



View from the Study Window...

What a marvelous, informed and concerned group of people we are! No surprise there. So it's no surprise, either, that I learn of great sermon resources as people are greeting me *after* a service. On December 7th, as we pondered the multifaceted topic of Escalating Inequality, I built time into the service for some of your ideas.

As I had read and reflected on our skyrocketing economic inequality, my mind (and the nation's) was on police homicides and racial profiling. Our unconscionably extreme economic inequality is tightly intertwined with other social and cultural factors, most especially racism. The most basic principles of American citizenship, and of Unitarian Universalism, are ensnared in this web of oppression.

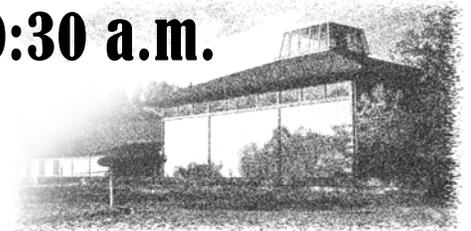
There were many great ideas shared of what we can do to move our communities toward greater justice; justice for all. David Ashley captured many of these on paper, and I will

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Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m. and Religious Education



December 21

Winter Solstice

Rev. Jean L. Wahlstrom and Stacy Sceiford

Today we welcome the beginning of Winter, and a turn from shortening to lengthening daylight. In a celebration for all ages and all voices, we will gather in the energy and maybe make a little magic!

Wednesday, December 24, at 6:00 pm

Christmas Eve Service

Stacy Sceiford and the MMUUS Staff

Join us in celebration and simple recreation of the Christmas story. We will have music and plenty of "joyful noise" and a closing circle of candlelight.

December 28

Begin Again!

The Worship Committee

Everyone needs a new beginning—whether it be from a personal shortcoming, or a desire to pursue a dream! Let's bid farewell to regrets of the past year, and begin again, with the hope and promise of the new year ahead.

January 4

A Broader Smile, A Wider Door

Rev. Jean L. Wahlstrom

What does it mean to be neighborly? Is it out of vogue or just "complicated"? What comes across as "friendly" - or as "nosey"?



CareRing News & Notes

Newcomers **Joey Favata and Kristina Starowitz Favata** are proud to announce the birth of their first child, Dominic "Nick" Joseph Favata, on November 25th, at 9:37 a.m. He weighed 8 lbs., 8 oz. and was 21" long.

Mother and baby are well and came home from the hospital on Thanksgiving Day. Nick has already attended two Sunday services with his parents!

Joey and Kristina thank all the members of the congregation for their kind thoughts during the pregnancy. May Memorial sends congratulations to all the Favatas!!



About Our Holiday Wreaths

The wreath outside, that greets you entering the building comes from Chengarian Treeland, in Oswego County. Robert Chengarian has a long association with us. He supplied the trees we sold for fundraising in the earlier days of our present location.

Hanging from the choir loft, facing the front of the Worship Hall is a wreath made by one of the women's groups in our congregation at the James Street location.

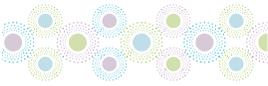
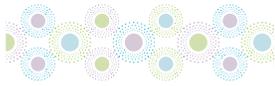
Facing you as you enter the Worship Hall, on the west wall, is a wreath finished by **Lida Black** from fresh greens and a collection of pine cones she owns.

They are all quite different, but convey the same message for the season.

Where our beautiful floral arrangements come from

We owe a special thank you to **Mary Burdick** for the exquisite flower arrangements that grace our foyer each week, also the little bouquets in the restrooms. Mary has an extraordinary talent and we are the beneficiaries of her endeavors. Thank you Mary!





This time of year is hyperactive. Massive snow. Christmas holiday time (for many of us this is full of stress, great music, family time, and joy, but for others, not so much except the stress). When Christmas winds down, the season is capped by a new year giving us a fresh start. There really is a thing called Christmas spirit, so be open to it. One example: it is a time when perfect strangers speak to each other in elevators. Look for the happiness and kindness and look to share.

Our ministerial assessment survey is closed, and we have about 160 signed responses. Some people who attend Sunday services comment that Jean's sabbatical has done her (and us) a lot of good. We got many replies from people who have been here over 30 years and many replies from people who have not actually joined us yet. That all who participated care enough to have gone through the lengthy survey is a good sign. It shows caring about MMUUS and that we have a strong future. I hope that all who took the survey have increased their awareness of what a complicated job the ministry gets to be, of the courage it requires, and of the difference between realistic and unrealistic expectations. Ministry sure isn't a job most of us would want. Replies indicate a broad range of opinions, which makes all our work worthwhile. Thank you.

