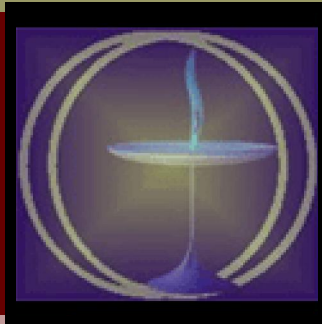


December 2011

www.uumidland.org



AN OASIS OF SPIRITUAL SEEKERS NURTURING OUR PLANET & COMMUNITY

UU Church of Midland

Minister's Musings

As the Winter holidays quickly descend upon us, it is good to remember that this time of year is supposed to be fun. I hear from people over and over, "I have to make these ten dozen cookies," or "I must buy gifts for 37 people." The fact is, there is nothing other than breathing, drinking, and eating (and their obvious correlates) that we "must" do. Absolutely everything else is a choice. We choose to make cookies, buy presents, decorate the house, etc. We do these things for many different reasons, but always it is a choice. It is a well known fact that people do not die from not eating Christmas cookies or receiving just the right present on or before the designated day.

Here is how I look at it. People enjoy the cookies we make (the presents we buy, etc), and we



enjoy giving those cookies to friends and family because their enjoyment is important to us. It is a conscious *choice* we make to spend those umpteen hours making those cookies. And because a certain degree of cleanliness and order are important to us, not to mention the obvious health benefits, we *choose* to spend umpteen hours cleaning up the mess made while making those cookies.

This change of mindset, the conscious awareness that everything we do is a choice, believe it or not, can make even the most mundane of tasks seem just a bit less tedious, and perhaps even enjoyable. Being mindful of why we do the

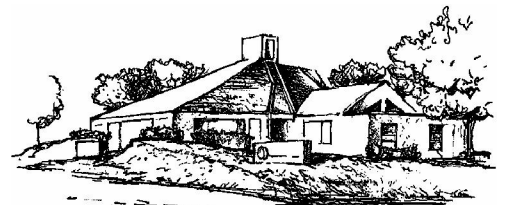
things we do is a marvelous way to maintain a sense of balance in our lives, most especially when we are surrounded by the busyness of the holiday season. And when we find that the reasons behind our actions are no longer meaningful, we are free to stop doing those things that do not nurture our souls. After all, if we don't take responsibility for our own souls, who will?

We call Unitarian Universalism a living tradition for a reason. Like all living things, it changes and grows to meet changing conditions. Likewise, it is important to allow for changes in our own lives. It is like pruning the dead branches of a tree to make room for newer, more productive branches to grow and flourish.

In Peace and Love,
Rev. Thomas Schmidt

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December 2011 At A Glance

December 4

9:30 a.m. Forum: Soup for the Soul led by Emmy Ulmschneider

11 a.m. Worship: *Sacred Stories* led by the Rev. Thomas Schmidt

The Holidays are here. Central to all the various holidays are the stories. Christmas is a story.

Hanukkah is a story. Yule is a story. Kwanzaa is a story. It is through our stories, sacred and

secular, that we interpret the world. What's your story?

Lunch following the service at 12:15 pm

December 11

9:30 a.m. Forum: Family Promise led by Rev. Thomas Schmidt

11 a.m. Worship: *No Room at the Inn* led by the Rev. Thomas Schmidt

In the story of Christmas, when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, they found no room available to them.

Only one person was willing to help them in their time of need. Today, countless families are homeless and

the number increases everyday. Is there something we can do to help?

December 18

9:30 a.m. Forum: High Sky

For 47 years, High Sky Children's Ranch has been dedicated to healing abused children and promoting family wholeness. Join Jalyann Hogan, Executive Director as she shares highlights, stories and needs.

11 a.m. Worship: **Christmas Pageant** — *Spirit of the Christmas Tree*

There is one Christmas story, there are countless ways to interpret it. Let us explore the significance of the holiday with storytelling, a children's pageant and song.

