



## News of the Fellowship

December 2009

### December 6 **FAQ about UU** - Rev Christine Robinson

Again we are blessed by another meaningful DVD sermon, our fourth this year in a subscription series from the Rev. Christine Robinson, Senior Minister of First Unitarian in ABQ. There are always new people and people among us asking questions about what we UUs believe. Here's a user friendly sermon answering **frequently asked questions** about our faith, our history and our congregations. What do you say to the question: What is unique and distinctive about UUism? Come and hear this thoughtful answer.

### December 13 **Embracing Our Religious Roots** – Ilene Haykus

As the holidays centered upon the winter solstice near, it is not uncommon for Unitarian Universalists to feel conflict between pleasant childhood memories and the fact that, as adults, we no longer embrace the religious ideologies upon which those holidays were based. Is it possible to find harmony between the traditions of our past and our adult beliefs? This homily is based on interviews conducted with members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowships of Pagosa Springs, Colorado and Sedona, Arizona.

### December 20 **Mid Winter Graces** – Elizabeth Baldwin

Join us as we celebrate the season with readings, songs and sharings from traditions around the world. We will contemplate the sacredness of Solstice, Hanukah, Kwanzaa and more. As the days get darker, in unity, we hold the light and warmth to welcome all faiths and beliefs to share in our celebration of renewal.

***A Potluck Dinner will follow this morning's service.  
All are invited to join us for our Holiday Feast.***

***Please bring donations of food and personal care items  
for the Community Food Bank***



### December 27 **Travels in India** – Shanti Johnson

India. What draws so many to this often mystically revered land? Many people travel to India to experience a world drastically different from our own, to see the holy sights, and desperately hoping to find themselves along the way. Shanti Johnson recently spent five weeks traveling throughout the country of India, participating in Yoga and Meditation retreats, experiencing both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and learning about one of the most romanticized and extraordinary people of the world. Shanti will be speaking about her travels, what she learned, saw, and her quest for spirituality.



## President's Letter

. . . Pam Kircher

In last month's letter, I promised to update you on a couple of practical matters as they got resolved. The first one was our request for leniency on the interest of our back taxes from 2003, the year we bought our current building. I'm pleased to report that we received that leniency from the County Treasurer since we had not received a bill for those taxes until a few months ago. We have paid the original taxes and won't receive any more bills since we have had non-profit status since Jan. 2004 when we began occupancy of the building. With regards to the organza, the news is not so good; we were not able to use it as the Fire Department only allows specific materials in public buildings.

Since writing my last President's letter, we had our meeting on Oct. 25 about the possibility of pursuing a Four Corners shared minister. Joan Ward summarized those comments and they were sent by e-mail to you along with a survey about financial priorities and most desired functions of a minister. Please do complete the survey right away so that the Steering Committee can act based on the desires of the Fellowship. Your input is much appreciated.

The Steering Committee is meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 12:30 at the Fellowship Hall. If you have issues that you would like for us to discuss, please let any of us know ahead of time.

I wish you a wonderful Holiday season filled with the precious gift of time for being with family and friends.



*Pam*

## Guest at Your Table

Remember those small, colorful boxes we hand out this time of year?

They come from the UU Service Committee (UUSC), and raise funds for their work around the world helping others through partnerships and standing for justice.

This season we will do it differently. Instead of each of us taking a box home, we will have one larger box at the Fellowship for your donation. There are two reasons for the change. Although we receive the boxes and resource material free of charge, using fewer boxes is just a "green" way to be. Also, since we pass out more boxes than we get back, it makes sense to consolidate our effort and do this as a community. (There are a few boxes available for those who love to fill it up at dinner time) Bring a check or drop in some change as you remember those around the world.

The box will be on display until the end of the year when we will add it up and send it in.

Check out UUSC website, [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org) for more information. You'll be hearing stories about the work of the UUSC as the giving season continues. And thank you for responding to the call.

## Introducing our New Members

We welcome these long time friends as they now become members of our Fellowship. Thumbnail sketches began a couple months ago and we continue today.

