebrate with the music of the holidays. Holiday refreshments will be served at the coffee hour following the service. All are welcome. Bring some goodies to share, if you like. Led by Jeff Wallis, and members and friends of UUFSC. Music by Linda Watkins-Goffman.

Dec 24. Christmas Eve. No service. Have a happy holiday!

Dec 31. New Year's Eve. No service. Celebrate responsibly!

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person.*
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.*
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.*
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.*
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.*
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.*
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*

The Quest is the monthly newsletter of the UUFSC. For the most up-to-date information, go to our website, www.uunewtonnj.org. Our phone number is 973-579-7210.

MINISTER'S MUSINGS



It is truly remarkable that we are already at the holiday season. As I write, November 25, our weather has been very kind. I've heard stories of the angry, snowy winters of North Jersey. I have experienced a few in Cincinnati, OH, and Kennewick, WA. I drive a four-wheel Jeep Patriot, called Midnight. We can make it through. Famous last words? Be safe. Remember our hybrid services each Sunday. Connect, and stay in!

I enjoyed my four days in Cincinnati with family (two sons and spouses, and five teenage grandones). Great food and laughter. I used Allegiant Air, and I recommend them. No frills, but efficient and comfortable for short flights.

So thankful, as it seems the horror in the Middle East may be lessening. The violence and hatred will not solve anything. It will do the reverse—perpetuate an age-old feud. When greed and toxic faux religion is mixed in a small space (about the size of New Jersey), life will always be accursed. Sins of the past do haunt the present and poison the future. Forgiveness must be extended and reconciliation crafted for there to be hope and health. All Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) preach such...in the practicing is the rub!

And the tragedy in Ukraine. Russia's efforts to restore the losses of the ending of Old Communism with a new fascist plutocracy is an international threat that is most real. The successes of a neo-fascism around the world is very troublesome. The age-old contest endures in new garb—greed and power over freedom and justice. Faith is required for the struggle...faith in love and solidarity with justice! It has ever been so!!

These coming weeks can be very troubling...the long dark impacts us. The stress of how things ought to be (happy, merry, joy to the world, etc.) proves an obligation many of us find terribly painful. Depression is real and ripens in the long winter. Age and illness compound the malaise. We are all susceptible. Let us name it and acknowledge the struggle. Please reach out to friends, family, and/or me for commiseration and mutually conjured strategies to cope. I have learned booze makes things worse. Talking can help.

On the other hand, winter can be a great time to read, tap creativity, will an action, self-motivate. I intend to draw. And read.

Please remember the Guest at Your Table initiative and help actualize UU values in the world through the UU Service Committee's great projects. (See page 5.)

Also, remember our Head and Heart Workshops will meet at 1:30 pm on Saturday, December 2, and Saturday, December 9. Come explore ideas and feelings with Rev. Doak.

As always, stay in touch by phone or email.

Love,

Rev. Doak

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

Here's what I like best about the people of our Fellowship—**they make you think.**

In our season's first Friday morning Discussion Group, the subject was artificial intelligence. At least three of our members at the group were computer programmers, and everyone had opinions about the implications of this tech.

Next, the November group's topic was "What is a good life?" Should we be talking about happiness? How do we achieve that? Or should this be about accomplishment? If so, what should we accomplish?

On November 5, award-winning educator (and former UUFSC president) Jeff Wallis addressed "The Downside of Kindness" for our Sunday service. Jeff was just recovering from COVID, but showed us all some of the complications involved in what at first appears to be a purely desirable quality. "Would you want to hire a lawyer known for kindness?" he asked.

And, on November 26, we heard the backstory of artist Claude Monet, as told by Stevie Fava. His love affairs were shocking, his friends included a prime minister, his fortunes moved from abject poverty to wealth, and he virtually invented impressionist painting.

In the midst of all of this, Reverend Doak Mansfield consistently amazed us with clear—and often challenging—sermons. Every single one was a "ten."

And next, we have more wisdom coming from Rev. Mansfield, followed by the first new member induction ceremony we've had in a long time. That will occur after the service on December 10, followed by lunch. (Remember to sign up!)

On December 17, we'll have the Ceremony of Lights, celebrating the holidays of multiple religions.

Anything else? You bet. Program Committee Chairman Richard Goffman has upcoming programs on Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious structure, and on Buddhism, Wicca, and a local trans family.

On January 28, Richard has scheduled a talk he himself will deliver on mortality. It's the one subject that may have led humans to either realize or invent God. Richard writes, "Spoiler alert: With the possible exceptions of Dolly Parton and Elon Musk, we are all going to die."

