



DECEMBER 2011

Unichord



THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ELGIN

Kwanzaa Celebrates Black Heritage

Created by Maulana Karenga in 1966, [Kwanzaa](#) is the first specifically African American holiday. Karenga said his goal was to "give Blacks ... an opportunity to celebrate themselves and history." The name Kwanzaa derives from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, meaning first fruits of the harvest. At first, Kwanzaa was conceived of as an alternative to traditional holiday celebrations, but today, most people celebrate it along with whatever faith they typically identify. For example, Christian families might have the traditional kinara candles near their Christmas tree. One celebration need not supplant the other.

During Kwanzaa, African Americans reconnect with their African cultural and historical heritage. Families celebrating Kwanzaa decorate their households with objects of art, colorful African cloth such as kente, and fresh fruits that represent African idealism. Women wear traditional kaftans. It is customary to include children in Kwanzaa

ceremonies and to give respect and gratitude to ancestors. Libations are shared, generally with a common chalice, *Kikombe cha Umoja*, which is passed around to all celebrants. Non-African Americans also celebrate Kwanzaa. The holiday greeting is "Joyous Kwanzaa."

A Kwanzaa ceremony may include drumming and musical selections, a reading of the African Pledge and the Principles of Blackness, reflection on the Pan-African colors, a discussion of the African principle of the day or a chapter in African history, a candle-lighting ritual, artistic performance, and, finally, a feast (*Karamu*). The greeting for each day of Kwanzaa is *Habari Gani?* which is Swahili for "What's the news?"

Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa, from December 26 to January 1, is dedicated to one of the principles, as follows:

Umoja (Unity): To strive for and to maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and stand up and speak for ourselves.

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems, and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (Family): The belief in family and general communal understanding.

Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful than when we inherited it.

Imani (Faith): To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Joyous Kwanzaa to you!

From the Minister

I like the holiday season. Yes, I know it is too materialistic, too hectic, and often has too many expectations that go unfulfilled. Still the holiday season has a way of keeping my spirit hopeful and engaged. Even though in the midst of the holiday season we have the darkest day of the year, the holiday lights keep that darkness at bay. What's more the cold and snow are just part of the magical setting.



Come January, when the lights and decorations are taken down and all the talk of magic, generosity, and making the world a better place lessens to a whisper, my spirit tends to withdraw from the world. For the months of January and February I am in a survival mode waiting for the signs of spring.

I heard a suggestion the other day that made sense to me. We were talking about the approach of winter, and how dreary it was compared to the holiday season, and this person suggested that we come up with a midwinter holiday. An occasion to thaw our spirits and rekindle the fires of hope, good will and glad tidings. It doesn't have to be all that complicated. In fact we could just leave up the lights and decorations from the holiday season. Heck we could just extend the holiday season another month. It wouldn't have necessarily the intensity that accompanies the pre-January holidays, but it could be a slow winding down with a bit of a kicker at the end—something to look forward to that comes in January (or early February) besides the Super Bowl.

Or it might have nothing to do with the pre-January holiday season. After all there seems to be something interesting going on with February 2. It seems to be one of those days that many faiths try to get a piece of. The pagans have

A Month of Sundays

12/4: Deck the Halls. We mark the holiday seasons with a service devoted to decking our building out in holiday spirit and in so doing encourage it within ourselves. The morning begins with us all gathered in the sanctuary for a few minutes of opening words and music, and then we split up into various activities. It is a morning of activity and good cheer.

12/11: Communion. Our annual bread communion service when we recognize and celebrate the gifts that come through community. As part of this service we will have a Child Welcoming Ceremony where we recognize the young children who have joined us since our last ceremony. Service led by the Rev. Dan Brosier.

12/18: Holiday Intergenerational: Let There be Light! This intergenerational service will look at the common theme of light in several faiths at this time of the year. Service led by Kathy Underwood and the Rev. Dan Brosier.

12/24: Christmas Eve. Come join us as we celebrate the magic of the season through song and story. This year's service begins at 7:00 PM. Following the service there will be refreshments and participants are encouraged to bring a hors d'oeuvre to share. Service led by the Rev. Dan Brosier.

12/25: No service. Merry Christmas.

All services begin at 10:45.

Imbolc, the Christians Candlemas, and several cultures have some version of Ground Hog Day. All we need now is a common theme, a few stories, and a couple of snappy songs, and we will have ourselves an oasis in the desert of winter.

— Dan

December Calendar

Worship Services

December 4, 11, and 18 at 10:45; Christmas Eve service on December 24 at 7:00. No worship service on December 25.

Adult Religious Exploration and Education

December 4, 11, and 18 at 9:00 in rooms 301 and 302:

- Voluntary Simplicity (through December 11)
- Building Your Own Theology

No classes on December 25.

