



# The UUCG Beacon

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES



As we are now full-steam in to the holiday season, I'd like to speak up for what I think is an underappreciated holiday that is increasingly being overshadowed by another. Kwanzaa? Hanukkah? Yule (Winter Solstice)? Saturnalia? Festivus? No, while I think these are less appreciated than the big Christmas juggernaut, the holiday I'm most concerned about is actually Thanksgiving.

While I appreciate Christmas, I guess it is more of the consumer culture in the name of Christmas that I resent. Sure, I love to give and get gifts, but the "season" is actually getting close to the length of a season. As soon as Halloween was past, the onslaught of Christmas commercials started.

I understand that many people do start shopping early to find good deals and to avoid the later rush, but the big rollout used to at least wait until the day after Thanksgiving, with "Black Friday". Now stores "leak" their Black Friday sales weeks in advance, or advertise "Black Friday deals all month long!" Black Friday has spawned "Cyber Monday" to be the Monday after, when people are generally back at work and will continue their shopping spree online. Now, in order to try and get a leg-up on competitors, more and more stores are starting to open for special sales on Thanksgiving.

I, for one, am fed up with it! Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, and luckily for me, I tend to get to celebrate it over more than one day. My mother always makes her Thanksgiving Celebration the day after for various reasons, but largely so she doesn't have to compete with others. Rather than having to figure out how to schedule the day around in-laws' expectations, invitations from friends, or non-custodial parent visitation hours, rushing from one event to another and making sure that you eat some at each place, she gives us the freedom to meet all those obligations on Thanksgiving Day, but expects our presence and undivided attention the day following. Others in her family do similarly, often celebrating the Saturday or Sunday before, where they are able to draw from more extended family (including me, so sometimes I get 3 Thanksgivings).

But more so than the actual meal, it is a great excuse to get together with those people who are important to us and express our gratitude. We've talked a lot about gratitude at church over the past month, but I think it is important that we don't spend Thanksgiving expressing our gratitude, then turn around the next day to rush into stores and trip other shoppers in the hopes of getting the last \$20 Crock Pot. We should really focus on trying to live a life of gratitude year-round, but probably the period of time we need to be most mindful is during the period of the most rampant cultural expectation of unbridled consumer consumption. Let's take back Thanksgiving and make it what the holidays are all about.

Rich Elkins  
President, UUCG Board of Trustees

## MINISTER'S REFLECTIONS



I love winter holiday sights, the smells, the excitement, the music. Despite my nostalgia that “I’ll be home for Christmas... if only in my dreams,” I’m so joyful that I don’t have to go back to my past! I have changed.

I suspect that you, as well as I, have been nomads with many homes, following dreams to new places, immigrating, opening ourselves to new opportunities, to new insights wherever the truth may take us, willing to be changed by the places we make home.

Community, university, job, social networks, activist groups, and religious homes are relational systems into which we merge, bringing our unique gifts to the banquet table.

In my childhood home, my mother and father were the dominant working parts, and we children were shaped to fit the open space in the picture set aside for children. At the same time, our parents were changed by our presence, by my brother’s musical ingenuity, by my scoliosis and my sister’s club feet. We kids were shaped by the songs on Mother’s lips and by our preacher father contracting roofs and rain-gutters in his green work uniform. It reminds me of the pagan chant about life, about Mother Goddess: She changes everything she touches.

Work, social, and activist groups I’ve been a part of were not designed for my transformation, but as I worked in manufacturing, as I socialized or sought to change the world supporting the homeless shelter, the League of Women Voters, and the Garden Club, I have been changed. Have you found yourself influenced by the groups into which you have invested yourself?

Schools and religious communities are even more explicitly about personal transformation. If you don’t come out a different person, you must not be putting much of yourself into it.

I am sad to know there are some unknown observers who audit or simply drop in occasionally, like phantoms who sit in the stands and watch football practice. How can we enrich one another’s lives if we are strangers in our own religious homes?

