

Nora Unitarian Universalist Church
Sarah Oelberg, Minister

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Hanska, Minnesota 56041-4310



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Mere Lys
(More Light)

Permit Number 2

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<http://nora-uu-church.org/nora/>

Address Service Requested

Sunday Services December, 2002

Social Hour: 10:00 A.M.

Worship Service: 10:30 A.M.

December 1: "Holy Islam." Our Muslim friends are ending their holy month of Ramadan as our Jewish friends begin Hannukkah. What do these holidays tell us about their religions?

Servers: Roger and Norma Breu; Jane Thompson

Musician: Ryann Rathman

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

11:30 - POTLUCK LUNCH and decorate the church!!



December 8: "Four Famous Unitarian Eliots--Plus One." Another in a series about important Unitarians who share the same name.

Servers: John and Anne Makepeace

Musician: Mimi Kamleiter

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

- Board of Trustees Meeting



December 15: "Reflections on the Season." A program about Christmas presented by Kristine Paulson, Mimi Kamleiter, and church musicians.

Servers: B.J. and Wally Wellmann

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group

December 22: "Surviving the Holidays." 'Tis the season to be jolly and to overdo. How can we survive the holidays--and enjoy them?

Servers: Ardis and Elroy Wellmann

Musician: Sally Hanson

9:00 - Adult Discussion Group



December 24: CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - 5:30 pm. Our annual candlelight service with the children, music, and story. Please bring cookies to share after the service.

"The word, 'Advent,' from the Latin, adventus, means 'coming' or 'approach'. The word connotes a longing or hunger for something more in life, something intimated but still unfelt. For Christians this longing focuses on the divine child, a child who was embodied

in the Jesus of history, and who, from a psychological perspective relates us to 'unborn' aspects of ourselves. Advent, then, is the season of the unborn...Each of us nurtures some promise that wants to be born. Psychic birth refers to any potential aspect of ourselves that longs for realization: it refers to our 'becoming' who we are meant to be."

- by Mariann Burke in Advent and Psychic Birth

The basic theme of Advent is a universal theme. It is a theme of hope and confidence and trust, and the human capacity for these things. It is a theme of that vision which looks forward to the day when there might be peace upon the earth, good-will among all peoples.

We are once again in the advent season, waiting expectantly for Christmas, singing the ancient songs and re-dreaming the ancient dream. But we dream with one eye open. We are aware of the evil abroad in our world. We are aware, very much aware, of our own confusions and inadequacies. But as we labor amid things as they are shall we labor in hope or in despair? This is perhaps the basic question with which the advent season annually confronts us. We would prefer, of course, to labor in hope. But is hope, or trust, really possible in the world as we know it?

The hopeful, forward-looking, attitude which is the spirit of advent may be the best and most desirable and healthiest, but it is not always the easiest attitude to have. It is challenged and dampened by the regrets, the anxieties and fears, and the despair which darken our lives. This despair and these regrets and fears are very real. But the advent message is that these things need not be the final realities in our lives--except as we make them so. The advent message is that it is in our power, over and above these things, to set our human capacity for hope and trust.

Regret for things past is always with us. And as we remember the past it is difficult not to conjecture as to what might have been--had we only done the things which now appear to be so obviously the proper things to have done. Indeed, if we have grown at all, it would be strange if--looking back--we did not find things said we would not longer say, things left undone we would now do. We would be deceiving our selves if, looking back, we claimed to be completely satisfied with our records.

The danger of regret, however, is that it turns our thoughts and our energies the wrong way. It directs them toward the past, which is now beyond our reach. We can no longer touch it, or change it. Yet we are called upon to redeem it--to redeem it by present actions that can prepare a better future. This is perhaps the great strength of advent--giving us hope that better things will come, and the time to prepare for an improved future. The evil, the regrets, of the past can be overcome by present dedication to the good. The yearning for what might have been is overcome by the vision of what yet may be. The past is redeemed by present action. Regret is overcome by hope.

May our days of waiting with great expectation for the holidays be also days of becoming who we are meant to be.



TO KEEP IN TOUCH

Bud (Walter) Anderson was in the hospital with pneumonia for a couple of days, and is undergoing further testing. His son, Charles, is spending a couple of weeks with him.

Joanne Saxton is "back in the fold" and would love to have calls and visits from Nora folk as she continues to recover from her surgeries.

Clayton Olson is undergoing a series of radiation treatments in Rochester. While there, he and Shirley are staying at Hope Lodge 411 Second St. NW, Rochester, MN 55901.

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

On December 1, we will decorate the sanctuary and church for the holidays. Plan to stay for potluck and then help with "decking the halls" afterward.

Our annual Christmas eve service will be at 5:30 pm. As usual, the children will be a large part of the program, which will end with our candlelight circle. After the service, we will enjoy hot mulled cider and coffee and punch along with whatever goodies people bring to share. This is a wonderful time to reconnect with people far away who come back for Christmas, and to celebrate the spirit of Christmas!

