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The River

Newsletter of the Skagit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
December 2017



FORTHCOMING SERVICES

December 3

Speaker: Vincent Lachina

Celebrant: Rosemary Stevens

Music: Susan Wakeman

The History Behind the Holidays

December marks the month when several faith traditions will observe special days and events. Even though many of us have heard about these days, we know very little about the history behind them. For the Christians, Advent and Christmas; for the Jews, Hanukkah; for African-Americans, Kwanzaa; and for some, Winter Solstice. Each of these has a history and a story. Perhaps it will help us understand these holidays better once we learn their meaning and history.

December 10

Speaker: Rev. Amanda Aikman

Celebrant: Susan Thayer

Music: Sally Riggers

Souper Sunday

Sacred Waiting

Impatience is our usual response to waiting. As we enter the waiting season of Advent, let's consider the testimony of a UU who is incarcerated. He says that the practice of waiting transformed his spirit, gave him direction and purpose, and ultimately saved his life.

December 17

Speaker: Rev. Barbara Davenport

Celebrant: Jim Heard

Music: Sally Riggers

Finding Joy in this Season of Greed and Giving

This is the season between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I cynically call “the season of greed and giving”—too much to do, too much stress, shopping for folk you might not like.

How do we find joy in this frenzied season between Thanksgiving and Christmas, a season of stress and excess when “Joy to the world” seems like a forsaken fantasy?

How do we bring joy into our lives and the lives of others?

December 24

Speaker: Rev. Barbara Wells ten Hove

Celebrant: Susan Thayer

Music: Susan Wakeman

Christmas Eve in the Morning!

Join guest minister Barbara ten Hove as we celebrate the mystery and wonder of Christmas Eve with words, music and even some candles. We may even find Jaco ten Hove featured in the program as well. This service is appropriate for all ages and though it takes place at our usual time, it will feature elements of an evening service.

Revs. Barbara and Jaco ten Hove are Emeritus Co-Ministers of Cedars UU Church on Bainbridge Island, having retired to Bellingham last winter. They are experienced worship and music leaders who were with us in September.

Fourth Sunday. Our donation will go to support the Saharawi refugees stranded in the Algerian desert, the subject of Najla Mohamedlamin’s passionate presentation earlier this fall.

December 31

Celebrants: Peggy Bissell, Jim Heard

Joys and Concerns, and Hope

Reviewing the ending year and anticipating the new one, this service will expand the Joys and Concerns segment into the main event. By sharing reflections on personal life and on the wider world, we can each feel part of a close community embarking on another challenging year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Women's Party: Saturday, Dec. 2, 4:00 p.m. to whenever. Bring something to eat, drink and share, finger food or whatever strikes your fancy. Wine and beer are allowed; coffee and tea will be available. We will have our traditional "gift exchange", so bring a wrapped gift, new or used, \$20 or under, serious or not. Use your imagination. Anything goes. For those of you who haven't participated before, this is a legendary exchange where you can "steal" a gift from another participant if you wish. We will have instructions and details. Questions? Contact Rosemary Stevens or Pat Young.

Men's Party: This will be, among other things, a Snack and Yack, so bring a snack to share. December 13th, 6 pm.

Winter's Return, a Celebration in music with autoharp legend, Bryan Bowers, Sunday December 17, 2 pm at SUUF. Suggested donation \$20 (No one turned away for lack of funds). See flyer in the dining room.

Holiday Gifts for Needy Children. Again this year we are helping a family without the material means to celebrate this season of giving. To contribute, ask Pat Young for particulars about what would be most appreciated.

The Spiritual Brain - Science and Religious Experience. Third Sunday (December 17), 15 minutes after coffee hour starts. Why do we have a spiritual brain?

This month we will cover *Stimulated States and Religious Experiences*. Meditation and prayer naturally stimulate religious experiences. These stimulated states help us gain a deeper understanding of the underlying biology of religious or spiritual states, but they raise even more interesting questions about the meaning and realness of these states - which lead to some fascinating issues that pertain to beliefs, reality and the brain.