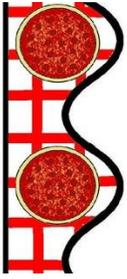
For developing “intimacy and ultimacy,” facilitated small groups of the same people meeting monthly have caught on in Unitarian Universalist congregations across the country. That’s the model of the first century church as well. Young adults and elders here have both expressed interest in such small groups.

Of course, committee-tasks are made light by working together, friendship as a side benefit. Our Standing Committees include Children’s Religious Education, Worship, Communication, Social Justice, Ambiance, Hospitality, Membership, Fellowship, and Caring Committees. They welcome your gifts and friendship. Contact Rich at 252-258-5513 or [rich@uugreenvillenc.org](mailto:rich@uugreenvillenc.org).

Let’s talk about how connecting with other Unitarian Universalists in mutual trust and support will deepen and transform your life! May we be blessings to all around us in this holiday season!

Blessed Be!

Rev. Rod Debs, Minister



**PIZZA FUND RAISING OPPORTUNITY**

Pizza! Pizza! Pizza! On Tuesday December 9, the UUCG will receive a percentage of receipts and all tips at the Pizza Inn on Greenville Blvd from 5:00 to 8:00. We need 10 or 12 people to help out for an hour or two. We will be helping to seat people, serve, and clear up after diners during our time. Come and enjoy the buffet and bring your friends. Contact Feryl Masters at 944-7608 or oferyl@gmail.com if you can help. No experience required.

**DECEMBER 2014 – Universal Human Right Month**

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Monday 1st                    | World AIDS Day   |
| Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup>        | A Time for Giving: The Pit and the Plum—Rev. Rod Debs      |
| Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup>       | Pizza Night at Pizza Inn                                   |
| Wednesday 10th                | Human Rights Day   |
| Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup>       | Heartfire—Becky Woelkers                                   |
| Tue 16th-Wed 24 <sup>th</sup> | Hanukkah   |
| Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup>       | Winter Solstice<br>Jesus: Radical Generosity—Rev. Rod Debs |
| Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup>     | Christmas  |
| Fri 26th-Wed Jan 1st          | Kwanzaa  |

Read more about what is being done for Human Rights:

[United National Human Rights \(www.ohchr.org/\)](http://www.ohchr.org/)

[Human Rights Watch \(www.hrw.org/\)](http://www.hrw.org/)

[Youth For Human Rights \(www.youthforhumanrights.org/\)](http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/)



**Classic GLBT Movie Night** will be taking the month of December off, but will return on January 16<sup>th</sup> with the film “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil” (1997).

### STAFF

Minister: Rev. Rod Debs  
Music Director: Mort Stine  
Choir Director: Sue Jefferson  
RE Director: Lilani Butler Masters

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President: Rich Elkins  
Vice President: Brenda Stewart  
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Treasurer: Feryl Masters  
At Large: Cam Scales  
At Large: Laura Schroeder  
Past President: Tom Thielen

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### SUNDAYS

9:30AM Mindful Meditation  
10:30AM Worship  
12:00PM Lunch Groups

#### TUESDAYS

8:00AM Breakfast Group  
7:30PM KTC Buddhist Meditation

#### WEDNESDAYS

7:00PM Choir Practice

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

#### Building and Grounds:

Chris Federico & Bob Hudson

#### Caring:

Ruel Tyer & Ruth Abrahamson

#### Communications:

Rich Elkins

#### Fellowship:

Cam Scales

#### Finance:

Richard Baltaro

#### Fundraising:

Patrice Alexander & Jennifer Schultz

#### Hospitality:

Holly Brown

#### Membership:

Susan Foreman

#### Social Action:

Ray Sobel & Ann Eleanor

#### Stewardship:

Patrice Alexander & Feryl Masters

#### Worship:

OPEN

#### Youth Religious Education:

Shannon Terry & Christy Hoppenthaler

Deadline for next month's **Beacon** is Tuesday, **December 23 at 8:00 pm**

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"I dunno, maybe deep down I want to bark up the wrong tree."