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December 2010

## *The Good News*

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Dear Ron,

### Advent Resources and Holiday Wishes

Help center your life on a deeper journey through the Advent weeks leading up to Christmas. On our **Christian Year Resources** web page you can find direct Advent related links such as liturgies, a devotional for 2010, and more.



Advent

Be a part of an online discussion of the Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan book "The First Christmas" by reading and commenting on posts at our **Christian Year blog** where excerpts from their book have been posted. Each week of Advent, selections from their chapters will be posted for discussion.

And finally you can read and reflect and respond on special meditations for the full Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany season at our **Virtual Monastery** where each week a different UUCF member will comment on a part of scripture from that week's selections of the Revised Common Lectionary. Thanks to the Rev. Betsy Schuereman, Kristen Grassel, Madelyn Campbell, the Rev. Rosemarie Smurzynski, and the Rev. Anita Farber-Robertson.

### Sermon Links For The Season

Here are some links to wonderful sermons during the Advent season:



- **"Second Naivete: The Mystical Way of Faith"** by the Rev. Victoria Weinstein, First Parish, Norwell, MA.
- **"A Christmas Truce"** by the Rev. Anthony David of the UU Congregation of Atlanta, GA.
- **"When Soul Meets Body"** by the Rev. Kathleen Rolenz of West Shore UU Church in Rocky River, OH.
- **"Building A Door In Time"** by the Rev. Martha Niebanck of First Parish in Brookline, MA.
- **"Advent" reflection** by the Rev. Adam Tierney-Eliot of The Eliot Church of South Natick, MA.

## A special Advent Good News Publication "Mary's Yes"

We've launched our new, bigger, biannual Good News that will allow us to more deeply develop commentary and celebration of both Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. This first new issue, entitled **"Mary's Yes."** It's 28 pages long, has been published and is arriving in UUCF members' hands now. Thank you's to editors The Rev. Kathleen Rolenz and Kimberly Beyer-Nelson.



Mary's Yes

Table of Contents includes:

- CHRISTMAS PRAYER by Joel Miller
- WELCOME TO ADVENT by Ron Robinson
- THE ANGELUS AS A UU SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, by Claudia Hall
- ADVENT PROMISE by Tim Powell
- PEOPLE LOOK EAST: A MEDITATION by Betsy Scheurman
- POEMS & PRAYERS OF THE SEASON by Kim Beyer-Nelson
- DECEMBER MOURNINGS by Jackie Gibbons
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- THE MESSENGER COMES by Tom Hoorstra
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- GESTATION by Jennifer Sandberg
- AT MATTHEW'S KNEE: FOUR REFLECTIONS by Kim Beyer-Nelson
- MARY'S YES by Kathleen Rolenz
- AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH by Finley Campbell.

Start thinking now of contributing for the Lent/Easter issue. Writer's guidelines and more can be found on our **Web site**.

If you haven't received your copy of Mary's Yes and believe your membership is up to date, please **contact** us. If you

need to change your address or other contact information, please send the new information to that email address as well. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity to receive the publication by renewing a lapsed membership or to begin your **membership** you can also do that online too. We would love to have you back.

## Revival In Retrospect

### Rediscovering Jesus and Communities of Faith

This was the theme for the recently completed UUCF Revival and Retreat in the Dallas area, our ninth gathering since 1999 in New Orleans. Many of the resources from the Revival are available now on our **website**. These include the full Revival worship booklet, as well as the Breviary that was used for the Daily Office of Morning and Evening Prayer, and the prayer from the opening worship. More content will be coming as well so keep checking back to the site. We will also be selling Revival DVDs of the major lectures.



Rev. Eric Posa of the UU congregation in College Station, TX, received baptism during Revival this year. He writes about his decision:

*For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)*

Yes, you read that right - I got baptized today, during the Communion Worship Service of the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship's Revival conference. If you're not a Unitarian Universalist, that statement may well confuse you. I can hear some of you asking, "Wait, you've been an ordained minister for over five years, and you've never been baptized?" As Unitarian Universalism has evolved, the tradition of baptism fell away from many of our churches, as more churches were founded without that tradition in place. I was raised unchurched; the first church I ever joined was one of those UU congregations founded after we dropped the sacrament from our tradition. So I never belonged to a religious community that authentically could baptize me into Christian fellowship.