There will be 24 classes of 30 minute lectures on DVD followed by 15 minutes of discussion. Lecturer: Andrew Newberg, MD, director of research at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, PA. For more information, contact Nancy Miller 425-754-6138 or nmiller115@aol.com.

Covenant Circle Group Bring whatever book you are reading to Haggen's on Division Street in Mt. Vernon and join an invigorating and far-ranging discussion. The first and third Thursday of each month (December 7 and 21) at 1:30. On the second Thursday of each month (December 14), lunch at a different place, meeting at 1 p.m. (Call Joy for location.) Questions? Call Joy Lindberg at 424-8090 joylindber@aol.com

Custodian needed After the retirement of our SUUF custodian, there was a member request for volunteers. That may be a lot to ask, and the response so far has not been adequate to rely only on volunteers. If you want to volunteer or you want to recommend a janitorial company, please share that with a board member. Board contact:

Laura.E.Herman@gmail.com

Books at SUUF The Fellowship has two libraries. One in the dining room with paperback and hardcover novel, etc. for sale at bargain prices. Sometimes there are CDs, DVDs and videos. The second is in the office and is overflowing with great books, CDs, DVDs and videos on many subjects. Many are donations from members and friends. Just sign your name on the sign out sheet, take it home, read and return.

CRE involvement opportunities! Look for opportunities to get involved with our children and their religious education. Team teach with one of the teachers this fall! We'll do all the work; you get to know the kids, or donate quality musical instruments to our program. Kelly will make more announcements at church.

Opportunities for Stewardship at SUUF: On the entry table is a green book full of opportunities! Take a look, take a form and join in the fun. Skagit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship runs on volunteers. Your help is appreciated and invited! There is also a hospitality sign-up by the kitchen window. Other opportunities exist. Please speak with anyone on the Leadership Council.

Member information handouts are available with UU Principles, SUUF history, bylaws, and more! Please see Laura Herman.

Pianists and other musicians needed. We're making a roster of musicians to sustain the music we love so much while allowing Sally to share her music duties more. The budget does provide some funds for musicians. If you know someone who could help us, a retired or aspiring musician, for instance, please forward the information to Sally Riggers. Being a Unitarian Universalist, while not required, would help.

Compassion: January mini-series. The first three weeks of January are devoted to one topic: Compassion ... toward ourselves, toward others. The series will be led by Amy Patee Colvin, who has practiced a blend of Taoist and Buddhist meditation since the mid-1990s. It is based on her book "Cultivating Compassion", which is a 66-day self-reflection incorporating acceptance and compassion into our daily lives, putting criticism and judgement aside. Amy is a local speaker and coach. Plan to attend all three as the services build on each other toward a better life.

ACTIVITIES HOSTED AT DIVERSITY HALL

Alzheimer's support group December 7. First Thursday of each month 10:00-11:30AM (new time) for caregivers of those with memory loss. A safe place for unpaid family caregivers, their family and friends to exchange practical information on caregiving problems and possible solutions, talk through challenges and ways of coping, share feelings, needs and concerns and learn about resources available in the community. Cheryl McRill, group facilitator 360-899-4643

Healing and Intention Drum Group. December 12. 2nd Tuesday of each month 6:30-8:00 PM. Rev. Elke Siller.

Dances of Universal Peace December 10. Simple, meditative, joyous, multi-cultural circle dances that use sacred phrases, chants, music and movements from the many spiritual traditions of the earth to touch the spiritual essence within ourselves and recognize it in others. 2nd Sunday of each month 6-8pm. Donation \$5-10. No one turned away for lack of funds. For more information contact Aarti Cathy Wooten 360-629-9190 or jstplnfolk@gmail.com

Meditation for everyone Monday nights 7:00 to 8:30 pm presented by **Tom Unger**, (new) Buddhist teacher. Just drop in. Everyone is welcome. See flyer on bulletin board in the dining room.

IMPORTANT DATES

Dec. 12-20 Hanukkah

Dec. 21 Solstice

Dec. 25 Christmas

Dec. 26-Jan. 1 Kwanzaa

Dec. 31 New Year's Eve

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