

DECEMBER 2023 VOL. 12

THE COMPANION

Monthly newsletter of Cedarhurst Unitarian Universalists

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Written by Rev. Amy Williams Clark



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202-579-0823

Office Hours

Wednesdays 4:00-6:00pm



The song *I Wonder as I Wander* keeps flowing through my head as I consider writing this article. It is a beautiful song outlining the Christian story of Christmas and the theology of salvation. But it is not the story or the theology that flows through my mind, it is the image of wandering and wondering that keeps my attention. The play on words and the poetry brings to mind the times that I have wandered the forest on a cold and snowy winter's day. These days are often quiet as the snow comes down gently, perfect time for thinking and being in awe, or wonder, of the world.

As this holy season begins, wandering can take place outside and in. Perhaps it is through a store looking for the perfect gift or perhaps it is wandering past the Christmas lights. We can also find ourselves wandering metaphorically through the season. At times we may be hurried, at other times may be slow moving. At times our wandering is full of cheer, at other times lonely. Each of us wander at our own pace through the season on our own paths that at times blessedly intersect with the paths of others.



“Let me keep my distance, always, from those who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say, ‘Look!’ and laugh in astonishment, and bow their heads.”

-Mary Oliver

“The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.”

-Oscar Wilde

“Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.”

-Rachel Carson



This truly is a season of wonder. The lights are out, the music plays, decorations are plenty. And the food! From Thanksgiving through the new year there is food galore. Favorites and traditional foods from so many traditions - the Yule Log of Paganism, the Sufganiyot of Judaism, the cookies of Christmas, the beans and cornbread of Kwanza. So many foods to go with celebrations.

The season also brings the wonder of spiritual contemplation of the Holy Days. The reflections of the solstice with its promise of new light on the horizon. Reflections of the Christmas story of love being incarnated in our world. Contemplation of the story of the Maccabees and God’s presence. The cultural survival and celebration of Kwanza. Each allows us time to reflect upon the ways that the holy is near and at work within us.

Wonder can be defined both as a questioning and a sense of awe. Both are holy things to do. In Unitarian Universalism questioning is key to who we are. We wonder why things are and question assumptions. We also find the possibility of awe and wonder in the complexity of theology and in simple interactions with nature. No matter how you find wonder in this season and no matter the ways that you wander, may you find peace, love, sustenance, and resilience.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Amy





BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Written by Becky
Zimmerman*



With this December issue, you may notice a new look to the *Companion*! Nalina White is experimenting with ways to make our monthly newsletter “pop,” as well as making it very readable. Email her at outreach@cedarhurstuu.org with any feedback you have – she’d appreciate it!

I’ve shared with you in past articles that my three pillars for 2023-25 are:

Inclusion
Communication
Momentum

boardpresident@cedarhurstuu.org
443-789-1886
9 am – 9 pm

This month I want to talk about inclusion.

In July at CERSI (UU summer camp) I was introduced to the concept of pre-emptive radical inclusion* In simple terms, for us it means: what can we do at CUU to go out of our way to help everyone feel welcome and included? This means not waiting until a person with a particular need walks in our door, but rather already being ready for them, as if they were already in the room. It also means not expecting newcomers to assimilate, but rather to bring themselves fully, as they are, and add to the wonderful mix of people who make up Cedarhurst.

As a congregation, we must decide what we are willing to do, including some renovation of our existing building, to be more inclusive. Our upper level is partially handicapped accessible; our lower level is not at all. This means people of all ages who use canes, walkers, or wheelchairs for mobility cannot go downstairs safely. Our downstairs also does not have consistently reliable heating & air conditioning.

Accessibility and comfort impact the classrooms for Religious Exploration, those same rooms for any other event we might host, the nursery, the office area, our minister's office, and the downstairs bathrooms.

The Board has been examining several options and will be presenting a specific proposal for building renovation to the congregation in the new year.