The Lunch Bunch will meet on Tuesday, December 10, at the Holiday Inn in New Ulm at 11:30 am. Good food, good discussion, holiday spirit! See you there.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Oak Hills Auxiliary is sponsoring a Holiday Bazaar, bake sale and raffle on Saturday, December 7th from 9:30 - 11:30 am at Oak Hills Living Center in New Ulm. Refreshments will be served and there will be pictures with Mrs. Claus, Santa and his Elf.

Donations of baked goods are welcome by 9:00 a.m. on Saturday. Proceeds will be used to re-upholster furniture for residents at a cost of \$2,450.

NORA WOMEN'S SOCIETY

The NWS will be packing boxes for the church shut-ins after the service on December 8. Members who are able are asked to bring cookies and other holiday goodies to church that morning, or leave in the Fellowship Hall during the week. The children of the church will be helping with this, including delivering some of the boxes afterward.

The women of the Lake Hanska Lutheran Church have invited all area church women to their Guest Day on Wednesday, December 4th at LHLC at 2:30 PM. The theme of the afternoon will be "A Cup of Christmas Tea". This will include the singing of familiar Christmas carols and the reading of "A Cup of Christmas Tea" by Tom Hegg. They ask everyone to bring their favorite cup in which their tea will be served. If your cup has special significance, perhaps that can be shared while drinking your tea and enjoying the scones that will be served. We hope many will be able to attend.

There will be no regular NWS meeting in December.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

The reconstituted Committee on Ministry has agreed to begin the exploration and process of finding a new minister. They will be conducting a comprehensive survey of the congregation in early January, and compiling the results both to help us know how to proceed, and to give information to prospective ministers. The committee will form the "core" of a search committee when we are at that stage. Members of the committee are: Mark Wiger, Jeannie Hinsman, Doug Anderson, Ron Peck, Kris Paulson, and B.J. Wellmann. If you have ideas or suggestions, please speak to one of them.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

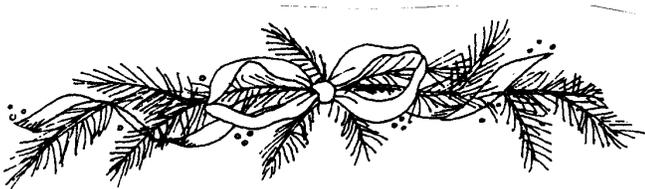
Two of the children in the RE class have written "articles" for the newsletter:

"We are starting to plan for Christmas. We would like to do some things that help. Some of the ideas we have are meals on wheels, baking, delivering treats, making boxes and toys. Our favorite one was baking."

"This idea comes from our church principle of: "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." We're starting to plan to give gifts to our friends in Transylvania for Christmas. Ideas we have so far are: writing letters, making beaded Christmas decorations, and coloring fuzzy posters."

The children will be doing these things and also practicing for the Christmas eve program during the Sundays in December. It will make things go much smoother if everyone can be present each Sunday. On Dec. 8th, each child is asked to bring some candy to put in the shut-in boxes, and to stay to help the women pack and deliver the boxes.

The children are also donating toys to the Sertoma club's "Santa's Closet." Toys appropriate for giving should be brought to church by Dec. 8.



PARTNER CHURCH NEWS

On December 1 and 8, there will be blank Christmas cards available in the Social Hall for members of Nora church to write messages to send to families in our partner village of Benced. If you would like to enclose a picture of you or your family, that would be appreciated, also. This is a way we can connect with them and show that we are thinking about them. Sarah will send the cards on December 9, and they should arrive by Christmas for distribution in the village.

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE

Once again, we are participating in the annual "Guest At Your Table" program of the UU Service Committee. Since the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas are when Americans spend more, eat more, buy more and consume more than any other time of the year, it seems a good time to think about others who do not have the advantages we do. For over 60 years, the UU Service Committee has been successfully partnering with grassroots organizations around the world to empower women; to support the struggles of oppressed racial, ethnic and indigenous groups; and to defend the rights of children. Much of this work is financed through the Guest at Your Table program.

There are some boxes in the foyer, as well as envelopes for those who just wish to make a cash contribution. If you take a box, place it on your dining table from now until Christmas eve, and each day place in the box as much money as it would cost you to feed one guest. On Christmas eve, the boxes and envelopes will be placed under the tree, and Sarah will forward them to the UUSC in the name of Nora church.

DENOMINATIONAL DOINGS

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) offers classic chalice jewelry at reasonable prices for UUs everywhere. From simple pewter chalice pendants to lovely gold chalices with crystals, there is a variety of unique jewelry, including earrings, pendants, pins, tie clasps, pins, and even ornaments. Give a gift to someone you love or to yourself that speaks to your commitment to liberal religion. Shop online at www.clfuu.org/jewelry or call 617-948-6616 for a brochure.

The 2003 Meadville Lombard Winter Institute will feature Dr. Parker Palmer presenting a workshop on the theme: "Spirituality and Education within the Faith Community." Dr. Palmer is a popular writer, teacher and activist as well as a dynamic speaker. The dates are February 20-22, cost is \$250 plus housing, and the place is the Univ. of Wisconsin in Madison. Registration is already filling fast, so if you are interested, contact Sarah for more information.