



Brockport UU News

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Reflections—Advent and Compassion

By Rev. Peggy Meeker

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Our worship theme for December is compassion, which strikes me as a wonderful fit for the holiday season, the time of gift-giving. I've also been thinking lately about Advent—the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Some Unitarian Universalists do not celebrate Christmas, but many do, and certainly our culture does. So I got to thinking about what Advent could look like for UUs. The Christian idea of Advent is preparation for the birth of the Christ child. Christians believe that God became human in the baby Jesus, so that Christmas is about God being with us, right here in the midst of our busy, everyday lives.

Unitarian Universalists might say that Christmas is about *love* being right here with us in the midst of our busy, everyday lives. But we don't always see it, we don't always feel it, we don't always stop for it, and that's where Advent comes in. It's a reminder to prepare ourselves to be more open to

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Holiday Service on December 23rd

Join us for a special Christmas/Holiday service on Wednesday night, December 23rd, at 7 p.m., at the Brockport Exempt Association. We'll have some very special music, including Christmas carols, we'll reflect on and celebrate the holidays, and we'll finish up with a carol sung by candlelight, and then some holiday refreshments! We're asking everyone to bring a few cookies or other finger foods; beverages will be provided.

The service will feature a play, "December Spirits," about darkness and light, being dazzled and frazzled, and nurturing our inner lights. It has seven speaking parts: one narrator and the six Spirits of Solstice, Night, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve. We would LOVE to have six children, middle-school age or older, to take part. If you know some youth who'd enjoy doing this, get in touch with Karen LoBracco at 637-6374, David Markham, or Rev. Peggy Meeker (contact info above).

*Spirit in Practice
Workshops are being
postponed – see p. 2*

Spirit in Practice Workshops Postponed

The Spirit in Practice class, which has been held the first and third Wednesdays of each month, is being postponed until after the first of the year, because of sparse attendance. We hope to start the class again in February, perhaps on a different schedule.

If you have been thinking of attending, or if you are interested but can't attend on Wednesday nights, please let Rev. Meeker know, either by calling her at 224-6312 or by email to pmeeker@frontiernet.net, so that when the class is started again it will be open to as many people as possible.

Here is the list of topics to be explored:

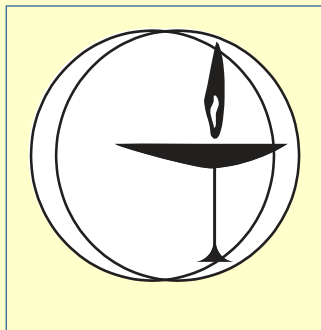
- Personal spiritual practices, including meditation and prayer
- Communal worship practices; engagement with community
- Spiritual partnerships
- Mind practices
- Body practices
- Creative practices, such as painting, sculpting, poetry
- Life practices, including relationships with others
- Justice practices

The class is based on the idea that the “free and responsible search for truth and meaning” is a spiritual quest, and that there is nothing in our lives that cannot serve as a tool for this work.

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giving and receiving love. And what better way than by practicing compassion? So here's my proposal for the four Sundays/weeks of Advent, beginning with November 29: the first Sunday/week, practice compassion for yourself—look for ways to be your own best friend; the second, look for ways to offer compassion to the people close to you; the third, try offering compassion to people that you may not know but whose paths cross yours (say, the mail carrier, or the grocery check-out person); the fourth, think with compassion toward all people, all creatures, everywhere.

And so as we move into December, whatever your beliefs or ways of marking the winter holidays, may you practice compassion in all its aspects, and may the holiday season bring you peace and joy.



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The Wider UU World (and Beyond UU)

Metro Justice's 28th Annual Alternative Fair: Fair trade, earth friendly, and/or locally produced holiday gifts for sale. Food, live music, and information tables. Free child care. Friday, **December 4th**, 6-9:30 p.m., and Saturday, **December 5th**, 9:30 -3. First Unitarian Church of Rochester (220 South Winton Road). \$3 suggested donation for ages 12+. Info: 325-2560.