Pre-emptive radical inclusion is a way for us to grow as a congregation – grow in numbers of people who feel included from the start, and also grow as UU's determined to live our principles to the best of our ability.

I hope you agree that CUU must continue to exist and to thrive in Carroll County and the surrounding area. One way for us to make sure that happens is to be pre-emptively, radically inclusive. Making our whole building accessible and comfortable is one way to do this. There are many others.

Next month, I will explore communication, which is as vital in a small congregation as it is in a large one.

Warmest wishes to all for a peaceful, joyful holiday season.

Board President,
Becky

****Links to learn more
about pre-emptive
radical inclusion:***

<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/preemptive>

(this one includes a video by the speaker I met, CB Beal)

<https://www.umbrellacollective.org/blog/2022/7/5/preemptive-radical-inclusion-a-framework-for-justice-equity-and-liberation>



What Makes the Holidays Special to Me



Each year, Dan and I take out the porcelain Nativity Scene that my grandmother poured, fired, and hand painted. Grandmother would create these scenes for each of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren born while she was alive. Each of us were gifted with what she called the “beginner set” which included an angel, manger, the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and a donkey. Each following year she would send us one or two pieces until we had the whole set including a cow, sheep, shepherds, wisemen, and camels.

Every year, Dan and I take out these treasured items, lovingly unwrap them from their protective wrapping, and place them on our table. As we lay out each piece we tell the story of Christ’s birth, but with a twist. The twist is that Dan studied ancient Greek and will intersperse the story with the Greek names for each item. So manger becomes fatni, angel becomes angelos, sheep become probaton, shepard becomes poimenas, wisemen becomes magi and so on and so forth. We do this until each piece is out and placed. Though we each insist that they are placed correctly, somehow each piece is moved to the “right spot.” We do this throughout the season until it is time to lovingly put away the nativity and store it until the coming year.

-Reverend Amy



Every year at holiday time, I pull out these two vinyl LP’s and remember the best choir I ever sang in, the Birmingham Southern College concert choir. Our Director was Dr. Hugh Thomas, whose musicality and sensitivity brought out the best in all of us. We were so well trained that while we were recording “Silent Night” Dr. Thomas decided to record just one verse. All eyes were on him as he motioned to us to stop singing at the end of that verse. It was a magical moment, and the recording reflects that.

For me, the holidays would not be complete without listening to these two albums at least once.

-Becky Zimmerman



What Makes the Holidays Special to Me



My parents bought a heavenly, densely wooded seven acres of New Hampshire wilderness in 1964. I was 12 years old. Our property bordered Cub Pond, a sparkling dream in the summer. Secluded, two miles in on a rutted, rock-strewn dirt tractor path, no electricity or running water, under the strict control of Mosquitoes Unlimited, our property was, nonetheless, all ours!

Our Christmas Tradition became finding our very own Christmas tree from our very own forest.

Cub Pond in the winter was a silent wonderland of up-to-your-knees snow blanketing rolling hills of deep fallen leaves, streams, and downed tree limbs. We'd trudge the two miles in on the unplowed trail to our property on Saturday before Christmas. My parents, sister, and I would wander about, our necks craned so we could look straight up to the tops of the trees to find The Perfect One.

You see, those Christmas trees we're all familiar with don't actually exist in a forest. Not enough sunlight makes it to the ground, so the pines reach their branches high to the sky to grab hold of as many rays as they can. The only dense growth exists far, far above.

We'd decide on The Perfect One. We'd chop and saw the magnificent pine until it crashed to the ground in a thunderous avalanche of snow and broken branches. In excited anticipation, we'd heave ourselves through the snow to reach the top of the pine and behold what would be our Christmas Tree.

After we hauled the tree-top home, my father would spend hours drilling holes in the many bare spots of our tree-to-be, to fill the gaps with the branches we'd cut from the lower part of the tree. We'd set up the result in whatever spot we could find that would require the removal of the fewest pieces of furniture. What had been a small bit of tree in the forest was a gigantic monstrosity in a suburban home.

