



James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Weekly News for 12/20/23 - 12/26/23

This Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 10:00 am

"Christmas in the Trenches" led by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski at [Prairie UU Society](#)

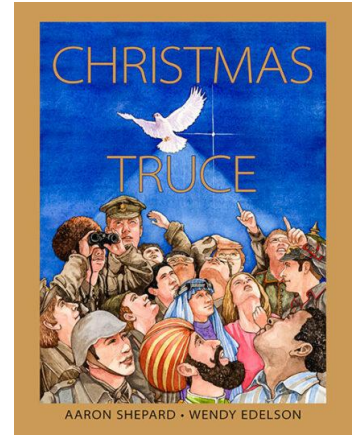
On a Christmas Eve of World War I, British and German soldiers lay down their weapons to celebrate the holiday together. This Reader's Theater presentation has four British soldiers (performed by Prairie members) reading from letters to their loved ones. The story is derived from "The Christmas Truce" by Aaron Shepard, and nearly everything described is drawn from first-hand accounts in letters and diaries of the time.

Children and youth are invited to join the service until the Time for All Ages, after which they will move to the RE area to make popcorn - to string or just to eat - and explore the Christian Christmas story.

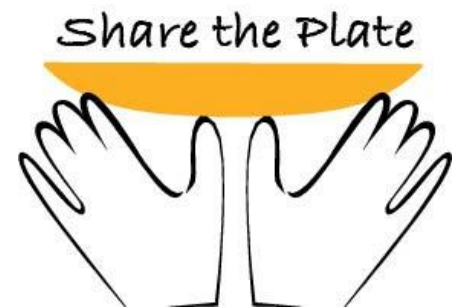
There will be no service at James Reeb on Sunday, December 24, 2023.

[Service website](#)

[Zoom Link for Service](#)



The Share the Plate recipient for Dec. 17 and 31 (skipping 12/24, which will be at Prairie UU) is [Middle East Children's Alliance](#), a nonprofit humanitarian aid organization focused on supporting the lives of children in the Middle East. They are working in Gaza to provide emergency assistance to families who have fled their homes and to get emergency medical supplies to hospitals and clinics. They were nominated by Jennifer Hedstrom.



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

Next Sunday: The service will be a multigenerational fair offering several opportunities to practice mindfulness of the present moment through music, movement, and meditation.



Winter Solstice Celebration

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.

In-person and streamed [on Zoom \(click for link\)](#)
Please bring a dessert to share after the service

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, Dec. 24

You're invited to attend any of these services at

[First Unitarian Society of Madison](#)

(900 University Bay Drive)

“Away in the Manger” at 2:00 pm in the Atrium Auditorium

Our Christmas Eve services begin with our Christmas Eve Nativity Pageant. The service is gentle, warm, and full of wonder and love – a favorite of families with little ones. We ask each family to bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to a local food pantry. Those who choose to dress up may participate as an angel, a shepherd, a wise one, or an innkeeper. Please join us for this participatory and joyous celebration of the Christmas story.

“Welcome Christmas” at 4:30 and 7:00 pm in the Atrium Auditorium

Gather for a celebration of the spirit that infuses this season with hope and joy and holy light. Through stories, music, carols, and poetry we will honor the blessings and gifts of Christmas and celebrate holiday wonder old and new. We will end with the warm glow of candles and the soft choruses of Silent Night.

Candlelight Vigil at 10:00 pm in the Landmark Auditorium

Enter together into the sacred space of Christmas Eve with this service of music, candlelight, and story. Join us as we welcome the spirit of Christmas into our world and into our hearts. We will also partake in a Christmas Eve communion, sharing in the bread of community and the light of hope.



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?

There is peace that comes
from letting the self
be with the world
as it is, and tonight,
it's a dark world...

-- [Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer](#) (you can read the whole beautiful poem [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 will be away on sabbatical leave from January 1 through April 30, 2024

Rev. Karen is not holding in-person office hours through the rest of December. Please reach out to her if you'd like to see her in person before her sabbatical leave begins.

She will hold her Tuesday virtual office hours on December 26 at 5:00 - 6:00 pm- use this [Zoom link](#) to join her there. And, as always, please [call or text her](#) if you have a pastoral emergency. *Karen has a new cell number- it's 608-893-2146*

Music Ministry

From Jennifer Hedstrom, Music Director



Jennifer is looking forward to her first Winter Solstice Celebration at Reeb. She and the Sacred Breath Choir have been hard at work learning new songs and reviewing old favorites for this Saturday's service. We hope to see you there!