December 24 — 7 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service — "*O Solstice Night*"

Let us explore "The Reason for the Season" through the myths and stories that precede all others and continue to give shape and meaning to our lives.

December 25

No church, please plan to attend the Christmas Eve Service.

January 1, 2012

No Forum

11:00 a.m. New Year's Brunch Note the special time!

Bring favorite brunch food to share and reflect on the coming New Year together.

UU Children participate in religious education from 9:30 to 10:30 each Sunday morning.

At 11 a.m., children join the adults for the beginning of each service.

After the children leave the service, they engage in supervised projects or play through the second hour.

Free childcare is available each Sunday.

December Calendar

Dec 7	7:30 p.m.	BYOP/Building Your Own Philosophy
Dec 10	10:00 a.m.	Program Committee
	11:30 a.m.	Religious Education Comm. at Murray's
Dec 14	7:30 p.m.	Catechism with an Open Mind
Dec 16	6:30 p.m.	Christmas Party at the Kimberly's
Dec 18		Deadline for January Newsletter
Dec 19	7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting

Note from Treasurer

If you would like your pledges to be counted for this tax year, please pay them before December 31. If you need information on the status of your pledge call David White.

David will send a letter for tax purposes in January.

Greener than Green

Submitted by Niki Widmayer

As Green Sanctuary chairperson, I have had the real privilege of coming in contact with many Green advocates around this country. In 2007, Peter Sawtell, Executive Director of Eco-Justice Ministries penned the following that describes the different shades of being green.

At a base level, we should now expect all churches to meet community standards, and to do the commonly accepted things in environmental responsibility. When most of our members practice recycling at home and the office, it is glaring if we don't do it at church. Keeping up with the normal practices for business and government agencies is the *very least* that we can do if we're to call ourselves "green."

Leadership churches have moved beyond commonly accepted practices, and also are doing things that other churches or institutions are not doing. Leadership churches implement energy-saving features, even when there is not a short-term financial benefit -- installing solar panels on the roof, or putting in a super-efficient heating system. They provide education and moral leadership, both within the congregation and the broader community working to address issues of environmental racism. Environmental responsibility is seen, and named, as a moral imperative.

Transformational churches are the deepest shade of green. Where leadership churches look at innovative technologies and practices, transformational churches take on social systems and worldviews. They might resist consumer culture with a deep call to voluntary simplicity, or challenge the structures of economic globalization which encourage the exploitation of God's creation. They call us into an ecological spirituality that affirms a new type of relationship with our communities and the earth.

As we think about our own church, what sort of green does it seem to be? Is it deep green, bright green, pale green, or perhaps just vaguely greenish? How does it compare to other "green" churches?

We have achieved a lot in 5 years, but we can not be comfortable or proud simply because there's a vague tinge of green in our programming and practices. Let us work to make our church "greener than green." Let us move beyond the basics into the realms of leadership and transformation.



UUCOM Board

Carol Kullman, President

Barbara Handley, President-Elect

Emmy Ulmschneider, Programs

Alice White, Membership

Kathryn Shelley, Secretary

David White, Treasurer

John Kullman, Building & Grounds

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News from Religious Education

Submitted by Lisa Jebesen

If you're like me, you're having a hard time believing that the holidays are upon us. Didn't the new school year just start?

We have a special event coming up for the season. Rev. Schmidt will lead the children and youth (as well as several adults) in a Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 18th. Spirit of the Christmas Tree is an intergenerational worship service designed to celebrate the Christmas nativity story from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. We would love to get as many children and youth involved as possible and we've made it as easy possible to participate. All you have to do is be at the church at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 18!

It is important for us to know how many people we can count on so please contact me or Rev. Schmidt as soon as possible. Or don't be surprised if we contact you personally! It's going to be a great event. Hope to see you there.