**Deni Blaisch** glows these days when you ask "how are things going"? She is engrossed in her nursing studies and enjoying the challenge. Deni already has made life more comfortable for many as a massage therapist. She also finds time to volunteer at the Senior Center and Pagosa Outreach. Raised in the Jewish faith, she spent many years wandering and considers it a blessing that Merlin suggested she visit PUUF. If we miss her on a Sunday, she may be studying or enjoying her hobbies of biking or white water canoeing.

**Laurel Epps** found PUUF more recently upon moving here from Homer, AK. where she was an active UU member. Her profession is computer graphics with a short time venture as a health food store owner in Alaska. We have become acquainted with Laurel quickly as she has shared her art work and marimba playing with us. Laurel works for Hospice and helps with Loaves and Fishes and it is no surprise to learn her hobbies include art and music. She and Doug, are working on their first documentary movie about Zimbabwean music coming to North America.

**Michael Ward**, educated as a civil engineer, spent 33 years as an engineer and in management for Praxair/ Union Carbide. He and Joan ventured to Pagosa Springs where he seems to keep busy enough as secretary for Timber Ridge HOA Board and as a volunteer at Chimney Rock, with time left to watch the birds and serve as treasurer for the Audubon Society and also care for the animals at the Humane Society. With hiking, skiing, investing and politics as his "hobbies" we should all have something to talk with him about.

**Merlin Wheeler** has entertained us with his knowledge of the Grand Canyon and helped us understand the magnificence of this and other beautiful places. With a PhD in hydrology he has experienced much of our land but not always in positive situations. He spent 25 years in radioactive and hazardous waste site investigations. Good we have folks like him watching out for us. Merlin also takes time to enjoy the good life hiking, skiing, biking and canoeing (with Deni). Woodworking fulfills his creative side.

## Book Club News

The book club will meet on December 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 at the Fellowship Hall. We will have our second discussion on ***Spontaneous Evolution***.

In January we will talk about *Justice* by Michael Sandel, a Harvard professor. He teaches a very popular class and the book is about the issues which he presents to his students. A lively discussion should be expected.



## Musings from the Back Room

### *The Treasure of Magical Moments*

As I write this I feel full of gratitude for those of you who share in the life of the Pagosah UU Fellowship.

Many of you took part in the **New UU Primer**, and as we finished up today I realized we shared some magic moments. It is what happens when we come together and just be ourselves, encouraging one another to spiritual growth. These magical moments can not be measured, but I take great joy when I notice them, and it seems I notice them more when I am in pain or see someone else's suffering. I recognize I have been changed in some small way and it sticks with me, helping me see the beauty in other events and moments.

Take some time in your day to stop and notice, keep a journal of the magical moments – you may notice there is more magic in your life, granting you the joy you deserve.

In Friendship,

De Anna, RE Coordinator

## Children's Religious Exploration

The schedule for our children and youth program has been relaxed and free-flowing with lots of time for sharing and just being together. We will continue this format throughout the winter months, and focus on holidays making each one "holy" as we celebrate one another in community.

I am preparing to be away from my duties as RE Coordinator for the month of January as I finish my credentialing work. I will be asking folks to pick a Sunday to minister to the children in the back room. This is a wonderful opportunity to tell your story, teach a child about history, sing songs or just be silly. If you can offer your time, please talk with me as soon as possible. Having a team-of-two is always great fun, so grab a partner and give us a hand.

Our schedule this month will include more gift making which will be available for a donation raising funds for our programs. The items we are working on include:

Rag Rug Projects	Rock Art
Gratitude Beads	Crystal Ornaments

Stop by our booth in the back room and support the youth and children's program.

**December 20** is our multigenerational service, the theme this season being **Mid Winter Graces**. The children will take part in the service and we will be practicing during the month of December. We would like to know how many plan to be involved in the service, so do let us know. We hope you will all plan on coming and lending your spirit to make this a magical moment in community.

If you have questions about our Lifespan Religious Exploration Program contact De Anna Hoyle, 264-7224 or [dhoyle@centruytel.net](mailto:dhoyle@centruytel.net)

## Back Room Bazaar



If holiday shopping is something you enjoy, then don't forget to check out the **Back Room Bazaar** hosted this month by Children & UUth of PUUF.

As a special fun(d)raiser we will be selling **Gratitude Beads** and other items for a donation to the program. The youngsters have been working hard to prepare for the BIG sale. Donations of any size will be accepted.

