



# **WEEKLY CONTACT**

December 20, 2015

Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota (UUCS)

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## **MINISTER'S MESSAGE BY ROGER FRITTS**

Each December I tell the stories about how Unitarians have helped create Christmas in America. On December 11, 2011, in a sermon called "Singing at Christmas," I told the story of two famous Christmas carols written by Unitarians. On December 22, 2013, I talked about how one of the most famous Christmas stories was written when the author was attending Sunday services at a Unitarian Church. Last year, on December 7, I explained how in the 1830s a Unitarian minister helped promote what has become one of the most important cultural symbols of the Christmas season. Sunday's sermon will bring all these stories together, in shorter versions.

Some religious conservatives look down on our religion and say we are not part of the mainstream of American life. In response, it is important that we remind ourselves and our fellow citizens of the ways Unitarians and Universalists have played a significant role in the development of our culture, including the ways we celebrate Christmas.

## **SUNDAY EVENTS, DECEMBER 20**

### **UUCS, 3975 Fruitville Rd, Sarasota 34232**

#### **\* 9 a.m. & 11 a.m. "A Unitarian Christmas," sermon by Rev. Roger Fritts**

This celebration includes the carols "Jingle Bells," "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" and for humor "God rest ye Unitarians, let nothing you dismay." Our children's program, "The Candles of Our Advent Wreath" will also be presented.

#### **\* Music: 9 a.m. & 11 a.m. Thomas Koch, guitar; Don Bryn, piano**

**\* 11 a.m. Religious Education (RE):** RE Classes will be starting off in the Sanctuary where we will be lighting the UU Advent Wreath. We will meet in the West Wing and walk in together for the 11 am service. Following our time in the Sanctuary, we will go back to our classes to work on our Social Justice Project - "Gift Giving that Changes the World."

#### **\* 10:05 Forum: Christmas Party with food and music**

### **Lakewood Ranch**

#### **\* 10:00 a.m. "How We Treat Our Children," video sermon by Rev. Roger Fritts**

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." -- Nelson Mandela

**\* 10:00 a.m. Music: Ed Kinder, Keyboard, Claudia Holmes, Recorders**

**\* We have volunteers on hand to make sure your children are supervised and happy while you enjoy the service.**

### **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES, Thursday, December 24:**

**5:30 p.m. Children's Service.** This service is designed for young children and will end at about 6:00.

**6:00 p.m. Wassailing.** There will be food and drink to celebrate the season, thanks to Catherine and Chris Bonner. Please bring a finger food or dessert to share.

**7:00 p.m. Our choir will be singing at our traditional Unitarian Universalist service.** Designed for children over the age of 8.

**8:00 p.m. Wassailing.** Come join the celebration.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

**\* The annual Christmas Eve family service will take place Thursday, December 24th at 5:30 pm.** The service will last about 35 minutes and families will be invited to come up to the front of the church to sing some familiar Christmas songs. Everyone is invited to participate and we will be gathering to have a brief rehearsal at 5:00 pm before the service. Please feel free to wear your Santa hats, reindeer antlers or other seasonal attire! Following the service, join us for refreshments.

**Our Whole Lives (OWL)** for 7 - 9th graders is a comprehensive sexuality education program. It provides adolescents with a safe, supportive environment where they can clarify their values, and understand the emotional and social aspects of sexuality. Sessions are led by trained facilitators. If you know of a teen who would benefit from the program or would like additional information, please contact Susan at [dre@uusarasota.org](mailto:dre@uusarasota.org) or by telephone at 371-4974, ext 7. The program is scheduled to begin in January 2016 and will meet weekly on Thursday evenings.

### **OTHER SUNDAY EVENTS**

**\* A memorial service for Boris Pundick will be held on Sunday, December 20 at 2 PM.**

**\* Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) - Guest at Your Table**

Guest at Your Table is the annual fundraising program that supports the human rights work of the UUSC. The UUSC works in more than a dozen countries throughout the world, fostering social justice and working toward a world free from oppression. Their work in promoting economic justice, bolstering environmental justice, and protecting rights at risk is grounded in the belief that all people have inherent power, dignity, and rights.