The Board and Jean will review the data and comments, but as I promised, they will not know who said what. We will also report back to the congregation, but we have to understand what we got first.

Merry Christmas!

~ Peter Colman,
President, Board of Trustees



Holiday Cookie Baking with the Syracuse UU Young Adults

The Syracuse UU Young Adults group invites you to an afternoon of holiday cheer with good friends on **Saturday, December 20th, from 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm, at May Memorial.**

We will be baking holiday cookies (in May Memorial's new kitchen!) to celebrate the season. **Be sure to bring the ingredients or dough for your favorite cookies.**

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlewomen Party Wrap-Up

The annual God Rest Ye Merry Gentlewomen Party proved that the women of MMUUS and First UU can rise above any weather prediction to have a good time. Nearly 30 convivial souls met, ate, shared stories, swapped and scrapped for gifts. The laughter in the parlor held the snow at bay.

Many thanks to Linda Lowen for publicity, **Laura Knight**, May Memorial point person, Randy Kalish and Rebecca Karpoff for setup, Radell Roberts, Justine, Joan Kump, and Felice Killian-Benigno for clean up. Surely the mystery gift will appear next year!



Our Care Baskets and the holidays

We at MMUUS understand that charity should not be something we do just during the holidays. So many members and friends gave with gusto to the needy through our Giving Tree. The folks at the Christmas Bureau and Dorothy Day House were amazed and so appreciative! But let's all strive to continue giving of ourselves to others through our weekly donations in the Food and Personal Care Baskets in our foyer. Consider purchasing these food items: peanut butter, baby food (no glass containers), powdered milk, granola bars, baby formula, single serve fruit juices, oatmeal, rice. And for personal care. Socks are always needed on these cold CNY days! Other ideas: individual facial tissues, alcohol-free mouthwash, disposable razors, individual packets of laundry soap. Let's make those baskets **too small** for our donations!

~ Julie Daniel

Social and Environmental Concerns

"December 25: Birth of the Son of God...Or Birth of the Sun God?"

Commentary by committee member Lynne Perry

December is filled with Christmas traditions – inspiring music and candlelight services, beautifully decorated homes, pine trees hung with colorful ornaments and lights, family gatherings and delicious food, brightly wrapped gifts and stories of Santa Claus. There is another, very different story, of a Divine Child born 2,000 years ago to the Virgin Mary. And this story is why—as far as we've been told—we celebrate Christmas on December 25th.

But, this gentle Nativity scene was not the first. Some 3,500 years earlier, the Persian Sun God Mithra was said to have been born of a virgin on the same date, December 25th. He was also called the Son of God, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Knowledge of Mithra was brought to Rome about 75 B.C., by Legionnaires, who learned of him during a military campaign. By the fourth century A.D., Mithraism had spread across the entire Empire.

The Sun was the most important of ancient gods, and virtually every tribe worshipped one. In some, he was the only god. In others, he was one among a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Special worship was held at the Winter Solstice, when daylight lengthened, the earth warmed, the trees flowered, the wheat and barley grew and the animals delivered their young.

Another holiday – this one for the agricultural god Saturn—became popular in Rome about 63 B.C. This week-long, carnival-like celebration, ended on December 25th—which was soon known as Mithra's birthday, too. In Saturn's honor, trips to the forest were held and pine trees were decorated. There were gifts exchanged, public feasting, public drunkenness and sexual indulgences.

Then, in 312 A.D., the Emperor Constantine converted from paganism to Christianity and, later, outlawed paganism completely. The majority of pagans—afraid their gods would cause catastrophes if proper sacrifices weren't conducted—worshipped in secret.

Now, Christians could worship openly. As the church grew, newly powerful leaders—who had always believed that paganism was sinful—tried to convert its followers by taking over their symbols and holidays. And so, although experts believe that Jesus was probably born in the Spring, the church simply declared that December 25th—Mithra's birthday and Saturnalia's concluding day—would officially be called Jesus' birthday.

As a life-long Jew, Jesus would have celebrated Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, which commemorates a miracle in Solomon's Temple, when tapers in a candelabrum burned for eight days, although there was only enough sacred oil for one. Hanukkah is observed according to the Hebrew calendar, and this year is December 17th through 24th. Every Jewish home enjoys traditional food, songs, prayers and games; and lights a candle each night in a Menorah—which holds one candle for each of the eight days, and one for wisdom.

Meanwhile, Sunni Muslims honor the birth of the Prophet Mohammed on

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MUSIC AND THE ARTS

The MMUUS Music & Arts Committee to start a play reading group



Anyone interested in evenings filled with comedy, drama, mayhem (*well, maybe not mayhem*), tragedy, farce and above all camaraderie, please let me know either in person or by email at jseavers@hotmail.com.