If you have something you want to donate for a special "kid shop" - talk with De Anna. The children will have an opportunity to "buy" items for their loved ones.

One person's give-away, could give someone else a smile!

Peace,

De Anna Hoyle  
Religious Education Coordinator



## Caring Network at Your Call

The vision of the Caring Network (CN) is to provide caring and concern for members and friends of the Pagosah UU community. If you could benefit from a personal contact with a CN team member, please contact the team member for this month.

Some of the tasks we can provide: serve as a resource, provide meals, transportation to appointments, child care, general errands, and time out for a care giver. There are limits to what we can do, but we are here to help. Do let us know. **December Team Members:**

**Merilyn Moorhead, 731-2323**  
**De Anna Hoyle, 264-7224**

In Caring Service, PUUF CN Team



## Join the Gift-Wrapping Marathon Dec.16<sup>th</sup>

We will be wrapping packages for **Helping Hands** on the 16th of December starting at 10:00 at the Extension Bldg. We usually have a crew of at least 10 and are hoping to see all the old faces as well as, maybe, some new ones. It is a fun time and you can really know that you are making a difference and also become aware of the need many families have for help here in Pagosa.

Signup on the sheet posted on the back room bulletin board at the Fellowship. *Merilyn*

The saints, ghosts and a variety of characters arrived well dressed for All Saints Day



Fun with the marimbas as we learn about Zimbabwean music



## Pagosa Outreach Connection

As you consider year end charitable contributions, please consider Project Outreach.

It is a local group of individuals from churches, service organizations, LPEA and United Way, which meets once a week to consider applications for one-time requests (usually). The requests are carefully reviewed and are considered a hand up, not a hand out. Applicants are counseled on budgeting and must present a plan for handling future expenses. But most are facing the prospect of no job or only part time work and at this time of year, increased heating bills. Unexpected medical bills can also result in the need for help. In just three weeks in November, we received 33 applications for help.

In PUUF's name the Steering Committee donates \$1000 to POC each year, but individual donations are always needed to help the unfortunate members of our community. Make out your checks to PUUF but **designate POC** on the memo line. And in advance, a big thank you. *Merilyn*



## Why Do We Belong to the UUA?

How do we balance independence and interdependence in our congregations?



### *What is "Polity"?*

by Lynn Ungar, minister for Lifespan Learning,  
Church of the Larger Fellowship

"Polity" is not exactly on the list of the top 10 words that make people's hearts beat faster. In fact, it's a word that most people might not even recognize. But it's something that does have real significance for churches. "Polity," like politics and policy, has to do with government. Polity is the way that a group chooses to organize or govern itself. Polity is about how we are connected.

There are more than 200,000 people who are members of Unitarian Universalist churches. The way that we try to connect those 200-and-something thousand people is our polity. UUs have "congregational polity". This means that each UU congregation gets to make their own, independent, decisions. For instance, unlike, say, the Catholics or the Methodists, where authorities higher up in the organization tell a church who their minister will be, UU churches choose their own ministers. Each UU congregation owns its own property, decides for itself whether and how to take a stand on social or political issues, and generally takes congregational matters into its own hands. Within a particular congregation, a committee—usually called the board of trustees or board of directors—makes financial and policy decisions. But that board is chosen by a vote of the congregation. And for major issues, such as calling a minister or major capital expenditures, every member of the congregation gets a vote.

But our congregations aren't just floating out there all alone in the world. Each church makes independent decisions, but we also have ways of being connected. UU congregations band together as members of the Unitarian Universalist Association, or UUA, for short. The UUA doesn't tell the congregations how they have to do things, but they do help churches with things that are difficult or impossible for each church to do alone. For instance, the UUA produces curricula for people to use in their Sunday school programs and they help ministers match up with congregations and they help congregations to work for social justice and provide a pension plan for ministers and a whole lot of other stuff.

In the same way that people pay taxes so that governments can provide police and fire protection and roads and bridges and other big-ticket items that no one person could pay for alone, individual congregations give money to the UUA so that we can fill needs that no one church can pay for by itself. The CLF, even though we have members all over the world who never see each other in person, is a member congregation of the UUA. We even have an office in the UUA's building at 25 Beacon Street in Boston.