Then we'd stand back to admire Our Very Own Christmas Tree. And try really, really hard to love it.

*Okay, so I exaggerated. Our Christmas Tradition lasted only two years. But such memories!
-Becky Barbour*

December Events

See printable calendar on page 13.

LADIES WHO LUNCH – Every Wednesday at noon on Zoom

LADIES WHO LUNCH is a social Zoom that is open to ANY woman who is a member or friend of CUU. We invite you to drop in any Wednesday between 12:00-1:00 pm. Whether you have 10 minutes to spare, or the full hour, you are welcome here!

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.

DECORATE CUU FOR THE HOLIDAYS – Sunday, December 3rd at noon

Please help decorate after the service. We will not be putting up a tree. We will be decorating the mantel, the windows, and have several wreaths and some other decorations. We expect the decorating can be completed in less than an hour. When the decorating is over, have lunch together at Bistro 91 in the Finksburg Plaza.

Call Beth Schilpp at 443-904-1304 with questions.

CUU VIRTUAL GAME NIGHT – Friday, December 8th at 7:00pm on Zoom

Zoom in to play games with CUU friends! We usually play Tribond, Taboo, or Scattergories, but are always open to new ideas. We do not keep score - just have a lot of fun! Contact Beth Schilpp with questions.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.





MAKE YOUR OWN GNOME/SANTA– Saturday, December 9th at 10:00am

Using socks and creative fillings, you will make at least one gnome or Santa. Hand stitching and imagination are needed! All supplies provided. Anyone ages 8 and up welcome. \$20



VIEWING TRAIN GARDENS – Saturday, December 9th at noon

Meet at noon at CUU to carpool to the Jarrettsville Firehouse to see the train garden. If time permits we will also stop at Kenilworth Shopping Center to see their train garden.

Call Beth Schilpp with questions at 443-904-1304.



CUU BOOK CLUB – Sunday, December 10th at noon on Zoom

We will pick our books for 2024 at this meeting so come with ideas. All are welcome.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.



CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP – Tuesday, December 12th at 5:30pm on Zoom

Please Zoom in if you are or have been the physical or emotional caretaker for a loved one. We have no experts – this is just a place to share your issues and experiences.

Call Beth Schilpp at 443-904-1304 with any questions.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING - Wednesday, December 13th at 7:00pm on Zoom

Board meetings are open to all unless otherwise noted.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar.

NIGHT-BY-NIGHT: FOOD PROGRAM – Friday, December 15th at 6:15pm

Every third Friday of the month we provide dinner for approximately 30 homeless in Carroll County, a community service CUU has provided for over ten years.

Interested in helping provide food or drinks? Contact Pamela Malkin at 410-857-5071.

SING ALONG – Sunday, December 17th at noon

Bring your own lunch and spend an hour or so singing carols to get in the holiday mood.

MONDAY MUSINGS – Monday, December 18th at 7:00pm on Zoom

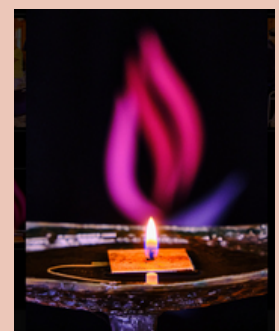
Rev Amy facilitates discussions based on quotes from the UUA on the theme of the month. The September theme is Welcome. All are welcome to join; no preparation needed.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING – No meeting in December. Next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 16th, 2024 at 7:00pm on Zoom.

Interested in helping to create the Sunday worship services? Then this is the committee for you! All are welcome.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.





UU WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION - Wednesday,
December 20th at 7:00pm on Zoom

Join UU Ministry for Earth and other UU partners to honor this time of year and our connection to the natural world, and to remember that light does come after the darkness. Join the Ministry for an evening of music, reflection, meditation, and spiritual grounding hosted on Zoom! Follow link below for more information.

