



Weekly News for 11/29/23 - 12/5/23

This Sunday, December 3, 2023

“Waiting on a Mystery” with Rev. Karen Armina

For Christians, this is the first Sunday of Advent, the season of waiting and preparation for the birth of their Savior. It is a time of deep hope, and it begins with the story/mystery of a woman being told by an angel that she would be the mother of the Son of God. This morning, we’ll explore the sense of anticipation that comes from knowing something special is going to happen, but not how or even exactly what. The service will also include a joining ceremony for new members.



[Service website](#)

If you need an assisted listening device during the service please ask a greeter to get one for you.

There will be religious exploration sessions for all ages after the service. Adults are invited to attend a **workshop on reparations and land acknowledgements**, where we’ll reflect on the spiritual grounding for reparations and consider concrete actions we might take as a congregation. This will be a multiplatform session- just stay on the Zoom meeting after the service. Please see the RE and Family Ministry section below for information on RE for children and youth.

[Zoom Link for Service](#)

Next Sunday: [“Not Knowing, But Wondering”](#) with Mary Hillebrand, a multigenerational service with everyone in the sanctuary followed by our collaborative Youth Group held at Reeb from 12:30-1:30 pm

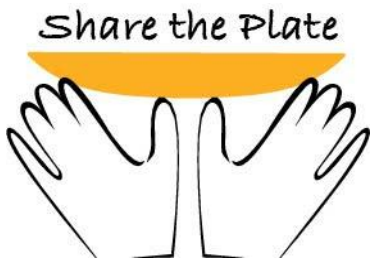


Special Holiday services this month:

Blue Holiday with Rev. Karen, Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 5:30 pm

Winter Solstice Celebration Saturday, Dec. 23 at 5:00 pm

See descriptions for these services below



The Share the Plate recipient for Sunday 12/3/2023 and 12/10/2023 is [Four Lakes Welcome Corps](#). Welcome Corps is a federal program which empowers everyday Americans to welcome refugees arriving through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The Madison area chapter of Four Lakes Welcome Corps is a group of neighbors and friends working together to welcome refugees seeking freedom and safety. The group was nominated by Kelly Kearns.

Please [nominate a local organization](#) for our Share the Plate Program!

Our December Theme: The Gift of Mystery

Our December theme reminds us that we can't possibly know everything, and invites us into the spiritual practice of being okay with that. In this space, you'll find a new invitation into reflection every week.

Check-in question: What's the most unprovable thing you've placed your faith in?

Knowledge is a priceless gift. But the illusion of knowledge can be more dangerous than ignorance. Thinking that you know your lover or your enemy can be more treacherous than acknowledging you'll never know them. Every morning in Japan, as the sun is flooding into our little apartment, I take great pains not to consult the weather forecast, because if I do, my mind will be overclouded, distracted, even when the day is bright... In the end, perhaps, being human is much more important than being fully in the know.

-- [Pico Iyer](#) (You can watch his 10-minute TED Talk called "The beauty of what we'll never know" [here](#))

Ministry Connections

Minister's Musings for December From Rev. Karen Armina



Dear Ones,

Our December theme is the "gift of mystery," which challenges me to think about mystery as a gift. And this really is a challenge, because I think we humans find a sense of security in being able to know and predict and control. I know I do! We might feel powerless when we can't do those things, and our first response to powerlessness is often fear. For me, these days, that feeling comes when I think about my teenager heading off to

college next year- the mystery of what's in store for each of us, on our own. And when I think about the ever-rising cost of food and housing- the mystery of whether and how we humans will continue to take care of each other. And when I think about the dropping water levels in our nation's reservoirs, and the changes in the cycles of the seasons that I'm noticing- the mystery of how long our earth home might be hospitable to humans. Is it possible to find gifts in those situations? How might we do that?

I think that finding ways to reframe mystery might offer some gifts. Maybe being confronted with mystery is an invitation to explore our opportunities. Maybe it's a chance to discover and use our creativity. Maybe it's even a way for us to connect with each other and offer each other comfort. After all, don't we all experience mystery of some kind? What might it be like to share how powerless or even afraid we feel when we do? To offer each other compassionate accompaniment as mystery confronts us? To let the shared experience of seeking responses to mystery bring us solace? We can hold hard things together, and let ways to keep going arise as we do so. We can turn our relationship with mystery into a dance, lessening the grip of the fear it can provoke.

And so I invite you to the spiritual practice of dancing with mystery - with questions. What mysteries offer you opportunities to learn and grow? What do you do when you find yourself in one of them? How might your presence ease someone else's confrontation with mystery? We'll explore these questions on Sunday mornings this month- and please reach out to me if you'd like to talk with your minister about your dance with mystery.

In faith and love, Karen

I would love to meet with you! Please come by during office hours or send me an email to set up an appointment for another time. And, as always, please call or text if you have a pastoral emergency.

