

----- AUUF Services · 10 a.m. -----

December 7—Candle of Peace
Incarnation
 Rev. Diana Jordan Allende

Central to Christianity is the teaching that God became flesh—incarnated—in the man Jesus. From this idea of incarnation flow interesting questions, even in a metaphoric sense: If God became human, what does this say about the value and goodness of embodied, human life? In what ways do *we* incarnate divinity? How can we bring an incarnational presence of compassion and love to others?

December 14—Candle of Joy
A Generous Unitarian Universalism
 Rev. Diana Jordan Allende
Potluck & Giving of the Plate: AIDS Outreach

There's nothing Scrooge-like about being a UU in December when we celebrate all the winter holidays. And yet, beyond the wondrous winter festivals, as a matter of principle Unitarian Universalism seeks to honor and respect the wisdom of the world's religions throughout the year, to find in many traditions that which is meaningful. Rather than clamor for exclusive claims to truth, let us celebrate the generous spirit of

Unitarian Universalism and mine it for its depths.

December 21—Candle of Love
Solstice: Thank the Lord for the Nighttime
 Rev. Diana Jordan Allende

For weeks now, we've entered ever deeper into darkness. On Solstice the sun is said to stand still—and then make its return back toward the earth, toward spring, toward rebirth. But nighttime has its charms, its uses, its gifts. Before we turn toward the light, we'll take a moment to appreciate the night.

December 24 (6:30 pm)
Sing We Now of Christmas
 Rev. Diana Jordan Allende & Friends

A multigenerational service of song and story, of candlelight and hot chocolate, of family and friends. Join us for this AUUF tradition that celebrates the ancient yearning for peace on earth and goodwill toward all.

December 28
A Participatory Service
 Lay-Led Service

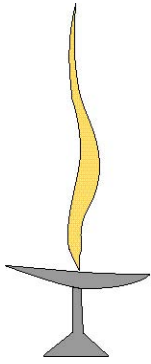
Come and share the words, images, and music that bring meaning to you. See our website auuf.net for the latest information.



December 2008

AUUF Auction
 December 5, 2008
 Silent Auction 6 – 8 pm
 Live Auction 7 – 9 pm
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Conversation Café
 December 7, 2:00-3:30
 Forgiveness
 **
All are welcome

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Weekly Events Choir @8:45 | Terri 11-1 | Diana 1:30-6:30 Yoga @5 | Terri 11-1 | Diana 1:30-6:30 | | Meditation @ 10 |
| | 1 | 2 Com. Lunch @ 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 Auction | 6 Cookie Walk |
| 7 Conv'n Café @ 2 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 Potluck Board Meeting | 15 Jan News Deadline | 16 | 17 Ember Days | 18 | 19 Ember Days Feminista @ 6:30 | 20 Ember Days |
| 21 No Theology Café Humanists @ 6 Hanukkah Begins | 22 | 23 | 24 Christmas Eve Service @6:30 | 25 Merry Christmas | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | *(Please see inside pages for more details about events.)* |



Diana's Column

Office Hours—

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-6:30 p.m.

Time off: Mondays

Diana's office is in the lower level of the Busch Center, most easily reached by walking down the sidewalk and entering through the back door.

Do stop by!

Although I most sincerely wish you a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukkah, a soulful Solstice and a joyful Yuletide, I thought I'd share some alternatives (or additions) to the conventional holiday gift-giving celebration. Some of you may be doing something similar already.

At last year's Christmas Eve service, Bill Baird read the letter he sends to family and friends explaining that he has made donations to charitable organizations in their honor. Just recently my son, Gabriel, and his wife, Alexia, showed me a list of charities they are keeping handy for whenever they're asked about their Christmas wish list. They will simply direct people to the several options they would be pleased to have receive a donation in their honor.

Of course, with the internet, all of this is made easier. Websites such as www.redefine-christmas.org or www.changingthepresent.org give us the opportunity to make the world a better place, one gift at a time. Like the Heifer Project or even our own UUSC Guest At Your Table boxes, websites like these invite and encourage us to give truly meaningful gifts where they are needed most. So keep this in mind for your hard-to-shop-for gift recipients. Or invite others to give to your favorite groups on your behalf.

