

Peace, Grace, and Prayer

We beckon this good season to wait a while with us. We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come. Peace. Come and fill us and our world with your majesty.

—Maya Angelou

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Maya Angelou writes in her poem, *Amazing Peace*, "We beckon this good season to wait a while with us. We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come. Peace. Come and fill us and our world with your majesty." She goes on to add other faith groups, all beckoning the season to bring peace.

Unitarian Universalists, we are a people called to the work of building bridges between people—manifesting peace. I implore you to find peace for yourself this season, whether at one of our special holiday Worship Services, at our Help Portrait Day, in a Covenant Group, or at a Wednesday evening Spiritual Practice, so you have the strength to build bridges of peace in our world.

Build the strength for peace, because our world needs us now, perhaps more than ever. Let's celebrate the season by welcoming the stranger—standing up for the rights of the Syrian refugees in every way we can, whether in direct advocacy or Facebook advocacy. And let our voices rise with the voices on college campuses that are calling for a transformation of institutionalized racism. Let peace come, and let it begin with us.

In Faith,

Rev. Anya Sammler-Michael

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Amazing Peace



Rev. Anya
Sammler-Michael



*In the sky,
there is no distinction
of east and west;
people create distinctions
out of their own minds and
then believe them to be true*

Buddha

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thankfulness and Joy



Paul Roche
Board President

As Thanksgiving passes and the winter holidays approach, it is a good time to be thankful for our wonderful church. It is a haven in a crazy world. It is a spiritual refuge as well as a spiritual challenge. It is a beacon of hope for all people, a lighthouse shining in the rough seas of ignorance and hate.

We welcome all of the storm-tossed to our doors. We greet them with open arms and warm hospitality. Our services elevate our lives beyond day-to-day existence and remind us there is a unity that binds us together. Our music soars like sirens' calls, not to crash on reefs but to lay down one's burdens and share the bounty of beloved community.

Let's enter the New Year with renewed energy and commitment.

Happy Holidays!



1st and 2nd place winners of the teen poetry slam, Meredith (l) and Molly.

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

Sharing the Monthly Themes with Children: Peace, Grace, and Prayer

In the midst of news of violence, injustice, and intolerance around the world and within the United States, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling offers a place of welcome, a place of refuge, a place to come together in beloved community. We offer a place to focus on the people who are making positive changes in the world and on being a part of that change ourselves. The themes for the next three months allow us to consider what this means and to experience living authentic lives that bring peace, justice, and comfort to the people around us.

In the children's program, our 9:30 class most deeply explores the monthly themes. In December, children will hear an Islamic story of cooperation, *The Stone in the Ka'ba*. They will experience the joys and challenges of cooperation and peacemaking by reenacting the story, playing games, and acting out situations that require conflict resolution.

In January, they will hear the Buddhist and Hindu story of *Indra's Magnificent Jeweled Net*. They will explore connections to other people and to the universe and will experience the wonder of being part of this amazing net through games, crafts, and other activities. They will also make jewels to place on a net as part of the congregation's fundraising for Syrian refugees.

In February, the children will hear the story of *Brother Benno and the Frogs* and experience a variety of ways people can reflect, listen to their inner voices, find calmness within themselves, or connect to the universe or the divine. Recognizing the needs and desires of children, almost all the activities will involve the body, movement, sound, or objects, rather than still, silent contemplation.

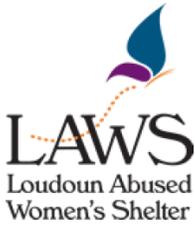
If you are part of the UUCS community and would like to find out more about how you can take these experiences home, check out Explore!, our weekly RE newsletter. Contact [Linda Weaver](#) and ask to be added to the mailing list.

Children's Religious Education topics and a list of programs and events for children and families is on the calendar at the UUCS website, www.uusterling.org.



Linda Weaver,
Director of
Religious Exploration

WINTER JUSTICE ALLOCATIONS



In December, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS). LAWS seeks to empower survivors of personal violence so that they may live lives free from fear, anxiety, and danger. Prevention and education programs are presented throughout the county to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. For more information, visit www.lcsj.org or talk to Bonnie Lepoff.

In January, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to a Unitarian Universalist Association's United Nations Office (UU-UNO) fund to benefit Syrian refugees. [Shelley, do we have a contact person or a URL to include here?]



In February, half of our Sunday morning offerings will go to Mosaic Harmony, a multicultural, interfaith choir of about 60 members who belong to more than 17 faith traditions in the Washington, D.C., area. Mosaic Harmony draws on the rich heritage of African-American inspirational music to "unify the world, one song at a time." For more information, visit www.mosaicharmony.com or talk to Judy Gruner.



In October, we collected \$633.99 for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy.

In November, we collected \$527.11 for the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI).

On November 8, our special collection for the Wounded Warrior Project totaled \$180.00.

On November 29, our "fifth Sunday" collection gathered \$368 for the minister's discretionary fund.

Thank you all for your generosity.



Ed Meagher the guest speaker from the Wounded Warrior Project at the UUCS Vereans Day Breakfast



Want to share something in the Spring newsletter?

- ✓ Reflections or articles related to the summer liturgical themes, *letting go, freedom, and reason*
- ✓ Group or committee updates (what you accomplished, what's planned coming up, etc.)
- ✓ Recent photos taken at UUCS or during UUCS events

Please send anything you'd like to include to newsletter@uusterling.org by February 15.

SCENES FROM THE 2015 UUCS AUCTION



Behold! Mike Berger's famous random number displayed by Holly Fitzgerald



Rosalie, Yvonne, and Michelle discuss their bidding strategies at the UUCS auction



The auction had so many fabulous prizes up for auction. Thanks you one and all for your generosity!