

The Pilgrim

Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person

6 December/The First Sunday: The NUUF Religious Education children

‘Lights of faiths’

For reasons that may not be entirely coincidental, light plays an important part in the practices of many faiths during the dark winter months. Candles are part of the December rituals for Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Paganism, and even (dare we say it?) Unitarian Universalism.

The 6 December service is being led by the children of the NUUF Religious Education class, and they have chosen to reflect the UU principle of drawing on the traditions found in many other faiths by talking a bit about a holiday of a particular faith or tradition.

You will not want to miss this very special service.

Following the service proper, the coffee and chat session will be augmented

with a special activity that we have not done before and you will also not want to miss. (Hint: bring your thinking caps.).

The children are looking forward to seeing you.



In Buddhism, lights recall the enlightenment of the Buddha, celebrated on Bodhi Day in December

President's Message: Krissy Ferris

Compassion & patience: back to the roots

At the mid-November service, Derek discussed the new Charter for Compassion (<http://charterforcompassion.org/>), a document distilled from global input by a multi-faith and multi-national council, affirming the importance of compassion in today's world. After a stimulating discussion at our service, I was left with a question: are we becoming more compassionate, or less? While Derek proposed that we were becoming more interconnected and also more compassionate, Heather challenged this at the micro level. Sure, she said, we may be more compassionate at the societal level, but in the era of instant connectivity, are we not becoming less compassionate at an individual level? She gave the example of Facebook – yes, it's good that we can connect to one another instantly online, but it is becoming rare to find someone who will even take the time to send an e-mail to a friend when a quick Facebook message will suffice.

I agreed, but wondered if the modern dilemma wasn't one of patience rather than compassion. Well, wasn't I surprised to find that compassion and patience come from the same Latin root – "pati," suffering, feeling, enduring. While "patience" comes directly from this root, "compassion" adds "com," the element of togetherness. While the words have obviously evolved from their roots, it was surprising to find that my sense of their similarity was confirmed.

I wonder, then, if we can take this a bit further. Maybe it is the case that in our collective sense, as civilizations or societies, the conveniences of modernity have succeeded in bringing us more to-



gether, towards more successful attempts at understanding, empathizing, and interrelating. However, at the same time, we find that the individual aspect, the patience, has been marginalized by this constant accessibility and flow of information. In other words, while I routinely fly around the world, interacting with populations that I would never have met if it were even 50 years ago, I simultaneously find it difficult to schedule a Skype call with my brother.

Maybe it isn't as paradoxical as it first sounds, but rather it's a question of re-aligning our priorities. Since we spent so much of human history looking to those immediately surrounding us, it is understandable that when the world (and beyond) becomes easily accessible to us, we spring to the opportunity to explore it. Because it is a shift, a new cultural paradigm, we don't yet have a model for how to balance this wealth of information with the patient responsibilities of our interpersonal relationships. But this isn't to

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In memoriam Paul Terry



Paul Terry, long time UU and member of NUUF died on October 31 after a short illness. He was 63. He is survived by his wife, Jean. They were married in 1970 in the oldest Unitarian chapel west of the Mississippi. Paul and Jean became active NUUFers way back when the fellowship met in Leiden. Jean is a NUUF past president and chairperson of several EEU retreats in Rolduc. Paul was always a quiet support for Jean and NUUF, and the saying, "still water runs deep" certainly applied to Paul.

He was a much loved teacher, mentor and friend during his 32 years of teaching earth science and biology at the American School of The Hague. Paul has 11 published articles in collaboration with research teams concerning dolphin communication and had presented over 14 times at Marine Mammal conferences.

The students at ASH organized a memorial service at school and, honoring a UU custom, as the students entered the theater, each took a candle and lit it from a chalice candle on stage.

Hundreds of candles lined the edge of the stage as students stood and paid tribute with stories and anecdotes about their time in class with Paul. Paul will be remembered for his belief that questions were more important than answers. The students said, "in his memory we all have questions and the greatest tribute we can pay him is never cease from asking them."

What greater legacy can a Unitarian Universalist impart to his students?

The December services will be held on 6 December and 20 December at 2 p.m. in the Keizersgracht Church, Keizersgracht 566, Amsterdam
Bring a friend (or a total stranger)

‘For unto you is born this day.....’

During the early days of Christianity, Christmas was not a very big deal. Why should it be? The Graeco-Roman civilisation in which it was incubated did not look on anyone’s birthday as a particularly noteworthy event, and the important part of Jesus’ life was his death, after all, which Christians believe(d) opened the way to eternal life and is celebrated at Easter.