On the other hand, my UU friends, perhaps including the members of the church I serve, may be surprised by this news for a different reason. I have been clear with my church that I see myself as Christian (though it's even more accurate for me to call myself a follower of Jesus, as one who strives to live my life and ministry in response to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth). But baptism may seem...extreme (for lack of a better term)...to that majority of UUs who do not see themselves as Christian. Yet baptism is something I have sought for myself for many years, despite serving in ministry in a tradition where it is

not common. When I learned some weeks ago of the opportunity to be baptized here, I reflected pretty deeply on what the experience meant, and at the invitation of Rev. Tom Wintle (who led worship and performed the baptism today) and Rev. Ron Robinson (UUCF Exec. Dir.), I articulated my theology of baptism. The best answer I can give, to the question in the title of this post, is what I wrote in that theological reflection:

*If a sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," then the inward grace for which I want to give a sign, for which I want to make my commitment, is the way my life has been transformed as I've freely followed Jesus. As I have grown to trust - to have faith - in the way Jesus has called me to live, I have become open to the grace of God that I never recognized when I was trying to "go it alone" through life as a younger man. I have come to know the radical love that does not just preach an abstract unity of male and female, of slave and free, but opens me to experience that unity as a living connection.*

*In baptism I seek to commit myself to a life of breaking bread with the outcast, healing the broken, and doing for the least of these, my brothers and sisters, in the light of the God-who-is-love, whom I have come to know most fully through the life and ministry of Jesus. I have longed for this day for many years, and anticipate it with great joy. Thank you for granting me the opportunity to make this commitment to my Christian faith in the fellowship of my fellow Unitarian Universalists.*

Also, here is a sermon delivered after Revival by Rev. Lillie Mae Henley of Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, D.C., the site of our next Revival March 22-25, 2012. Her sermon, inspired by Brandon Scott's Revival lecture and workshop in Dallas on Paul and other disciples on reimagining the resurrection, is titled "**A New Look At Paul the Apostle**" and is about the enlightenment of much of the new scholarship on the Apostle Paul.

## Giving Back This Season

**Remember the UUCF, our Movement and our Mission at this End of The Year Opportunity For Giving**

We hope this season of hope brings you rest and wholeness. We thank you for sharing your walk with us and with one another wherever you are and whether you are a new or a long time member. You are the UUCF and you are a gift to the world.



As you consider your special holiday donations and your end-of-the-year deductible contributions, I hope you will pause to think about **what an incredible year 2010** has been in our movement to keep both Jesus and Freedom alive and integrated and growing in lives and communities. We can't do it without everyone's help.

...Just holding the special **new Good News publication** for Advent and Christmas, Mary's Yes, in your hands, and in your heart and mind. What an accomplishment for the UUCF in 2010. And more like it are on the way, with your help.

...In connection with beginning the expanded Good News publications for Christmas and Easter resources, we also began in 2010 high quality monthly, and sometimes several in a month, **online and email Good News** versions, such as the one you are reading now, and other contacts with members.

...Go pick up and read through again **the 2010 UU Christian Journal**, a stellar book published this year called "Hear, Pray, Affirm: Three Essentials for Liberal Christian Formation" by the Rev. Thomas D. Wintle. This was a highlight of not only this year, but of the 62 volumes we have published in our 65 year history. While you are at it, go visit our **bookstore** to and easily order an extra copy of the book to give to someone or a church library as a Christmas gift.

...2010 saw us hold our **ninth national gathering in Revival** in the Dallas area, nurturing the spirit of our movement, deepening our connections with one another, introducing us to new regions, and growing in worship and in scholarship as a vital part of the progressive Christian sphere.

...2010 saw us at **General Assembly** of the Unitarian Universalist Association in Minneapolis, sponsoring more programs than ever before, and holding one of our largest UU Christian communion services there, and working in connection with other UU theological source organizations.

...2010 saw us **advertise** more than ever before.

...And throughout 2010 our **website** continued to add resources, especially in our weekly Virtual Monastery, and with our growing Christian year worship and study and discussion resources...and we continued to add new UUCF small groups around the country.

Most importantly of all, I think, we grew our prison outreach ministry, and we were there for the one to one contacts...to

talk with the person who was seeking a new home because his Christian church wouldn't welcome who he was as a gay man... and with the Christian minister looking for a new home because of his new theological leanings... and for the lonely UU Christian in the UU church who borrowed from our free DVD lending library and was transported to where top scholars and preachers uplifted her spirit... and for the seminarian raised a UU and who was discovering the Bible and its power for the first time and was hungry to find a wealth or resources in our archives that made her feel good about her faith tradition...and for the UU ministers seeking resources to help their church better understand new liberal thinking on the Trinity, or the ways of communion and baptism... All of it was behind the scenes, but all possible only by your help.

And we know so well that there is so much more we need to do and to become.

Please support one another and our larger movement at this end of the year by writing a check today to the UUCF sent to P.O. Box 6702 Turley, OK 74156, or **Donate Online** today! If you have moved, be sure to let us know your new address and any other contact information.