This may be impractical until after the holidays, but we wanted to suggest it now and let it percolate in your subconscious for a few weeks.

Please give us an idea of your schedule and availability. We will set up a time and place for an initial meeting sometime in January to discuss scheduling and other particulars.

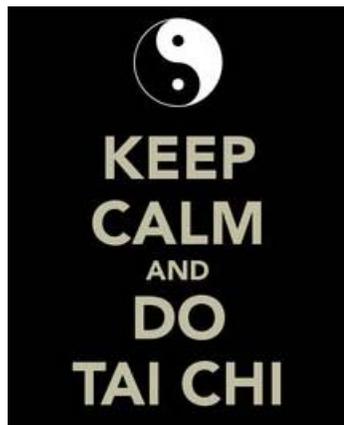
Thank you,
John Seavers,
Music & Arts Committee

Holiday Schedule for T'ai Chi Chih

Ann Pia's T'ai Chi Chih class **will not meet on the following dates:**

- Tuesday, December 23rd
- Thursday, December 24th
- Tuesday, December 30th
- Thursday, January 1st

The regular T'ai Chi Chih schedule (Tuesdays and Thursdays at 3:00 pm in the Social Hall) **will resume on January 6th**.



View from the Study Window

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get them into our next *MMUUSletter*. In the meantime, I recommend to you the fine words of Pope Francis, which can be found [here](#). He calls all people to say “No!” to “an economy of exclusion”, to oppressive financial systems, and “the inequality which spawns violence”.

This Christmas, let us add our voices and redouble our efforts for a world of justice, peace, and the radical equality which Jesus taught.

~ Blessings, Jean

Social & Environmental Concerns

December 21st, while the Shia branch of the faith observes it on December 26th. Taoists revere the Mother of Wisdom and Compassion from December 12th-22nd; and Shintoists worship the Goddess Anaterasu during the same time. The commemoration of the Buddha's Enlightenment comes earlier, and is celebrated on December 8th.

The newest holiday is Kwanzaa, a week-long celebration from December 26th—January 1st, that includes feasting and gifts. It has roots in the Black Nationalist movement, and was started in 1965 as a way for African-Americans to reconnect with their cultural and historical heritage.

From its beginnings as a persecuted cult, Christianity has become the largest religion on earth. According to a Pew research study, 2.1 billion or 33% of people worldwide, identify themselves as belonging to this faith. Muslims are next with 22%, followed by Hindus at 14% and Buddhists at 7%. Jews only account for .22%, and all others, including Atheists, make up 23%. With numbers like this, Christmas and its traditions will certainly continue.

~ Lynne Perry

May Memorial is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

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NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS
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MMUUSletter is a publication of events and information at May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society. To be included on our mailing list, please contact our office at 315.446.8920 or office@mmuus.org.

The deadline for the first of the month newsletters is the 15th of the preceding month. The deadline for mid-month newsletters is the 5th of the month. Articles received after the deadline will be included in the next newsletter. To submit an article, please email it to newsletter@mmuus.org.

May Memorial Unitarian Universalist Society
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TIME VALUE

Calendar

Monday, December 15th		
6:30 pm	Spiritual Enrichment Group	Memorial Room
Tuesday, December 16th	Hanukkah begins at sundown	
3:00 pm	T'ai Chi Chih	Social Hall
Wednesday, December 17th		
6:30 pm	Men's Fellowship Discussion/Potluck	Social Hall
Thursday, December 18th		
3:00 pm	T'ai Chi Chih	Social Hall
5:30 pm	Twisted Sisters (Women's Group)	Memorial Room
7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal	Sanctuary
Saturday, December 20th		
4:00 pm	Syracuse UU Young Adults Cookie Making Party <i>(see page 3 for details)</i>	Social Hall
Sunday, December 21st	Winter Solstice (First day of winter)	
9:40 am	Individual Spiritual Practice	Creekside
10:30 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
10:30 am	Teenz	First UU
12:15 pm	Spanophiles	COA
Tuesday, December 23rd	* NO T'AI CHI CHIH *	
Wednesday, December 24th		
6:00 pm	Christmas Eve Service	Sanctuary
Thursday, December 25th	Merry Christmas!	
Friday, December 26th	Kwanzaa begins *Office Closed*	
Sunday, December 28th		
9:40 am	Individual Spiritual Practice	Creekside
10:30 am	Worship Service	Sanctuary
10:30 am	Teenz	First UU
Tuesday, December 30th	* NO T'AI CHI CHIH *	