Like a church, the UUA has a board of trustees that makes many of the decisions about how to run the organization. And, like a church, there are some big decisions that representatives of the churches make. Each June we have a big gathering/meeting/celebration/conference called General Assembly. Every church is allowed a certain number of delegates, who have a vote in the decision making process. Many more people come to attend worship services and workshops and to see friends who live far away. But the heart of General Assembly is the plenary sessions where delegates discuss and debate and decide issues ranging from changes to the by-laws of our organization to how we should stand on social issues.

There's a lot more you might want to know about our polity as Unitarian Universalists, such as how the United States is divided into regions, called "Districts". Each of the districts have programs and people to help out UU congregations in their area. But the most important part is this: as Unitarian Universalists we are independent, with each church getting to make decisions for itself. But we are also interdependent: connected together, caring about many of the same things and working together for a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. We decide for ourselves, but we aren't all by ourselves. Not unlike our UU principles, which start with the "**inherent worth and dignity of every person**" and end with "**the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.**"

***Independence and connection. That's our polity.***

*This article is based on a piece in the New UU Primer which the Adult RE Class recently studied. An interesting discussion ensued and they thought it was a good explanation for the question: Why do we belong to the UUA?*



## Smart Giving - Using Your IRA

*Taken from the Denver Post, The Wall Street Journal  
Sunday, November 8,*

### We welcome everyone to the events of the Fellowship

(Meetings are at PUUF Hall unless otherwise noted)

**Sunday Services begin at 10:30 am**  
**RE classes offered for children 3 to 11 years**

**Dec 8 tu 12:30 Steering Cmte**

**Dec 10 th 9:30 Loaves & Fishes** Set up at Parish Hall on Lewis St. Call Joan Ward, if you can help: 731-9151, 398-9057

**Dec 11 f 3:00 Sunday Service Cmte**

**Dec 13 sn 12:00 UUth Gathering** after service

**Dec 16 w 10:00 Helping Hands Gift Wrapping**  
Meet at the Extension Bldg.

**Dec 17 th 1:30 Book Club**

**Dec 20 sn 10:30 Sunday Service** followed by our  
**Holiday Potluck Dinner**



### Back Room Bazaar

Sundays during December after service

### Survey re Four Corner Ministry

Please complete and return the survey by Dec 6 so that the Steering Cmte can act based on the desires of the Fellowship. You may return your survey to the Fellowship Hall or email to [pk@www.pamkircher.com](mailto:pk@www.pamkircher.com)

If you did not receive a survey, please ask for one at the Fellowship or request one by calling Norma, 731-3789, or email to [weareusually@skywerx.com](mailto:weareusually@skywerx.com)

Visit us on the web at [pagosauu.org](http://pagosauu.org)

Newsletter deadline is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month

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"Unless Congress extends this provision past 2009, donors age 70 1/2 and older have until Dec. 31 to make direct gifts of up to \$100,000 to public charities (not donor-advised funds and private foundations) from individual retirement accounts.....The charitable IRA rollover lets taxpayers make donations directly to charitable organizations from their IRAs without counting them as income and paying taxes on them."

"This approach is particularly beneficial for people who don't itemize deductions on their tax returns and, therefore, don't receive a tax benefit for charitable contributions, or for itemizing taxpayers who've reached the charitable-giving limit."

Consider this, if it applies to you, for your PUUF pledge or additional donations. *Joan Ward, Treasurer*

### Come Christmas!



*By M. Maureen Killoran, from UUA. Org*

No one is ever really ready for Christmas.

If we were really all prepared:

If every gift we had contemplated had been obtained;

If every present was beautifully beribboned;

If all the goodies our friends deserve were baked and

cooled, and stored just so;

If each and every person we love was gathered for our celebration;

If we never snapped at someone we care about, nor stopped short of being all that we could be;

If our minds were 100 per cent loving and our hearts were 100 per cent generous;

They truly would be ready

---and truly we would not need Christmas quite so much.

So come, Christmas, most needed of seasons.

Come with the reminder that love does not depend on Perfection but on willingness to risk connection.

Come into the unready manger of our hearts

That we may feel the warmth of new life

And give flesh to the promise of hope

That cries to bring healing into our world.

Come Christmas!

Come, Love,

Come, Hope.

Be born in our unready hearts

On this silent and holy night.