After some time, however, for reasons which we may never know for certain, the birthday of Jesus began to be celebrated (though probably not on his real birthday, which was not recorded by accurate municipal authorities) at a time of year when other faiths also had important celebrations.

What was the attraction? What was it that people wanted to express with the



Hannukah is celebrated at different times of the year, depending on the moon. It has a very December theme, though, and recalls the purification of the Temple after the Greeks had been driven out.



On Bodhi Day, Buddhists recall the enlightenment found by Siddhartha Gautama when sitting under a bodhi tree in India.

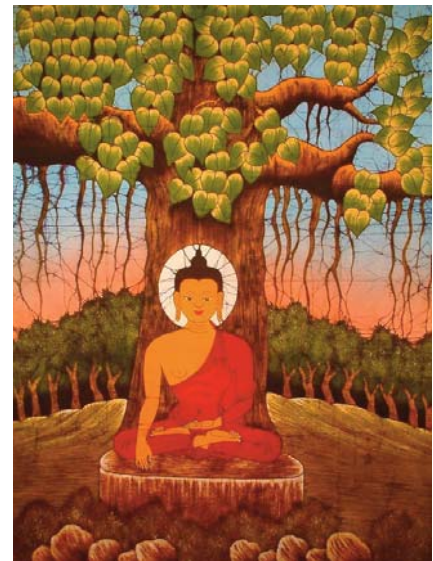
celebration? And why in December? And does the celebration of Christmas have anything at all to do with the celebrations of other faiths, such as the Jewish Hanukkah, the Buddhist Bodhi Day, one of the Roman holidays that have been considered as the reason the Christians chose 25 December (Saturnalia or Sol Invictus (the unbeatable sun)?

During the service on 20 December, Rev. Suchard will take a look at some of these questions and explore a possible underlying theme that many of the faiths of antiquity and modernity share and that quite often appear in celebrations that take place December.

Those who like to think ahead might try doing a bit of homework and looking into the stories (everything can be found in the stories) of the first Christmas, Hanukkah, Buddha and the Bodhi tree, the Winter Solstice, and any other holidays of the season that you think worth looking into.



On 25 December, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus.



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say that all hope is lost – in fact, it’s the opposite: we have a unique historical opportunity to craft a model of interaction that can balance the open information flow that requires and supports compassion with the inherently “slower” interpersonal relations that require and support patience.

How can we do this? Surely, I don’t have all the answers, and there will be as many different answers as there are people. One thing that I like to do is to send letters. No, not e-mails... not even printed copies of Word documents. Real, handwritten letters. I like this not just because of the care and intention that it shows the person who is receiving the letter, but also because the patience that is required in sending a letter tends to make the contents more compassionate and heartfelt. If I am writing a letter to someone that I routinely instant message with, you can be sure that in the letter, I’ll skip the inconsequential details of my day in favor of a more thoughtful discourse. I’ve found that this can strengthen and deepen relationships in unexpected ways – that the patience and the compassion support each other in creating a more meaningful bond.

Letter-writing may be my exercise in patience/compassion... what’s yours?

And the survey says:

EUU Fall retreat a great success

Months, nay years, of preparation proved to have been well worth the effort on the weekend of 30 Oct.-1 Nov 2009 when the EUU Fall Retreat organised by the NUUF was held in Maastricht.

The post-retreat evaluations showed that with but a couple of exceptions, most of those in attendance had a really good time.

Probably the least favourable review was due to the fact that the venue and some people’s sleeping accommodations were separated by a fair distance, which caused some difficulties with socialisation and with getting about.

That one point aside, most of the other comments were satisfyingly positive, so well done, that organising team.

Of course, a special word of appreciation has to go out to our guest speaker, Rev. Kate Braestrup of the Maine Warden Service. One never knows what a guest minister is going to be like until they’re actually on the ground and doing it. Usually it works out. This time, it far exceeded working out, and the talk Kate gave on the Saturday and her service on the Sunday, both of which had to do with love, but from two very different per-

spectives, were being talked about by those in attendance for a long while afterwards.

Were there aspects that didn’t go exactly as planned?

Of course. Did anybody notice? Not that we could see.

So a big kudos to Bill Britt for his organisational *leger de main* and having found such a brilliant site, and only slightly smaller kudos to the others on the team, both in planning and execution:

Krissy Ferris, Albert Manders, Derek Suchard, Jessica Shinnick, Stormy van den Brun, Rosemary Horn, Lance Horn, Dallis Rademaker and anyone else I have inadvertently forgotten.