Minister's Availability

Rev. Karen's regular office hours are:

- **Tuesdays** at the [Victory Café](#) (2710 Atwood Ave) 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- **Tuesdays** on Zoom 5:00 – 6:00 pm – [Zoom link](#)
- **Wednesdays** at Reeb 2:00 – 4:00 pm, please call or text ahead so Karen knows you're coming
- **Evenings and other times by appointment** – Karen would love to meet with you! Please send her an email to set up a time.

And, as always, please [call or text her](#) if you have a pastoral emergency.

Music Ministry

From Jennifer Hedstrom, Music Director



This Sunday, the Sacred Breath Choir will be sharing two selections from “Las Voces del Camino,” the Spanish language companion to “Singing the Living Tradition.” We’ll be singing the familiar Christmas carol, “O come, o come, Emmanuel” en español and the song, “El botón es flor mañana.” “El botón es flor mañana” (translated into English as “In The Bulb There Is a Flower”) will also serve as our Hymn-of-the-Month for the remainder of December. We’ll start with Verse 1 on Sunday December 10 and add a new verse on Sundays December 17 and 31.

Come join your fellow Reebers for folk music and singing on select Saturdays in December! Bring your voice and/or instrument and [click here to RSVP](#) so we can confirm a critical mass for gathering. Mike Stimson will email everyone who RSVPs by the Friday evening beforehand to let them know if there are a sufficient number of interested people to meet that Saturday. Folk music gatherings are scheduled for Saturday, December 2, 23 and 30 at 11:30am (note the new time).

This Sunday’s shared music:

#225 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

#57 “All Beautiful the March of Days”

#226 “People, Look East”

Religious Education and Family Ministry

From Genevieve McPherson-Shambarger, Director of Religious Education



This Week: This Sunday will be a multigenerational service with RE for all after the service. Elementary Aged children will meet in the front classroom, Youth will meet with Genevieve in the youth room, and Adults will meet with Karen in the sanctuary. See below for a description of the reparations/land acknowledgement workshop below.

Next Sunday: Next Sunday will be a multigenerational service with everyone in the sanctuary followed by our collaborative Youth Group held at Reeb from 12:30-1:30 pm.

Holiday Programming: As the winter holiday season approaches, Genevieve is interested in hearing any suggestions or memories from the past around holiday events at Reeb. If there is a pre-COVID tradition you would like to bring back or new ideas you want to share please reach out to Genevieve by email or at Reeb.

Small Group Ministries

Offering and Receiving Connection, Support, and Spiritual Practice

[Read more here](#)

Meditation With Friends - Wednesdays, 6:30 to 7 p.m. (Beginners Welcome) - [Zoom Link](#)

Sacred Breath Choir - Thursdays, 7 to 8:30 p.m., contact Music Director [Jennifer Hedstrom](#)

Folk Music Gatherings - Saturdays 12/2, 12/23, and 12/30 at 11:30 am, contact [Mike Stimson](#)

[Zoom Link for Meditation](#)

Our Congregation and Community Calendar

Prison Lockdown Protest - Dec. 2 at 11 am

MOSES is leading a protest about the ongoing lockdowns in the state prisons on Saturday, December 2nd at the Governor's Mansion (99 Cambridge Road), at 11 am.

Folk Music Group Meets Dec. 2, 23, and 30 at 11:30 am

Please join us for folk music and singing on some Saturdays in December. Bring your voice and/or instrument, and [RSVP to Mike Stimson](#) so we can confirm a critical mass for gathering. Mike will email everyone who RSVPs by the Friday evening beforehand to let them know if there are a sufficient number of interested people to meet that Saturday. We will meet in the sanctuary, multipurpose room, or music room, whichever is available, Saturday, December 2, 23 and 30, all at 11:30am (note the new time).

Last Week for Collecting Items for Nehemiah Essentials Pantry

As part of our Racial Justice Action Ministry (R-JAM) donation work, please be aware that there is a box in the foyer for your donations; we will continue to gather these through at least **December 3rd** (Nehemiah will have a December 5th distribution event and could also use volunteers). Items needed are listed below. [Contact Randy Coloni](#) with questions or for more information on volunteering:

- **For the Toiletries Kits:** Deodorant, Toothpaste, Shampoo & Conditioner, Lotion, Body Wash / Soap, Feminine Hygiene Products
- **For the Laundry Kits:** Laundry Detergent, Dryer Sheets, Bleach, All Purpose Cleaner, Rolls of Quarters

Religious Exploration Offering for Adults with Rev. Karen - Dec. 3

The next religious exploration offering for adults will be a **workshop on reparations and land acknowledgements** after the service on **Sunday, Dec. 3**. This will be a follow-up to the workshop led by Rev. Kerri Parker in October, and we'll reflect on the spiritual grounding for reparations and consider concrete actions we might take as a congregation.

Blue Holiday Service Dec. 6 at 5:30 pm

The winter holidays are usually framed around peace and joy and hope, and if you're not feeling those themes right now, you're not alone. You're invited to this evening service, where we'll share and ritualize the losses, fears, regrets, and sorrows we're feeling this holiday season, in the space we make sacred together. This service will be streamed via Zoom.