Angelic Organics

December 10 at 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall

Board of Trustees

December 21 at 7:00 in the Fellowship Hall

Book Group, Afternoon

(Not meeting this month)

Book Club, Evening

December 16 at 7:00 (offsite)

Buddhist Group

Thursdays at 7:00 (offsite)

Choir Practice

December 1 at 7:30 in the Sanctuary

Child Welcoming Ceremony

During the service on December 11

Committee on the Ministry

December 7 at 7:00

Covenant Group

December 13 and 27 at 7:00 (offsite)

Deck the Halls

During the service on December 4

Executive Team Meetings

December 14 and 28 at 1:00

Finance Committee Meeting

December 14 at 7:00

Handbell Practice

December 4, 11, and 18 at 12:30 in the bell room

Improv Group

December 4, 11, and 18 at 7:30 p.m. in room 301

Landscape and Grounds Work Party

December 4 at 12:30

qUilters

December 3 from 10:15 to noon in room 302

Social Justice Committee

December 28 at 7:00

**UNICHORD DEADLINE
DECEMBER 18**

Yule Ritual and Potluck Feast

December 23 at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall. Pagan Unity's annual celebration of the Winter Solstice is scheduled for Friday, December 23rd beginning at 6:00 in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a dish to share for the Potluck and join us to light the Yule Log and sing carols with "alternative" lyrics. Contact is [Sandy Russel](mailto:SandyRussel@unichord.org), 847-289-0811.



Planning Your Memorial Service or Funeral

Sunday, January 22, 12:30 – 2:00 in room 302

It is never too early to prepare for death. Forethought and planning are extremely helpful to those who survive you. In this workshop each participant will create their own memorial service.

Workshop led by the Rev. Dan Brosier.

Church Rentals

December 10
in the Bell Room
December 17 at noon in
the Fellowship Hall

Lifespan Religious Exploration and Education



As I sit here in my office, it is almost Thanksgiving. However, my “Christmas” cactus has been in bloom for over a week now. Every year, it blooms earlier and earlier. At some point, I imagine it will bloom at Christmas time again.

For the few weeks that it flowers, I enjoy its bright red blooms and am thankful for this small burst of color. And since it was a gift from the congregation many years ago, it reminds me of the beauty within our walls. For this, too, I am thankful.

As fall slowly turns into winter, our Adult Spirituality programming continues with Building Your Own Theology and Voluntary Simplicity. Both programs are at 9 a.m. every Sunday on the third floor.

The young people will be doing several social action projects during the year. We recently had the 3rd-5th grade class collect money for UNICEF at the Halloween party. During the winter holidays, we will take a short hiatus, since many other organizations and schools offer the young people similar

opportunities. I do encourage families to take part in the Giving Tree for the Larkin Center. The Tree is located in the first floor hallway. Let your child(ren) help choose a card and accompany you when you purchase the item. You’ll find the details on how to participate at the Giving Tree.

Here’s what’s happening in religious exploration and education classes this month:

December 4

- Deck the Hall Intergenerational – No classes

December 11

- Preschool: Christmas Is a Time for Sharing
- K-2: The Wonder of Life
- 3-5: Las Posadas
- 6-8: Visiting a Mosque
- High School: Judaism: Birth of Abrahamic Tradition

December 18

- Winter Intergenerational – no classes

December 25

- Christmas Day! – No classes

In Faith,
—Kathy

December Birthdays

3 Bob Sandidge	15 Meg (TianTian) Laflin
4 Tim King	19 Ethan Fincher
6 Rusty Winchel	20 Roberta Nauman
7 Linda Porter	20 Barbara Sugden
7 Mike Moutrie	20 Maxine Saunders
8 Ryan Flanagan	23 Hannah Day
10 Kole Talaga	24 Teresa Stultz
11 Paul Hanifl	24 David Nunes (Caruso)
11 Jim Bottino	27 Marilyn Hendry
12 Kurt Wachholder	27 Avery Bedard
14 Jennifer Day	30 Doug Pratt
15 Kassia Lesiewicz	31 Ed Wall



November Birthday

Jamie and Rick Yucuis are proud parents of a baby boy—Duncan Richard. Mother and child are doing well.