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](#). 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. The next folk music gatherings are scheduled for Saturday, December 23 and 30 at 11:30am.

Religious Education and Family Ministry

From Genevieve McPherson-Shambarger, Director of Religious Education



This Week: This Sunday we will join our friends at Prairie UU congregation for a special Christmas Eve service. Children will leave for RE during the service after the time for all ages to pop, eat and string popcorn and learn about the story of Christmas.

Next Sunday: Next Sunday we will be having a special interactive fair style service focused around meditation with different activities throughout the building. Join us for a morning of mindfulness and fun as we look to ring in the new year.

Soaps and Bath Salts: Pick up a last minute Christmas gift before or after Saturday's Winter Solstice service! Soaps will be sold for \$6 and Bath Salts for \$8. All items were handmade by our youth and proceeds will be donated to the Dane County Humane Society.

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 12/23, and 12/30 at 11:30 am, contact [Mike Stimson](#)

[Zoom Link for Meditation](#)

Our Congregation and Community Calendar



The Longest Night National Homeless Persons Memorial Service Dec 21st

From our friends at Just Dane: Join us in remembering and honoring people who died without shelter in Dane County and elsewhere. Too often, their deaths are invisible. We will be gathering on Thursday, Dec. 21st, the longest night of the year, with houseless individuals, members of local faith communities and representatives from social service agencies. Click [here](#) for more information.

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 \(click for link\)](#). Please bring a dessert to share.

Folk Music Group Meets Dec. 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 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 23 and 30 at 11:30am (note the new time).

Cozy Winter Brunch @ Prairie UU - Dec. 25th

[Prairie UU](#) has invited us to share a potluck brunch together on December 25th. Please bring a food item to share. Brunch meal is free for all attending. Glassware and tableware provided. Let's eat, drink, and be merry!

Congregational Conversation on Israel and Palestine Jan. 7th

The Justice Ministry will host a Congregational Conversation on Israel and Palestine on 1/7/2024 after services (11:30-12:30). We hear you that this topic is alive for many members of the congregation right now. This will be an opportunity to share what is on your heart and what you need from your spiritual community in this moment - and offer your energy towards any action plans that emerge. Hybrid format.

Ojibwe Storyteller Meetings in January

The Racial Justice Action Ministry learned recently that four wonderful Ojibwe storytellers are lined up for this January through the Wisconsin History Project. The meetings are virtual via Zoom, Tuesday evenings, January 9-30, 2024 from 7:00 – 8:00 pm. This series is free and open to the public, but registration is required. This year, you only need to register once and you're automatically signed up for all four storytellers. The zoom link you receive will be good for all four events. Registration is now open. [To register, please visit this link.](#)

The storytellers include: Sirella Ford from Lac Courte Oreilles on January 9th, Tina Van Zile from Sokaogon on January 16th, Tinker Schuman from Lac du Flambeau on January 23rd, and Liz Arbuckle, Northern Outreach Coordinator, Wisconsin Historical Society on January 30th. For more information, contact Jeanette Clawson at rjam@jruuc.org.

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

Congregation News & Announcements



Please Welcome Danica Hoehn

Danica started working with us at the beginning of December. Her regular hours in the JRUUC office are Wednesdays from 10 am-4 pm. She checks emails for JRUUC Monday-Wednesday in the mornings.

On Thursdays, she works on preparations for the Sunday Service from home. Want to learn more about Danica? Check out her bio [here](#). *If you have a project or specific admin issues you need to discuss schedule time to talk with Danica [here](#) on the JRUUC appointment calendar.*

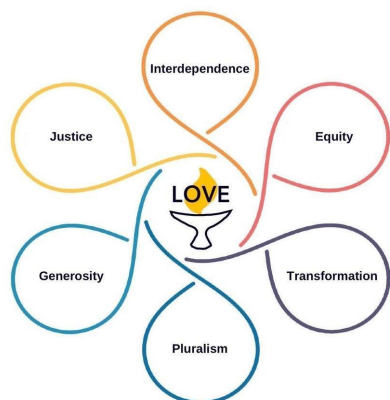
New Deadline for the Weekly Newsletter Submissions, Tuesday 10 am

Please send your submissions to news@JRUUC.org by 10 am on Tuesdays, so we have time to get them in the newsletter. Remember to include relevant event and announcement information, such as date, time, location, links, contact information, and how long you would like the information included in the newsletter.

What Can One Person Do? Sign up for the “Snow Lottery”

Winter is on its way. If you love being out in the fresh snow, 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](#)

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

Please submit articles for the newsletter to news@jruuc.org by Tuesday at 10:00 am.