One of UUSC's major focuses is serving the people who are most overlooked or discriminated against in the midst of humanitarian crises such as forced migration, large-scale conflicts, genocide, and natural disasters. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Guest at Your Table campaign will be continuing through December.

We invite you to join or renew your UUSC membership during this holiday season. Gifts of \$125 or more are eligible to be matched dollar for dollar by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock. If you did not receive a membership envelope at the November 22nd church service, you can pick one up at the Social Justice table in the courtyard. You may also place completed membership envelopes in the collection basket or bring them to the Social Justice table where you can learn more about the valuable work of the UUSC and its partners around the world.

## **ADULT PROGRAMS**

**"Singles for Friendship" Christmas Party is happening this Monday, December 21 at Cathy Cyrus' home at 6pm.** There will be music, singing, a gift exchange and, of course, food. All UU singles are welcome to come celebrate the holidays together. Three things you must do: bring a COVERED DISH to share; Bring a \$10 GIFT to exchange; and RSVP to Cathy at [cyr603@yahoo.com](mailto:cyr603@yahoo.com) by Sunday and Cathy will email you directions to her home. Let's make the holidays bright by brightening each other's lives.

\* **iPhone, Android and Computer classes are continuing.** Learn how a little education can help you enjoy your device more while we share some laughs too. Questions about days and times? [DeeAnnaDowdle@gmail.com](mailto:DeeAnnaDowdle@gmail.com) 350-3571

\* **Ever read a book you could not put down?** Unfortunately, once you pick up Elizabeth Kolbert's "The Sixth Extinction," you may just stay up all night and forget to register for the discussion group starting in January. But don't miss the discussion, which happens every **Wednesday afternoon, 4:00-5:00 pm, in January** here at the church. Sign up by calling the discussion leader Diane Cirksena at [651-253-0552](tel:651-253-0552), or at the adult programs bulletin board. Come on Wednesday, January 6 with your copy of the book ... and the first three chapters complete.

\* **Moral Ground in the Changing Climate, an adult education class at Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota Sundays 9-10 a.m., West Wing, January 10-February 28, 2016, Co-leaders: Lea Hall and Roy Lauridsen**

We know about the fires, floods, and famines, climate injustice, the sixth extinction. Knowing this, what kind of people do we want to be? What virtues do we cultivate? Registration, limited to 25, is now open at the new Adult Programs bulletin board and by email to [climate@uusarasota.org](mailto:climate@uusarasota.org).

For more information, look for the announcement on our website's home page at [www.uusarasota.com](http://www.uusarasota.com) or go directly to the class's page at <http://www.uucarasota.com/moral>

\* **Join us for our end of year BICYCLING GROUP ride on Wednesday, December 30, 9:30 am,** at Robinson Preserve, 1704 99th St. W in Bradenton. Admission is free. We will enjoy a beautiful and leisurely ride (about an hour or so) and then have lunch at the Seafood Shack (on causeway on Cortez Rd.) Those who live in

Sarasota can follow Gulf Drive back down to Sarasota if they would like a beautiful ride home. For questions or more information call Nancy Saum, [703-297-1749](tel:703-297-1749), or email [nancy.saum@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.saum@gmail.com).

\* **The Writing Your Life Story Groups** are hoping to form a new class in January, if there is enough interest. Class membership is limited to ten. Members are asked to write a story each time and read it to the class. John Yoder will be facilitator and the group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at 1:30 p.m. Please contact June Brasgalla, 379-6071, to put your name on the waiting list.

## CARING

\* **A Tribute from Gay Boylston in memory of Jean Shoemaker.**

\* **A Tribute from Sue Moreland to celebrate Boris "Buzz" Pundick's many years and contributions** to our congregation and the joy he shared with us daily. **Sue's tribute is also in honor of Joyce Schneider** for her years of devotion to him and many of our programs through the years.