PRESIDENT'S REFLECTIONS

Thanksgiving Thoughts



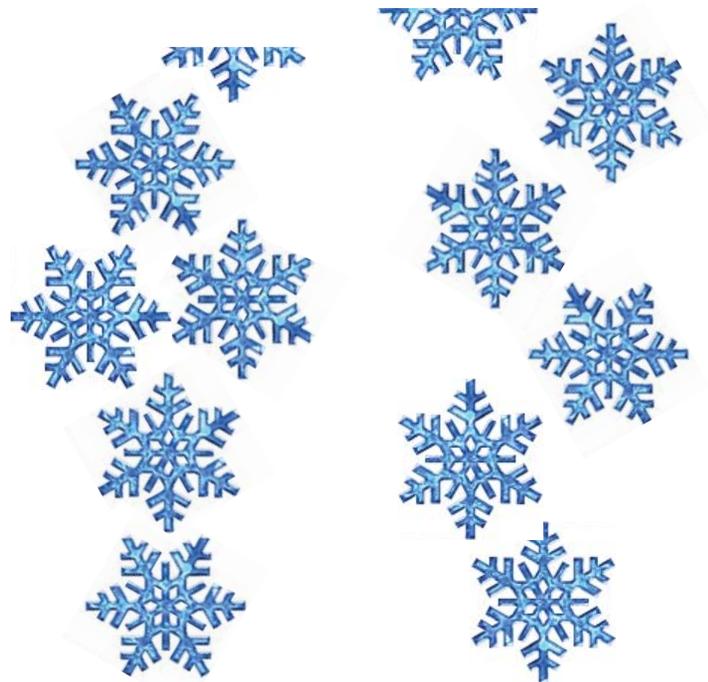
This past Wednesday evening, I drove west on the darkened stretch of Highland Avenue between Randall Road and the UUCE parking lot to attend our monthly UUCE Board of Trustees meeting. Our meeting started promptly

at 7:00, and as we worked our way through our agenda and applied our collective perspectives, analytical aptitudes and insight to the business presented by the agenda, I thought to myself, "What a remarkable group of caring can-do people." I left the meeting feeling energized by their thoughtful volunteerism and looking forward to our next gathering in December.

I am thankful – in this season of Thanksgiving - to be a member of our liberal religious community that exists primarily due to volunteerism. I am able to witness this firsthand with the two committees that I serve on, and there is abundant evidence (Labyrinth Resurfacing, Community Gardens, Fall Harvest Market, Executive Team, Religious Education, Finance Committee, Canvass Committee, Service Auction, Music and Musicians, Committee on the Ministry, Sunday Service Committee, and a multitude of other committees) that the UUCE is committed to honoring its mission and vision to create as Dan Brosier often states, "...beloved community."

Last month I shared some information about Thomas Starr King, and I have one additional TSK nugget to share. Each state gets to choose two notable individuals to honor with a statue in our Capitol Building (National Statuary Hall Collection) in Washington, D.C. For many years, one of the individuals that California chose to honor with a statue was Thomas Starr King. In June 2009, California replaced the TSK statue with a statue of – Ronald Wilson Reagan.

—Tim



Pledge Income as of October 31

Budgeted: \$53,223

Actual: \$55,780

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

19 October 2011

Attending: A. Schmidlin, B. Cooper-Zobott, B. Thrasher, D. Brosier (Executive Team) D. Caruso, D. Clough, S. Day.

Reports

Budget Report and Earmarked Funds Reports approved by consensus.

Executive Team Report:

—Youth will travel to Washington, D.C.
—Grant from state received for solar panels

Unfinished Business

Nominating committee eliminated; its responsibilities will be assumed by the

Committee on the Ministry.

New Business

Strategic Plan Review:
—Strategic Plan update process to be reviewed
—Committee on Ministry to provide report instead of Nominating Committee
—Volunteer coordinator needed
—Committee formed to identify software for membership, web and pledges

November agenda: Employee compensation to be reviewed.

Next meeting: 16 November 2011.

Labor of Love Extends Life of Labyrinth

History

1996: Neal Harris creates the eleven-circuit Earth Wisdom Labyrinth (EWL) by following the medieval design of the floor of the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres, France. EWL is twice the size of the original; it is one of the largest labyrinths in the world.

1997: Harris donates the Labyrinth to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin (UUCE) in March. In trucks, cars, or whatever vehicles they have, church members haul the 25 tons of Illinois fieldstone to its new home. An activation and dedication ceremony follows in June.

1998 - 2006: The Labyrinth is tended and the area improved. A berm enhances the sacred space.

2007: Flooding from broken drainage tiles on a neighbor's property results in an explosion of invasive weeds. Eventually the drainage tiles are repaired

Special Thanks

Andrew Russel
Anita Woloszynk
Anyone who sent positive energy to help get the job done
Cassey Howells
Dan Brosier
Darla Musson
Dave Segel
David Yaeger
Debbie Caruso
Diana March
Doug Pratt
Elizabeth Howells
Gloria Yaeger
Hannah Day