In thanks,

Ron Robinson  
UUCF Executive Director

## New MNY-UUCF Small Group Formed In Metro New York

See below for information on a new UUCF small group formed in Metro New York. Consider joining one or helping form one in your church or in your area. Check out our **Small Group Resources** for developing small groups of those who freely follow Jesus and our interested in our conversations and gatherings. And please **send** us news and updates about what your UUCF group is doing so we can help promote you and the UUCF.



New York

Good news! Early in 2011, a local chapter of the national UU Christian Fellowship will be forming in the Metro New York district. Led by the Rev. Kelly Murphy Mason, a community minister and former Vice-President of the UUCF, the chapter will meet on a monthly basis for evenings of fellowship and discussion, religious education and spiritual deepening. The Metro NY UU Christian Fellowship (MNY-UUCF) will meet the first Wednesday of every month beginning on February 2, 2011, at the Community Church of New York in Manhattan.

The first several meetings of MNY-UUCF will be devoted to discussion of the Skinner House Books volume, [Christian Voices in Unitarian Universalism](#). While the book is available

online from the UUA Bookstore, prior purchase is not necessary. The lines of inquiry will be kept open-ended, so people can explore personal concerns as well as religious questions. How can Christian spirituality and Unitarian Universalist identity become more mutually enriching? That's something people are bound to discover together in these ongoing conversations.

The MNY-UUCF meetings will start at 7:30 pm and end at 9:00 pm every first Wednesday, with meetings already set for February 2nd, March 2nd, April 6th, May 4th, and June 1st at Community Church, conveniently located in midtown Manhattan between the Metro North lines at Grand Central and the NJ Transit and LIRR trains at Penn Station and near to subways from outer boroughs. MNY-UUCF attendees are also encouraged to join in the numerous national UUCF activities held at General Assembly from June 22-26 in Charlotte, NC. While the UUA will be celebrating its 50th year in 2011, the UUCF will be marking its 66th in existence!

Since the first inaugural meeting of MNY-UUCF falls on the festival of Candlemas, all attendees are encouraged to bring candles with them on February 2nd for blessing from a shared chalice lighting. Unitarian Universalists throughout the Metro NY District are warmly invited to attend: clergy members, religious educators, and lay leaders, cradle UUs and Christian "come-outers", recovering Catholics and fundamentalists, the theologically committed and the relatively uninformed, true believers and the merely Christian-curious. Anyone in the region with any degree of interest in the Jesus event, gospel stories or Christian traditions is most welcome.

Please feel free to contact the Rev. Mason via **e-mail** for further details -- and please be sure to pass the word along! Attached you will find a flier announcing the start of the MNY-UUCF in 2011; it can easily be printed as a Word document. If you could kindly post it in your congregations, publish it in your newsletter, or distribute it to your religious leadership, that would go far in spreading the word to Unitarian Universalists seeking just such a group in this region. Pulpit announcements are always appreciated, especially during the holiday seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany!

## President's Column by Mr. Dean A Drake

### Jesus - My Star

Most historians believe that Jesus was born in the spring of 7 BCE somewhere in the Roman province of Palestine. The Roman world of that time was in chaos: constant civil war between liberal and conservative factions over the previous 50 years had weakened and eventually



Dean Drake

destroyed the republic. Oppression, poverty and cruelty were so prevalent that it was assumed to be the norm.

But into that world a child was born.

Jesus himself was a victim of the cruelty of this world, crucified at the age of 33 for his radical teachings of love and tolerance. Yet his words lived on, inspiring his followers to spread his message throughout the Roman world. For the poor, oppressed and subjugated, his words were an antidote to the evils around them, a guiding star that pointed to a better way and a better world.

For 2,000 years, Jesus has been that guiding star for billions of people. Today, over ¼ of the world's inhabitants consider themselves followers of Jesus. As Christians, we are part of that great multitude. But as Unitarian Universalists, we stand a bit apart from the rest by also seeking guidance and direction from reason and logic as well as faith. But we also understand that reason and logic have limits, and without faith, reason and logic can lead the world back to poverty, cruelty and oppression.

For me, the story of Jesus, like the ideas of justice, compassion and mercy, is a truth that transcends reason. Jesus is my teacher, my comforter and my guide along the way. While reason and logic can explain the how of something, only the transcendental truths like the life and teachings of Jesus can provide the where and the why of life.

As a Unitarian Universalist Christian, I am doubly blessed. My reason and logic give me tools to move forward, and my faith provides a star to steer my life by. With the rest of the Christian world, at this darkest time of year, may you join with me and the rest of the Christian world in celebrating the birth of the certain star called Jesus.