[Winter Solstice Celebration: Light For All](#)



DRINKS AND DESSERT – Friday, December 22nd at 7:00pm
on Zoom

This is our no agenda social time – come with or without drinks and dessert to chat and enjoy each other. Maybe share your holiday stories or whatever you wish.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE MEETING - No
Meeting in December. Next Meeting will be held on January
28, 2024 at noon on Zoom.

The Congregational Life Committee sponsors a variety of activities for friends and members of the congregation. Many of these are on Zoom as the result of COVID, but we are moving toward more in-person events. The committee meets on Zoom on the 4th Sunday of the month at noon and anyone is welcome to attend.

Follow Zoom link on CUU Calendar to join.



Save the Date

Lunch at Maggie's - Tuesday, January 16th at noon

Enjoy lunch with CUU friends at Maggie's located at 319 Green St. Westminster 21157.

We need to make reservations, so please call Beth Schilpp at 443-904-1304 by noon on January 15th if you can attend or if you have any questions. Hope you can make it.

Just For The Heck of It Pot Luck Dinner at CUU - Saturday, January 27th at 5:00pm

Bring a dish to share and any of your family and friends who would like to come. After dinner and some chit chat, we will have in person game playing. SO, in addition to a dish, please bring any games that you enjoy playing. We usually do not put a lot of emphasis on scoring – more on just having fun. Since the weather is iffy in January, we will have February 3rd as the snow day. If the weather makes you unsure if we are having dinner on the 27th, call Pamela Malkin at 410-857-5071 to check. Hoping we will have a good crowd.

Visionary Arts Museum - Thursday, February 15th at 10:00am

Meet at CUU at 10am to carpool to the museum which is near the inner harbor. It usually has works of untrained artists – maybe called folk art. It is a very interesting and different experience. Adults are \$15.95 and Seniors 60+ are \$13.95. The museum also has a restaurant.

Call Beth Schilpp at 443-904-1304

Holiday Service Announcements

Sunday service will be at its regular time on December 24th. There will not be an additional Christmas Eve service in the afternoon or evening.

Sunday service on New Year's Eve, December 31st will be lay-led by Francine Hahn and will be our traditional Quaker-like service.

Please feel free to bring your leftover holiday treats to share for coffee hour!

Interested in receiving more information on events?

Contact Nalina at outreach@cedarhurstu.org to be added to our weekly CUUpdate mailing list!



Minister Office Hours

In-Office Meeting

4:00-6:00pm

*Rev. Amy's office hours
for winter will continue
on Wednesdays, in-
person only.*

*Feel free to stop in any
time.*

*Rev. Amy is always
available for urgent
pastoral matters and
can be reached via
phone or text.*

202-579-0823



Contact

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Outreach Coordinator: Nalina White Outreach@cedarhurstuu.org



Cedarhurst UU Events

December

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 10:30am Sunday Service 12:00pm Decorate CUU for the holidays	4	5	6 12:00pm Ladies Who Lunch 4:00pm Rev. Amy's Office Hours	7	8 7:00pm Virtual Game Night	9 10:00am Make Your Own Gnome/Santa 12:00pm Train Garden Tour
10 10:30am Sunday Service 12:00pm Book Club	11	12 5:30pm Caregivers Support Group	13 12:00pm Ladies Who Lunch 4:00pm Rev. Amy's Office Hours 7:00pm Board of Trustees Mtg.	14	15 6:15pm Night-by-Night Shelter Dinner	16
17 10:30am Sunday Service 12:00pm Holiday Sing Along	18 7:00pm Monday Musings	19	20 12:00pm Ladies Who Lunch 4:00pm Rev. Amy's Office Hours	21	22 7:00pm Drinks & Dessert	23
24 10:30am Sunday Service	25	26	27 12:00pm Ladies Who Lunch	28	29	30
31 10:30am Sunday Service						