[Link to Service Page](#)

MOSES Transformation Celebration and Fundraising Gala

Dec. 9, 5:30 - 9 pm at Brassworks at the Goodman Center

Join us to hear the inspiring stories of our three Honorees to celebrate their accomplishments and to learn more about the work of MOSES. Tickets \$75, or \$65 for two. See [Mosesmadison.org for more information](https://mosesmadison.org). JRUUC is a founding member of MOSES.

Board and Minister Congregational Listening Session Sunday, Dec. 10

Your Board of Trustees and minister value what you have to say! We'll hold our quarterly listening session, after the service and a 15-20 minute coffee hour, on Sunday, December 10. Zoom participants can stay on the service link to participate in the listening session. We'll have someone monitoring the Zoom chat to facilitate online participation.

Here are the three questions for discussion. We'll plan to spend about 15 minutes on each:

- We are going to share with you a plan to change the duties of Treasurer back to the way they were a number of years ago. Do you have questions about it? Are you OK with this change? (Note: this change in plan will also be shared in the newsletter.)
- What time and talent do people have to offer to further our financial security?
- The Board in 2024-2025 is planning to begin work on a congregational vision statement. What is your understanding of the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement?

Winter Solstice Celebration on Saturday, Dec. 23 at 5:00 pm

Join us for our annual celebration marking the Longest Night and the Return of the Light! The evening is a deep ritual and celebration of the light that shines within and between us, with reflections, silence, and candlelight, and music featuring Jennifer Hedstrom and the JRUUC Sacred Breath Choir. The service will be streamed via Zoom.

All-Reeb Read Book Discussion Workshops Coming in Early 2024!

Virginia Harrison and Deb Myrbo invite you to read—and participate in a JRUUC discussion group about—this year’s UU Common Read, [*On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World*](#), by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, starting in mid-January.

You are invited to discover Unitarian Universalist resonance with the writings of the 12th century Jewish physician and scholar, Maimonides. With her interpretation, Danya Ruttenberg's book points people of any or all faiths toward modern day accountability practices that can really make a difference.

For more details about the discussion group, and to help us determine the best schedule and platform, please fill out the survey [here](#).

You can also find more detailed information about the book and workshops on the [UUA Common Read website](#), where you will also find links to videos about the book and interviews with the author.

We will be ordering bulk copies of the book from InSpirit, the UUA bookstore, and will receive a small discount per copy if we purchase at least 10. So even if you’re uncertain yet whether you’d like to participate in the discussion groups, but know you’d like to read the book, please contact [Deb Myrbo](#) by December 4 at 5pm to order your copy. A copy will also be made available in the JRUUC library for anyone who is unable to purchase the book but would still like to participate.

For more information, please talk with Virginia or Deb.

[See our Online Congregational Activities Calendar Here](#)

Congregation News & Announcements

Deck the Halls!

If you’d like to help decorate our foyer for the holiday season, please [let Rev. Karen know](#) you’re interested! A date will be set based on interest, by next week.

Reeb Rave Final Payments?

We raised more than \$7000 and had a great deal of fun at this year’s event. If you haven't already, please go to the [Auctria website](#) to see if you have a balance due. Registering a credit card is not making a payment. That needs to be done separately. Tom McClintock has sent out a .pdf with the names of winners and donors so you can connect with each other if you need to. Statements for donors and bidders have also gone out. Thanks!

Sign up for the “Snow Lottery”

Are you a fan of winter? Why not sign up to help with snow removal on our grounds? You can win the “Snow Lottery” if it snows during your week and you get to spend time outdoors! [Sign up here](#), or from the “Calendar” tab on our website.

UUA News & Connections



Final Proposed Revision to Article II

The final version of the proposed revision to Article II of the UUA Bylaws is now available! The UUA Board will officially receive the revision at the next board meeting, November 13, 2023, but it is available to you now. The deadline for submitting an amendment is 11:59 p.m. ET on February 1, 2024. All qualified amendments will be considered at the 2024 General Assembly. [Read the Proposed Article II here](#)

General Assembly 2024 Theme Announcement: Love Unites, Stories Ignite

The 63rd General Assembly will take place **virtually** Thursday, June 20 through Sunday, June 23, 2024. Participants will receive:

- Memorable, high-impact content for faith formation, with an easy and accessible experience
- Sense of belonging in the online community, with flexible approaches for a variety of needs
- Renewed connection to the wider faith of Unitarian Universalism.
- Inspiration and support to carry forward to your local congregations and beyond



SIDE WITH LOVE

[Click here](#) to learn what you can do to work for justice along with our national association



[Click here](#) to learn how you can get involved in getting out the vote

[More UUA Updates](#)

Please submit articles for the newsletter to news@jruuc.org by Tuesday at 5:00 pm.

[See our website for more information - jruuc.org](http://jruuc.org)