\* **A Tribute from Shirley Foss in honor of Boris Pundick and Joyce Schneider.** Boris gave years of leadership to UUCS and was a most generous and compassionate man. Joyce has been a fantastic companion and supporter.

\* **Does the Minister have your Memorial Form on file?** Has your emergency contact information changed since you filled out the form? Update and submit your form for a memorial service and have peace of mind knowing you've made choices easier for your loved ones. The form can be found online at [www.uusarasota.org](http://www.uusarasota.org) or in the church office.

\* **The Caring Committee** offers short term help with rides, meals and companionship. If you are ill or having surgery and would like us to be in touch, please contact Dee Widder at 377-9028 or [DeanaWidder@gmail.com](mailto:DeanaWidder@gmail.com).

\* **Would you like to honor a friend** who passed away or someone who made your day a little brighter or celebrate a birthday, anniversary or your grandchild's accomplishment? Make a Tribute donation today and send your check, with a Tribute form, to the office. Forms are available in the office and online. The Tribute will be acknowledged in the Contact.

## OUR COMMUNITY

\* **Your holiday purchases from Amazon.com can contribute to our UUCS budget.** Just start your holiday purchases at <http://www.uusarasota.com/amazon.php> or by clicking our Amazon search box at "Quick Links" on the UUCS home page and enter a search term or click Go. Amazon will do the rest.

\* **Snap, crackle and pop - have your picture taken for the UU photo directory in January.** You get a free 8 x 10 picture and a free Directory. You may also order more pictures. Please go to our website and sign up for dates listed. Questions: email [deanawidder@gmail.com](mailto:deanawidder@gmail.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

\* **RSVP REQUIRED by Wednesday, December 23. What are you doing Christmas morning?** (December 25, in case you're wondering.) Come to the Jefferson Room for coffee and pastries at 10 AM. Bring your favorite pastry to serve 4. I'll put on the coffee. Let's be Merry together....RSVP. [DeanaWidder@gmail.com](mailto:DeanaWidder@gmail.com)

\* **LADIES POTLUCK AND BOARD GAMES will be held Saturday, January 9 at noon in the West Wing.** Margie Henry and Dee Widder

\* **Now is the time to sign up for our Winter Get Together Dinners. The dates are January 23, February 27, and March 26, 2016.** It is a great way to get to know new friends at the church and/or reacquaint with old friends. The dinners, usually 6 to 12 people, are held in people's homes. The host provides the main dish and guests bring the sides, hors d'oeuvres, and dessert. Registration forms are available at the Get Together Dinner table in the courtyard or save paper and register online [www.uusarasota.org](http://www.uusarasota.org). Deadline for registering is January 3, 2016. Carole Malone, John Brackett, Alice Carden, and Jeanie Craig, Get Together Dinners Committee

\* **"Discovering UUCS" - A Newcomer Orientation**  
**Saturday, January 16, 2016; 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**  
**UUCS - Lexow Wing**

If you are considering membership, this workshop is for you. Reverend Fritts will discuss our history and explore with you what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and a member of this church. Some of our church leaders will join us for lunch to talk about the many activities here and to get acquainted with you. The Membership Committee provides lunch. Be sure to sign up at the Welcome Center!

\* **Our Sanctuary Concert Series presents "Grande Piano: Chopin & Friends," with pianist Eleonora Lvov on Sunday, January 17, at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary.** The celebrated Russian piano virtuoso will perform works by Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, and Gershwin. She has achieved acclaim as a performer and popular recording artist. She will play a broad spectrum of music from the Romantic and Impressionistic eras, offering personal impressions and historical remarks about each piece. Tickets are \$15 and are available at [www.uucsarasota.com/LVOV.html](http://www.uucsarasota.com/LVOV.html) or at the door.