Perhaps a gift to give to yourself this year could be the actual observation of Ember Days on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of the week before Solstice. Ember Days occur four times a year, generally around the change of seasons. Although they are part of the Catholic liturgical calendar, their roots are pagan and predate Christianity. An occasion for prayer and fasting in the Catholic tradition, the Ember Days of Winter seem especially timely and well-named. They speak to me of nodding by the fire, or perhaps banking the fire for the night, or stirring among the ashes to see what is still capable of producing warmth and light. We will need moments of stillness and renewal during the busy holiday season, so why not pencil them in on the calendar right now: December 17, 19, and 20, winter's Ember Days.

Proposing three days of soul repose during the holiday season may seem extravagant and unrealistic, but by putting them on the calendar, perhaps we'll make time—some time—to pause and reflect. Simply imagining an appropriate way to spend an Ember Day can be a useful meditation. To be intentional—making this part of your religious practice of the season—would be divine.

Wishing you a warm, happy, and safe holiday season.

Love, *Diana*

Christmas Eve Magic

AUUF's Christmas Eve service is made magical by the talents of its members and friends. Musicians, readers, bell ringers, candle-lighters, hot chocolate makers and cookie bakers—each has a part in creating this enchanted evening service (6:30 p.m.). Please let Diana know if you would like to contribute to the Christmas Eve service. Volunteer to tell the children's story, read the birth narrative from the book of Luke, sing or maybe even dance. dallende@uuma.org or 501-8621.





In the Loop



Since July, Terri Albrecht-Schmidt has been hard at work as our new DRE and we've all come to really appreciate her efforts and creativity on behalf of our children's RE program. Unfortunately, Terri and her family are leaving Auburn very soon, and we will soon be searching again for a DRE. Terri's husband, Thomas, has been offered a position at the University of Notre Dame, and they will leave around Christmas. Shannon Price has agreed to chair the search committee again, and I am hopeful that we'll be as fortunate in this search as we were in our first.

When you are next out on the playground, be sure and say "HI" to our new playground supervisor, Karen Sacco. Karen has a Masters in counseling, and she works with daycare home providers. As our paid supervisor, Karen is in charge out on the playground, so if you have any questions about what to do when you are a playground volunteer, be sure and ask her. If you have a child with food allergies, please let Karen know so she can be sure to purchase safe snacks. Now that we have a playground supervisor, we also need someone to step up and volunteer to be our Playground Committee Chair. This person finds playground volunteers for each Sunday and is our liaison with Karen. If you are interested in this position, please let me know. I'd be happy to talk with you about it.

Here's to a wonderful holiday season for all!

Yours,

Sharon Roberts

President, AUUF Board of Trustees



UU Connections

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GROWING BELOVED COMMUNITY



"Growing Beloved Community," Mid-South's theme for the year, takes its inspiration from the book of this name by Tom Owen-Towle, a much-respected UU minister, now retired.

In the season of the winter solstice, of Christmas and Hanukah and Kwanza, we humans affirm what is beloved in our lives. We pause to celebrate what we value most; we give gifts to those we love and to those to whom we would extend love; we sing of what brings us joy. It is a beloved time. It is a holy time.

In the first chapter of *Growing Beloved Community*, Rev. Owen-Towle writes about what "holy" means, and he suggests that "being holy invites us to be still and know that our lives have come into being through, and are sustained by, a loving Spirit beyond our control, beyond even our comprehension, [and] to gather in song and enjoy music as a spiritual expression rather than solely as performance..."

In this season, especially, we come to our UU congregations hoping to find again that which we call holy – to touch and be touched by it. "Holiness," Owen-Towle asserts, "is most nearly approximated through experiencing the fullness of the Beloved Community in all its multifarious forms – from local parish to global whole."

Yet holiness, Owen-Towle reminds us, "doesn't imply that we major in piety or esoteric ritual." We Unitarian Universalists know that the holy can be found in the ordinary, the everyday. (Rev. Owen-Towle will be with us at the MSD Annual Assembly in Nashville May 1-2, 2009.)