Death with a smile. You gotta love this place!

Stu

THIS MONTH IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Hello Friends,

In celebration of Thanksgiving last month, the children learned the meaning of generosity through a true tale from the Arab lands. They also put their understanding of generosity into action by preparing treats for all to enjoy during the Fellowship's coffee hour.

From one holiday to the next! This month, the children will learn some common elements of the various winter holidays celebrated by the diverse members of our congregation and by others around the world—love, hope, joy and peace.

Last week, the children worked together to put up our Mitten Tree, which will reside on our sanctuary stage upstairs. The mittens, scarves, hats, outerwear, and pajamas collected will be donated to Project Self-Sufficiency, to help those in need this season. (See page 5.)

Happy Holidays! 🌲

Sharon and Pin

Below is our RE calendar for December.

Dec 3. Winter Holidays. On this day, we'll read a book that introduces the different winter holidays and their significance. Afterward, the children will make a collage, to display in the RE space, using symbols of the holidays of Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Diwali.

Dec 10. Winter Holidays (continued). The children will craft a special book of the holidays we discussed last week to take home with them. We'll also listen to holiday music from across religions.

Dec 17. Ceremony of Lights. There will be no religious education today. Children will stay upstairs with their families to participate in the intergenerational service Ceremony of Lights. This is always one of our very favorite services of the year!

Dec. 24 and Dec 31. Christmas and New Year's Eves. No services or classes. Happy holidays!

***Mission Statement of the
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sussex County***

**We seek to nourish the spirit;
to foster peace, justice, diversity and understanding
in our community and the world;
and to cherish and sustain the earth and the web of life.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Discussion Group

We had a great turnout and a terrific discussion last month about "What constitutes a good life?" The topic for our next discussion is "What will it take to get the USA back to a functioning democracy?" We meet at the Fellowship at 10:00 am on the third Friday of each month. We hope you'll join us on December 15th!

Anyone who wants to join the UUFSC Discussion Group is welcome to just show up at a meeting or to email ufdiscussion@gmail.com for more info. We encourage people to email the moderator within a few days following each meeting after researching the next topic, to share with the group any links they've found interesting or that might help in preparing for the next discussion.

Mitten Tree

Please bring donations for our annual Mitten Tree, which is on display in the sanctuary. We ask that everyone bring in new mittens, scarves, or hats to decorate the tree. You may also leave new unwrapped outerwear and pajamas under the tree. After the holidays, everything will be donated to Project Self-Sufficiency, right here in the town of Newton, to help those in need this season.

Food Pantries

Susan Felsen and Hal Cohen would like to thank everyone for all the generous donations to the pet food and people food drives held during the last two months. Our collection for the Sparta Community Food Pantry is greatly appreciated.

Guest at Your Table

Our Fellowship is once again supporting the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's annual Guest at Your Table 2023. Collections are used to support the UUSC work to advance human rights in the United States and around the globe. This year's theme is "Pursuing Liberation."

The injustices and crises of the past year have underscored the importance of the goals we share as Unitarian Universalists—a world free from oppression, where all can realize their full human rights. The UUSC believes that the solutions we need come from communities most directly impacted by injustice. UUSC has many grassroots partners around the world working to address these injustices, and their work offers inspiration and guidance on the path toward justice.

The UUSC has set up a special donation webpage specifically for our Fellowship. Go to <https://donate.uusc.org/Sussex> to donate online using a credit or debit card, or PayPal, and then click the DONATE button. (Don't click to Join a Team). For those who prefer to contribute by check, please hand or mail your check by January 15th to your Guest at Your Table coordinator, Susan Felsen. (See Contact List for address). Checks should be made out to UUSC.

Contributions of any amount qualify for membership in UUSC. As a member, you join a community of over 40,000 supporters who share your principles and passion for justice. Gifts of \$150 or more from a family or individual will be doubled through a matching grant from the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY.

Thank you for your generosity.

UUFSC SUPERMARKET GIFT CARD PROGRAM

Please call or email Hal Cohen for your \$100 supermarket gift cards each month. Help the Fellowship earn 5% of each card purchased directly from the store, at no cost to you. Thanks!



RaiseRight™

Formerly ShopWithScrip

ShopWithScrip is now called RaiseRight and continues to offer the Fellowship a wonderful way to raise needed funds as you shop. UUFSC gets rebates of up to 14% on gift cards that you purchase from among more than 750 well-known merchants. You can buy gift cards by going to www.raiseright.com. Please contact Sue Weiner or Hal Cohen if you have any questions about this program.



**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
OF SUSSEX COUNTY**

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