Human Rights Day: 2009 is the 61st birthday of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This event, beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, **December 10th** at the Downtown Presbyterian Church in Rochester (121 North Fitzhugh St.), will celebrate a future event, the first anniversary of the achievement of world peace.

Solstice Concert: On Tuesday, **December 15th**, at 7:30 p.m., there will be a winter solstice concert at First Universalist Church in Rochester (150 South Clinton Avenue). The concert will feature singer Alan Seale, pianist Bill Lewis, storyteller Able Rae, and world musicians Sonam Targee and Michael Van Munster, and will include some familiar holiday music, "music of the heart," and storytelling. It is free and open to the public. A good-will offering will be accepted.

Christmas Pageant: On Sunday, **December 20th and December 24th** (Christmas Eve) at 7 p.m., the First Unitarian Drama Group of Rochester Unitarian (220 South Winton Rd.) will present "Under the Tree," a one-act Christmas musical, written by Rev. Kaaren Anderson, Mary Lyubomirsky, Kindle Perry and Rich Wilder. It's the story of a grown woman struggling with loss at Christmas time, and opening up to the stories of others.

BUUF News

A special Christmas/Holiday service will be held December 23rd at 7 p.m. See page 1 for details about the service and the play, "December Spirits."

Beginning in January, BUUF will begin offering two Sunday morning services each month. Services will be held on the first and third Sundays at 10 a.m. (Note the time change from the current 11 a.m. services.)

The BUUF Interfaith Book Club will be reading Kent Haruf's novel *Plainsong* for its discussion on December 8th. The next books will be *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* by Mark Lynas (a description of the potential results of global warming, degree by degree) for January; and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (published 50 years ago next year) for February.

On November 12th, Rev. Meeker had the honor of participating in the "Evening for Compassion," an interfaith worship service focused on the Charter of Compassion, which urges religious communities to restore the principles of compassion—based on the Golden Rule—to the heart of their faith and their lives. Rev. Meeker was one of about a dozen faith leaders who took part, sharing words about compassion from their own traditions. She spoke of our affirmation of "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" (our seventh principle), and introduced the hymn "Blessed Spirit of My Life" as a communal prayer for compassion.

If you are experiencing difficulties, or if you or someone in your family is in the hospital and you would like a pastoral call, please let Rev. Meeker know, at pmeeker@frontiernet.net or 224-6312.

The Golden Rule:

*"Do not do to others
what you would not like
them to do to you."*

BUUF Calendar

Sunday Morning Services—11 a.m. on December 6, 10 a.m. on January 3 and 17, Brockport Exempt Association

Christmas/Holiday Service—Wednesday, December 23, 7 pm, Brockport Exempt Association

Steering Committee Meeting—Thursday, December 17 (third Thursday), 7-9 pm

Building Your Own Theology Class—Mondays, December 14 and 28, 7-9 pm, St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Book Discussion Group—Tuesday, December 8, 6:30-8 pm, Lift Bridge Book Shop (discussing Kent Haruf's novel *Plainsong*; you're welcome to come whether or not you've read the book!)

Path to Membership Class—third of four sessions to be held after the service on Sunday, December 6

We would love to have you join us at these activities, and even better, bring a friend or family member!

Brockport Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Mailing address: 6558 4th Section Rd, Box 211,
Brockport, NY 14420-2477

Sunday morning service address: Brockport
Exempt Assoc'n, 248 West Avenue

Phone: 585-637-6374

Web: www.brockportuu.org

Action Alert

The biggest climate summit in history will begin in Copenhagen in early December. As we practice compassion for those around the world, let us remember the people in Africa where the desert is expanding, the people in Asia where floods and storms are growing worse, and the people of island nations such as the Maldives and Papua New Guinea whose very existence is threatened by rising sea levels.

President Barack Obama vowed to open a “new chapter” on climate change. Let's remind him that we take that promise seriously and let's tell our senators that we want bold leadership and change.

Contact President Obama at 202-456-1111, or at www.whitehouse.gov/contact, or by mail at:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500