'Tis the Season... a time to pause, to reflect, to invite the holy into our lives. In so doing we connect with what is beloved in our lives. In so doing we grow beloved community.

--Mid-South District – UUA; On the web at www.msduua.org

Religious Education NEWS

DRE Spotlight

Transformations



OWL can stand for one of two things as far as I know. The first is exciting, but alas imaginary, – Ordinary Wizarding Level. The second is a very real and powerful course on Human Sexuality that was created by UU's and United Church of Christ (UUC) – Our Whole Lives. In my job description it is written that I should “develop youth-focused programs such as OWL, Coming of Age, Rites of Passage, etc.” All of these programs serve to strengthen the community of a church, and certainly, they draw the children and youth closer together.

Much of the talk in UU congregations today is about multi-generational experiences through the services, various committees, and other gatherings. This talk is not just “for the sake of the children.” Sure they learn from the generations before them; however these experiences ensure and enrich the life of the fellowship. Without varying ages coming together for a common purpose, there is a real and mostly impassable divide between the youth circles and the adult district. This does not lead to a sharing of values and ideas, modeling of our shared religion or a sense of oneness for our fellowship.

There will be more multigenerational activities coming to AUUF, so please participate as you are able. While OWL is not technically one of them, it is a remarkable opportunity to enrich the life of a particular age group. Please consider getting trained in OWL in August 2009. There are 4 different age groups for children and youth: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, and grades 10-12. There are also 2 divisions for grown-ups: young adults (ages 18-35) and adults. You could change your life while changing others' lives!

Why am I stressing this so many months before the training? There are many reasons. I will share two of them with you. The first one is that teaching OWL or other courses is not to be taken lightly, so please reflect on this and see where it leads you. The second is that I will not be with you starting next month. I am celebrating with my family the move to Indiana, as Thomas will start a faculty position at Notre Dame. At the same time, I

am saddened not to see the full metamorphosis of the RE program at AUUF. But in no way do I intend for the changes to end because I am leaving. You all are a part of the transformation, and as such I want for each of you to find your place in it.

Gratefully,

Terri Albrecht-Schmitt

A Big Thanks to Terri!

While wishing Terri, Thomas and Isaac all the best in their move, I want to acknowledge AUUF's misfortune to be losing Terri as our DRE.

In the seven months that she has been with us, she has brought focused attention to our RE program and ministry to families with children, and we are better for that. Children's RE has long been an AUUF strength, but it is too big and important not to have ongoing, professional leadership. So a big thanks to Terri for helping us to begin to see those possibilities and shining a light on the path ahead.

~Diana

K-3 RE Report

We have four teachers in the K-3 class. We thought there might be too many teachers, but we underestimated how wiggly K-3 boys can be. The girls are a dream - quiet and helpful. The boys are silly and wild. All of them have been very thoughtful. We keep them moving from one thing to another during our class. Our curriculum this year comes from the UUA website - Moral Tales. Each session uses a story to center everyone. The stories have been very thought-provoking for the class. We have been thinking about Faith, Forgiveness, Empathy, Prayer and Welcoming. A new ritual at the beginning of class is called “Gems of Goodness.” Each person puts a gem into our chalice

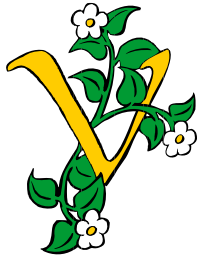


bowl and tells about a good deed from the previous week. We plan to have a small celebration when our bowl is full, and it is impressive how quickly our good deeds are piling up.

--Jey Koehler, Angie Hodges, Conar Rochford, and Shannon Price



ANNOUNCEMENTS



VINING

Join Robert, Amy, Sadie, and Jacob for the 16th Annual Vining on December 20. What is a Vining? It is an outdoor event at 564 Heard Ave where folks gather to twist and twine holiday wreaths from locally harvested grape, wisteria, and kudzu vines decorated with natural materials--pine cones, seed pods, dried flowers--gleaned from nature's fall bounty. We also make Stone Soup that we eat for lunch, along with vegetarian chili, warm wassail, and other goodies people bring to share. The fun starts at 10AM (-ish, or thereabouts) and lasts 'til about 3PM. What do you need to bring? Any decorative elements (pods and cones and the like) to add to the choices, a raw vegetable to add to the Stone Soup (we pare, peel, and otherwise prepare on site as a group activity), any foods or snacks to share for lunch, and a festive spirit. Hope to see you here at this any-and-every-age-friendly event!