In other news, many of our youth are participating in the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program being held at the Lubbock UU church. Maureena Benavides is the Cluster coordinator for the program that includes youth and volunteer adults from around our Cluster, including the Midland, El Paso, Lubbock, Amarillo, Odessa and Portales, NM churches. OWL is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum

developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC). OWL offers participants a safe place to learn with up-to-date and age-appropriate answers to all their questions.

Teens learn:

- How to clarify their values and improve decision-making skills through engaging activities
- Supportive peer group and bonding lessons
- What are sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment
- How to critique media messages about gender and sexuality
- Acceptance of diversity
- Encouragement to act for justice and sexual equality

Many thanks to our adult volunteers, Maureena Benavides, Sally Flores, Victoria Duran and Erika Neilson for giving their time for the first session held November 18-19 and thanks to Cynthia Pool for the financial contribution to OWL.

The next meeting will be in January and we will be needing donations of healthy food and drinks for the youth. Some more volunteers are also needed, especially some male teachers for that meeting.

November 21 Board Meeting Highlights

Building and Grounds chair, John Kullman reported that the landscape taskforce is pursuing fence bids with a goal of new fencing by February;

Membership chair Alice White reported that guest cards are now being utilized and are a helpful way for guests to provide the feedback necessary for us to better respond to their needs;

Tom presented information on five area MeetUp groups, each group likely attracting people who have similar interests and philosophies as UUs. Unanimous interest was expressed in exploring ways the UU Church might connect with these groups;

RE representative, Sally Flores reported that the OWL group meeting in Lubbock was successful and now the group has requested to meet in Midland. This was encouraged;

Treasurer David White reviewed the financials emphasizing how responsive members and friends have been to the new Sharing the Plate program. Cash offerings have increased along with our ability to address community needs through our city's various nonprofits;

UUA and Southwest Conference News

Everything is Holy

A Winter Retreat featuring musician Peter Mayer, February 10-12, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Express DFW, in Dallas. Join religious professionals and lay leaders from around the region for three days of inspiring music, hands-on training, sustaining worship and time enough to take it all in.

This conference is for anyone with an interest in the ways we can nurture ourselves and all of our families, children, youth and adults, in their faith and spiritual growth.

Batter Up!

UU Spring Training, a Faith and Leadership Development event of the Southern Region will be held at the First Unitarian Church of Dallas

March 29—April 1, 2012. Six Tracks will be offered:

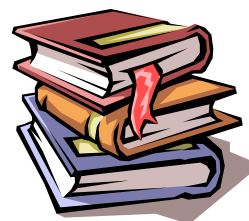
1. Our Whole Lives (OWL)- Jr. and Sr. High
2. OWL—Young Adult and Adult
3. Leadership Experience Prep Course
4. Non-violent Communication / Dialogue
5. Pastoral Care (Lay Chaplain Training)
6. The Smart Church—Healthy Congregations.

For more information about both programs and registration forms, please visit the District website (www.swuuc.org).

Don't forget, the UUA General Assembly (GA) , held every June will be in Phoenix this year. The primary focus of this GA will be immigration.

Holiday Giving

BOOKS! BOOKS! BOOKS! One of our new traditions at UUCOM is to collect donations for books for children. We will begin collecting contributions on Sunday, November 27 through Sunday, December 18. Books will benefit children and youth at High Sky Children's Ranch and Midland Fair Haven. If you make out a check, please write BOOKS in the memo line. Last year was our best year ever! Let's see if we can top it! See Barbara Handley for more information.



Koffee Klatch

Guests and long-time members are invited to join Rev. Schmidt every Sunday following the services that he is here. This is your opportunity to ask questions about the morning message, Unitarian Universalism, or anything that might be on your mind. The topic for discussion is determined by those who participate and will likely vary from week to week. This is a great chance to get to know our new minister better and also an opportunity to connect with others in the church at a deeper level. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall 12:15—12:45.

Please join us in celebrating the warmth and joy of the holiday season.