## Executive Director Column

### Advent's Relocation of Lives



Rev. Ron Robinson

This Advent and Christmas Season I have been thinking about where we locate our lives, and whose lives do we follow? My companion in this thinking, and a new companion of liturgy I will be using, is the new book "Common Prayer: A Liturgy For Ordinary Radicals" by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and others who are part of the new monastic movement.

They write: "Everything in our society teaches us to move

away from suffering, to move out of neighborhoods where there is high crime, to move away from people who don't look like us. But the gospel calls us to something altogether different. We are to laugh at fear, to lean into suffering, to open ourselves to the stranger. Advent is the season when we remember how Jesus put on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. God getting born in a barn reminds us that God shows up in the most forsaken corners of the earth.

"Wherever we come from, Jesus teaches us that good can happen where we are, even if real-estate agents and politicians aren't interested in our neighborhoods. Jesus comes from Nazareth, a town from which folks said nothing good can come. He knew suffering from the moment he entered the world as a baby refugee born in the middle of a genocide. Jesus knew poverty and pain until he was tortured and executed on a Roman cross. This is the Jesus we are called to follow. With his coming we learn that the most dangerous place for a Christian to be is in comfort and safety, detached from the suffering of others. Places that are physically safe can be spiritually deadly."

In part we may be motivated to relocate our lives, or return our lives, to places of great need because of the lives we lift up to guide our own. Especially during the season, with so many competing visions and values, what lives are our guides? We know so much of our consumer society wants us to follow some perfect fake person that doesn't exist....able to buy what they want, look like what they want, have perfectly obedient and happy children, and they can make us that way if we will just buy what they are selling. Or our celebrity culture wants us to spend time following the ins and outs and ups and downs of those who have become famous or infamous. But God always dwelled with nobodies, at least nobodies in the eyes of those in power, with those who are seen as numbers and statistics, who learn that in God they are always somebody, always full of worth and potential.

So, what lives will we follow this season, as the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem in Matthew's Christmas story? Or another way to put it is who will sit with us at our welcome table in these days ahead? Both literally, physically, and also spiritually, including those who have left us a presence of being with the poor.

In their new book, Shane Claiborne and others add in little stories about ordinary people across the ages doing extraordinary things, often at great cost to themselves. Each day there is someone to think about and remember, especially on the days of their deaths. Just a few of the lives lifted up during this season include Dorothy Day, Charles de Foucauld, Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan, Justin Martyr, Sojourner Truth, Wendell Berry, St. Nicholas, Ambrose of Milan, Jean Vanier, Martin de Porres, Thomas Merton, and all those who were in the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador. For those of these you may not know, it is a good Advent exercise to look them up and study what they have to offer us today.

In Advent, when we are journeying with a pregnant, unmarried young woman through occupied land where the Roman military could do anything it wanted to the most vulnerable, we are dwelling and waiting for the new life to be born into the world. But at the same time Advent calls us to remember the world of much violence and death and injustice that new life comes into, and many of the lives highlighted above for these days in December remind us of that. So, in our preparation for Christmas we should do all we can to prepare our world as a place of more peace and more joy and more hope and more love for those being born. In doing so we will become born again in the ways it most counts.

## January Good News

### Call for Reviews for This Issue



Good News  
Newsletter

For our January online Good News, we would like to focus on the ways our faith intersects with popular culture, and with starting the new year off with recommended books and movies and music and more that would be particularly connected to our mission. Write a review of that book on religion or spirituality you have read recently, or about the movie that made you think deeply about faith and issues of life, or the music that you find yourself returning to over and over again to lift your spirits and move you to action. Maybe it is a television series, or a video game. Help us fill in the blank in a surprising way, The Gospel and .....Send them to **Rev. Ron Robinson**.

## Join \* Renew \* Pledge

You can change the world by keeping alive the free and radical spirit of Jesus in the world, especially in our historic home of Unitarian Universalism and through our UUCF life. Here you can



**join** with us for the first time, **renew or upgrade** your membership, answer the call to **contribute** to specific projects or make special **donations**.

The UUCF is a self-supporting and self-sustaining institution. The first and most important reason to stay connected to the UUCF is because we represent a liberal religious Christian presence in the Unitarian Universalist Association. We believe that Unitarian Universalism is broadened and deepened by our active presence and our faithful witness. We represent one of the few organization in the UUA that can claim an authentic theological position, and the only one that can claim a historical tradition that dates back to the beginning of our movement.

Address: P.O. Box 6702, Turley, OK 74156-0702

Phone: (918) 794-4637

[www.uuchristian.org](http://www.uuchristian.org)

[info@uuchristian.org](mailto:info@uuchristian.org)

We are non-creedal followers of Jesus rooted in the history and tradition of Unitarian Universalism. All who wish to freely follow Jesus are welcome to be members of the UUCF.

**Sincerely,**

Ron Robinson  
Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

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