--Amy

December Giving of the Plate: East Alabama AIDS Outreach

In keeping with AUUF tradition, the December Second Sunday Giving of the Plate will help to support East Alabama AIDS outreach. As we have done for many Decembers now, all cash donations collected in the second Sunday (potluck) plate will go to EAAO. If you wish to write a check, please write "AIDS Outreach" in the memo area.

EAAO is a community-based organization that acts as an advocate for individuals that are HIV+ or are living with AIDS, and others impacted by the virus. Services provided include assistance with medical care, medications, support group, rent and utilities, food bank, case management, and transportation. The agency also provides testing, counseling and AIDS education within the community.

The Nutcracker Ballet

*December 13 & 14 at 2 pm
Opelika Performing Arts
Center*



For those of you who feel that the upcoming holiday season would not be complete without seeing a production of The Nutcracker—well, you're in luck!

The annual community production of LynnTerra Ballet's "The Nutcracker" will be performed Saturday, Dec. 13 and Sunday, Dec. 14 at the Opelika Performing Arts Center. Both shows are 2PM matinee performances.

Tickets are \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for children 12 and under, and individuals in groups of 10 or more are \$12.00 each ticket.

Several AUUFers are involved in this year:

- Carl Backman dances in Act I as Mr. Stalbaum
- Liza Backman dances as a Snow Flake in Act I, in the Flower Corps in Act II, and in a solo role as Chinese in Act II
- Leila Elalaoui-Tabili (Carolina Marquez's daughter) dances in Act I as a Soldier, and in Act II as an Angel
- Margaret Stauffer (Garth's daughter) dances in the Battle Scene as The Mouse Queen, and as a Snow Flake in Act I, and in Act II in the Flower Corps
- Sadie Zabawa dances as a Snow Flake in Act I, in the Flower Corps in Act II, with her solo role as Tree Fairy closing the Battle Scene in Act I
- Behind the scenes, Amy Kaiser is acting as costume mistress, and Ann Busch has assisted as a costumer

The Nutcracker is a lovely holiday classic that is sure to get you in a holiday mood with visions of mice and soldiers and snow and gingersnaps and sugarplums dancing through your head.

Tickets can be purchased through the Arts Association of East Alabama, 1032 S. Railroad Ave, 705-5546, at Auburn School of Dance and Performing Arts, 1875 Mall Blvd, 501-0901, or at the Auburn Kroger store. The most direct way is to contact the ticket seller, Judy Prior. You may download an order form at www.lynnterrabet.com, click on "Mail in ordering form," and send it and your payment to Judy Prior, 261 Cary Drive, Auburn, AL (jacprior@aol.com).



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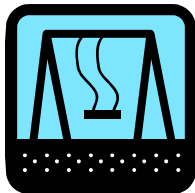
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Reminder: The deadline for January
newsletter items is December 15.



Schedules

Playground Volunteers

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| | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| December 7 | Ralph Banks, Peter Livant |
| December 14 | Amy Phillips, Peter Livant |
| December 21 | Kitty Frey, Michael Hein |
| December 28 | Peter Livant, Peter Livant |

Storytellers for December

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|-------------|-----------------|
| December 7 | Jay Koehler |
| December 14 | Janice Ross |
| December 21 | Terry Rodriguez |
| December 28 | To be announced |

Warm Greeters for Cold December

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|-------------|----------------------------------|
| December 7 | Leigh Jacobson, Lindsay Amsberry |
| December 14 | Terry Rodriguez, Ken Walters |
| December 21 | Kitty Frey, Michael Hein |
| December 28 | Jennie Raymond, Peter Livant |

Angels for December

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|-------------|-------------------------|
| December 7 | To be announced |
| December 14 | The Walkers |
| December 21 | Ken Walters & assistant |
| December 28 | To be announced |