Christmas Eve 2011

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Midland invites you to a special Christmas Eve service filled with traditional carols and contemporary music.

Unitarian Universalism welcomes all people and all families, including yours.

** Somehow, not only for Christmas but all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to you glad."*

~ John Greenleaf Whittier

The service begins at 7:00 p.m., with holiday treats to eat and drink following the service.

Building Your Own Philosophy (BYOP)

The BYOP book discussion group meets at the church on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays each month from 7:30 – 9:00 pm. All are invited to participate. Walt McConathy 432-212-2416. *Note: Information on the next book is below. Deadline for the group order is Wed. Jan 4th, 2012.*

Dec 7 Grace Paley: *An Interest in Life*

Dec 21 NO MEETING - HOLIDAY BREAK

Jan 4 Wislawa Szymborska: Selected Poems (1996 Winner Nobel Prize in Literature) Bring a poem or two to share.

Jan 18 Michel Foucault: *The Body of the Condemned*

Feb 1 Jhumpa Lahiri: *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000 Pulitzer Prize for book with same title)

Feb 15 First selection in *Great Conversations 4*

The deadline for the next group book order is Wed, January 4th.

The title is **Great Conversations 4**. Total cost **\$26.95**, includes S&H, tax exempt, at the group rate. Make check payable to Walt McConathy, 432-212-2416. Books will be available for pickup no later than

February 1st. Individual orders can be placed with The Great Books Foundation Bookstore at <http://www.greatbooks.org/store/> or by phone 800-222-5870 (\$24.95 for book + S&H \$4.50 + TX sales tax.) List of readings are below.

Titles - Great Conversations 4

*Indicates a selection from a longer work.

Meno by Plato

Life of Nicias by Plutarch

To Perpetual Peace: A

Philosophical Sketch by Immanuel Kant

The Chilean Earthquake by

Heinrich von Kleist

Where I Lived, and What I Lived

For by Henry David Thoreau

Selection from *Culture and*

*Anarchy** by Matthew Arnold

Selection from *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of*

*Thinking** by William James

Major Barbara by George Bernard Shaw

The Darling by Anton Chekhov

First Snow on Mount Fuji by

Yasunari Kawabata

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson

Selected Poems by Lisel Mueller

The Smallest Woman in the World by Clarice Lispector

Lava Cameo, from Object Lessons:

The Life of the Woman and the

Poet in Our Time by Eavan Boland

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Catechism with an Open Mind

A traditional catechism involves a series of questions and answers which is used to teach participants the foundation of their religious beliefs. In a Catechism with an Open Mind, participants are asked questions for which they provide their own answers. A traditional catechism is often required for membership. A Catechism with an Open Mind is not a requirement for anything. This program is designed for those people who want to grow in self-awareness and faith. For more information about the class, please contact Rev. Schmidt. The classes will be on Wednesdays that do not compete with BYOP or holidays, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. See below for dates and topics.

Date/Topic

December 14, 2011

What Does it Mean to be Human?

January 11, 2012

The Meaning of Community

January 25, 2012

What is Unitarian Universalism?

In Times of Need

One of the reasons we are here is to care for each other. Please contact Rev. Schmidt if you are aware of a care need in our church or community that is not being met. We can only help if we know there is a problem.

Sharing the Plate

As a part of our stewardship and social outreach plans, we have begun Sharing the Plate. Each month a different local nonprofit will be designated to receive one-half of all non-pledge contributions made to the Sunday offering plus any designated checks to the organization will be donated to that nonprofit.

The recipient of Sharing the Plate for December will be Centers for Children and Families (www.centerswesttexas.org). "Since 1957, Centers for Children and Families has helped strengthen individuals and families in West Texas. The agency was founded to provide counseling for those who would otherwise be unable to afford the services that would assist them during difficult emotional times."