Now, about spring 2012.....



The speaker at the EUU Fall Retreat in Maastricht, Rev. Kate Braestrup.

Strike the harp and join the chorus

By Christina Tomlow-de Muinck Keizer
NUUF Women's Group

The holiday season has started. Sinterklaas has arrived and next comes Christmas.

In addition to all the other preparations, it is time to warm up our voices. Do we remember all the words to the many Sinterklaas songs? Singing the songs as the children set their shoes out makes this event a true ritual. The songs define and call attention to what we are doing.

Then, on Sinterklaas evening (5 December) we sing while we wait for Sinterklaas to come visit us. Again, a signal that we are ready and waiting. Waiting for what? For our wishes to be fulfilled, our dreams to come true?

For me, singing these songs brings back the sense of anticipation and excitement I remember feeling as a child.

Then as soon as the Sint has left, we bring out the Christmas CDs. Now we enter another season full of song. In our women's group, we traditionally celebrate the Solstice with pagan and re-paganized carols. In a celebration of light in darkness, song is essential since it fills us with a sense of lightness, joy and laughter.

The joy of singing together is a unique quality of this season. Nowadays music is often something we just listen to rather than partake in. Perhaps alone in our car or in the shower we will raise our voice in song, but mostly we keep the reins on.

Yet singing is so uplifting. And singing together is truly magical. To sing together you must listen to others at the same time as expressing yourself. It enhances a sense of community because we attune ourselves to each other.

The act of singing, of letting the



sounds resonate in our body, can also be healing. The vibrations in our voice help us connect with our emotions.

So, at this time of year, when all feels bleak and dark, when we are often stressed and busy – sing a Christmas carol. The schmaltzy ones are great for really getting into it, but basically any one will do. And when you get together with friends and family, print out some of your favorite carols and get everyone to sing with you.

Fa-la-la-lah-lah, La-la-la-lah!

“Our deepest emotions seem to be caught in the net of our singing and propelled to the surface where they are tossed in the waves of the song. It is a kind public declaration of who we are as bare, sung lives. As we sing together, we hear our vulnerability in each other's manifest humanity’.

Gordon Adnams,



Once Sinterklaas gets to town, the season of joyful singing breaks loose in full voice.

The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, as part of the European Unitarian Universalists and affiliated with Unitarians and Universalists around the world, covenants to affirm and promote:

- * The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- * Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- * Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- * A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- * The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- * The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- * Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- * Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- * Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- * Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- * Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- * Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- * Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As a free congregations we enter into this covenant with others, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

NUUF New Year's weekend borrel

3 January 2010 - 3 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Rev. Derek Suchard and Liesbeth de Vries would like to invite you to usher in the New Year with some pleasant company and a drink or two.

RSVP to: Van Egmondstraat 28 RD
2024 XN Haarlem
023 562 8681 - djsuchard @ gmail.com

NUUF Services 2009-2010

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|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 6 December NUUF RE class | 7 February Rev. Hans le Grand | 4 April TBA | 2 May TBA |
| 20 December Rev. Dr. Derek Suchard 'A chance to start again' | 21 February Jessica Shinnick | 11 April Rev. Wyman Rousseau Oberwesel, Germany | 16 May TBA |
| 17 January Krissy Ferris | 7 March TBA | 18 April TBA | 6 June Rev. Dr. Derek Suchard |
| | 21 March TBA | | |

NUUF Services

The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship services usually begin with a candle-lighting ceremony and sharing of joys or concerns.

Each month a minister or a member of our congregation presents information about a particular religion, spiritual quest or another topic of interest to religious liberals.

Music and singing is always a part of our service but we also provide time for contemplation and meditation. After the service we have a social hour with coffee, tea, juice, refreshments and, of course, good company.

We meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on the first or second Sunday of the month (Sept. to

June) at the Keizersgrachtkerk, Keizersgracht 566, Amsterdam.

For more information contact Bill Britt on 015 369-2614 or by email at wwjebritt @ gmail.com.

We hope to see you!



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The Caring Group

The NUUF's Caring Group invites you to call someone from the Group if you need some help. You can also call one of us if you know of someone in the group who could use a helping hand, emotionally or otherwise, but who cannot call us for some reason. And, of course, please let us know if you would like to add your name and number to the group list:

Rev. Derek Suchard
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or 06- 203 379 64

Willem van Leenhoff
071-523 25 96

Dallis Radamaker
06 10947649



The NUUF Women's Group

meets on the second Friday of each month at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Andrea Landau on 030-604 49 01.



Masthead

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