The Unichord

Witness

I walked the labyrinth for the first time last Saturday afternoon. I was reluctant to participate in the walk for various reasons, but mainly I was bone weary from travel, stress, the sudden death of a dear friend, no sleep--a general malaise had settled over my being. I'm not sure why I took that first step into the labyrinth, but I am thankful that I did. I knew immediately I would be able to finish the entire walk--when just moments before I thought it would be a physical struggle for me. Not only did I feel the energy of that sacred space, I felt a rhythm to the walk. At each turn I stopped, looked up, breathed in and sent a blessing to different family members, friends, church people, whoever popped into my mind at that turn. It wasn't premeditated or staged or thought about really--it just evolved as my way of walking the labyrinth. I don't know much about labyrinths in general, but I do know that ours has a sweet spirit that can help revitalize a bone weary body and soul.

and the waters recede. Still, vegetation-clogged paths make walking the Labyrinth almost impossible. Several options to restore the EWL are considered. The final decision is to replace the mulch with limestone. Many church members and friends

Jaden Monteleone
Jason Engel
Jen Day
Louette Rogers
Matt Hutchinson
Mila Brinker
Mystery Person(s)
Nora Day
Paul Anderson
Renata Robertson
Reve Rogers
Sandy Russel
Stacey Reynolds
Stephen Day
Tom Scott
Valerie Howells

come forward to assist in this giant undertaking. It takes 72 tons of limestone—6 truck loads at 12 tons each. Of these, three truck loads were donated.

2011: The restoration is finally complete. There is much rejoicing!

Celebration of Renewal

At the Labyrinth Service on November 20th, purple amethyst and pink rose quartz stones were given out as tokens of gratitude to the Labyrinth Task Force and to all those who donated their labor to resurfacing and resurrecting the Earth Wisdom Labyrinth this year. An entire album of pictures documenting the labyrinth's transformation is posted online. The Labyrinth now has its own public Facebook page.



Give a Spoor! (We Need Toilet Paper)

Don't put t.p. at the bottom of your list! Clients served by the All People's Inter-Faith Pantry have the same basic needs as everybody else. Other toiletries they can use include laundry detergent and facial soap.

Eating every day is nice, too... those who are hungry could use

- peanut butter
- jelly
- cereal (no oatmeal)
- juice
- canned meats

Our Pantry Sunday is December 4. Give a scat.

Last Chance to Order Scrip Cards for the Holidays

Due to the holidays, December 18 will be the last day for delivery of scrip cards until January 8, so plan ahead and place your order—for groceries and gas as well as holiday gifts—by December 11. Scrip cards for iTunes, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, Harry & David, and popular eating places make great gifts, or you can use Amazon scrip certificates to purchase gifts for everyone on your list. Please support this UUCE fundraiser.



Kudos

...to all who made the Fall Harvest Market such a wonderful success:

- the lads who assisted with setting up tables: Kyle Brinker, Moter Schmidlin, and Rob Peterson;
- Joe Masonick, who put up and took down the road signs, and directed the overflow parking;
- Bob Sandidge, who designed the market flier;
- Ann Kremer, Sandy James, Frieda Anderson, and Mary Alice Masonick for cleaning up after the Market;
- to *all* who participated, whose names are not here;
- and last, but not least, Mary Alice Masonick and Alice Macy for coordinating this event, which is significantly meaningful to so many.



Ways to Get in Touch

WEBSITE

www.uuce.org

E-MAIL

minister@uuce.org
administrator@uuce.org
newsletter@uuce.org

PHONE

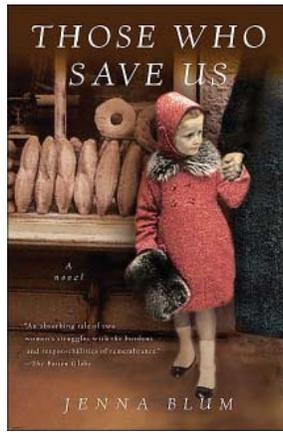
847-888-0668

PHYSICAL LOCATION

39W830 Highland Avenue
three miles west of Randall Rd.

POSTAL MAIL

P. O. Box 1032
Elgin, IL 60121

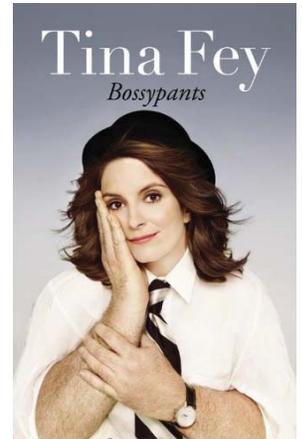


location on January 20, 2012 at the Panera Bread located at 2484 N. Randall Road, Elgin, IL 60123. Tel: 847/426-7000. The January selection is "[Bossy Pants](#)" by Tina Fey.

Book Club Choices are Blum & Bossy

There will be no Afternoon Book Group in December.

The next meeting of the UUCE evening book club will be held on Friday, December 16 at 7:00 at the home of Beth Cooper-Zobott. The December selection is "[Those Who Save Us](#)" by Jenna Blum. The evening book club will be back at its usual



The Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin

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