From our November collections we will be donating \$509.00 to the Permian Basin Food Bank, which is part of a larger network that serves much of West Texas. The Food Bank "supports the nutritional needs of children, families and senior citizens through strategic partnerships with civic and corporate groups as well as private donors." Every week the West Texas Food Bank feeds approximately 15,000 people. "Every dollar donated provides 4 meals for the hungry, and 95 cents of every dollar goes directly to feed West Texas." Along with the check, we are also donating several bags of food we collected this month.

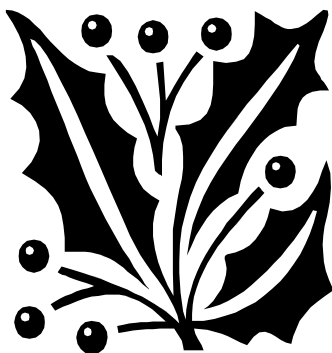
Circle Supper

A Circle Supper is a gathering of about 8-10 people at someone's home or for a Dutch treat at a restaurant. These dinners are a great way to meet people at the church for conversation and to enjoy good cooking. If you would like to be a host or be added to the list for future events, see Carol Kullman or see the sign-up sheet on the table in the foyer at church.

Holiday Party

It's time again for our annual holiday party. Thanks to John and Marion Kimberly for again hosting the event. Their address is 3101 Shell, Midland and the party will begin at 6:30 on December 16.

Everyone is welcome, of course, but please consider that the Kimberly's home is not necessarily "kid friendly" so please plan appropriately. The theme is **Italian** and the sign up sheet is on the table in the foyer.



Buddhist Practice Group Starting

Join us for a series of meetings lasting several weeks covering the basics of establishing a Buddhist practice. If you've been curious about Buddhism, want a refresher to re-establish your practice, or want to meet and practice with other Buddhists, then you are welcome.

Long time Buddhist practitioner Dennis Stratton will be leading the group here at UUCOM. They will meet weekly starting Tuesday, December 13. 7:00—8:00 p.m. The group is open to everyone seeking to expand their Buddhist practice and awareness. For more information or questions, please contact Rev. Schmidt.

Program Committee

Check out the energetic group who are working diligently to ensure your Sunday worship and forum experiences are top notch. They need your assistance. Saturday, December 10, 10 a.m. at the Church.

The Program Committee is responsible for planning and coordinating all of our Forums and one Sunday service each month when Rev. Schmidt isn't in the pulpit. If you can't make the meeting but would like to help, please share your thoughts and ideas with the Chair of Committee, Emmy Ulmschneider,

Membership Matters

Have you been getting to know the church and Unitarian Universalism? Do you feel that this congregation might be a spiritual home? Are you considering a deeper commitment to the church? Membership comes with great gifts and opportunities, as well as responsibilities to the community, such as voting in the upcoming congregational meeting. If you are considering membership see Alice White, Membership Chair, a Board member or the Rev. Thomas Schmidt.

Our Mission and Covenant

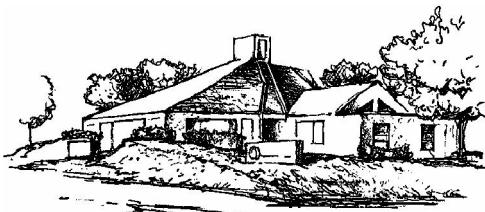
The Unitarian Universalist Church of Midland is an oasis of liberal religion empowering people to pursue spiritual growth and work toward a just, equitable, sustainable society. As a congregation, we covenant together before the wonder and mystery of life to provide a welcoming, safe, and tolerant religious community that both nurtures and challenges us in our diverse and yet shared journeys. Striving together in the spirit of love, we will listen and respond to the ethical and spiritual concerns of one another, seeking to foster a deeper sense of fellowship that strengthens us each in service to life.

- adopted 2003

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

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

Membership in our church is open to all who wish to covenant in the free, responsible search for truth and meaning. Contact the church office for more information.



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