### \* **SAVE THE DATE!**

The fabulous Serendipity Auction will take place on **January 31, 2016**, right after the second service. It's time now to start thinking about those wonderful and creative items you can donate. Sailing trips? Sewing lessons? Soirees? Cellphone training? Southern Dinners? Ski Chalets? Soups? We'll also be looking for volunteers. Familiarity with computers and careful data entry especially needed. Look for the Auction table in the courtyard starting December 27, and our big Kick-off on January 3rd. In the meanwhile, if you have any questions, contact Anne McFarlane at [Auction@uusarasota.org](mailto:Auction@uusarasota.org).

**\* Bishop John Shelby Spong will speak at UUCS's Rose Frank Lecture Series on Friday and Saturday, February 12& 13, 2016! Please attend!**

Spong's criticism of biblical literalism and rejection of much traditional Christian dogma have earned him a worldwide progressive following, and of course, a measure of harsh opposition.

Among the twelve theses that Bishop Spong drew from his 1998 book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, are his fourth and fifth theses:

"The virgin birth, understood as literal biology, makes the divinity of Christ, as traditionally understood, impossible."

"The miracle stories of the New Testament can no longer be interpreted in a post-Newtonian world as supernatural events performed by an incarnate deity."

Would you like to know why he says such things? Come hear him speak to us on February 12 and 13. Those who register before January 16 get a discount! Details, fee, and registration info are on the UUCS website - <http://www.uucsarasota.com/spong.html>.

**OUR COMMITMENTS - SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**The UUCS Social Justice Committee addresses issues of homelessness and hunger, economic justice, human rights and the health of our planet. To learn more, attend our noon meeting on the second Tuesday of the month, join the mailing list at [justice@uucsarasota.org](mailto:justice@uucsarasota.org) or stop by the Social Justice table on Sunday.**

\* **Resurrection House Winter Needs.** Resurrection House volunteers from our church have asked for donations of single-person blankets (not Q or K size), backpacks or zippered bags, and men's pants waist 32 and 34. For pick up, contact Sarah Risher at [sarahrisher@mac.com](mailto:sarahrisher@mac.com) or [781-367-8515](tel:781-367-8515) or bring them to church (drop off table next to the food donation bin).

\* **Shop With A Cop.** The Social Justice committee renewed a \$500 sponsorship of this special holiday project that connects kids with Sarasota police for private holiday shopping at Target. This relationship-building initiative of Chief DiPino often receives media coverage. Your gifts to our church help to make it happen.

\* **Newtown Nation representatives** Lou Murray and Valerie Buchand addressed the Social Justice committee in December about the group's effort to grow and retain more economic activity within the Newtown community. The organizers have incorporated as a Florida nonprofit to seek gifts and grants. It is recruiting board members from the larger community. To help Newtown Nation develop, the committee approved a gift of \$400 to cover the IRS non-profit 501c(3) application fee.

\* **Easier To Eat Healthy Away From Home.** Dulled by convenient fast food? [Here are](#) two guides for finding healthy restaurants. One is perfect when you are traveling, even out of the country. Also find them on the church website under Social Justice/Climate Change.

\***Bethesda House Food Donations.** Canned food (pork-and-beans, ravioli are favorites), travel size toiletries, paper products (TP and towels). Bring your donations any Sunday. Thank you!

\* **Chocolate Bars.** Responding to feedback from members, we will discontinue chocolate bar sales at the Sunday table due to the year round effects of heat. However chocolate bars will be available anytime through special orders, along with whole bean coffee and other Fair Trade items. For minimum order and other information, contact Suzie Brucklacher at [justice@uusarasota.org](mailto:justice@uusarasota.org). Subject line: Special Order.

\* **Thank You, Backpack Volunteers.** Backpack will resume in January. Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers!

\* **Sign the Solar Energy and Voting Rights Petitions.** Available at the Social Justice table until the February deadline. Florida voters only.

**Also at our courtyard table today:** Organic, Fair Trade coffees, teas, cocoa, olive oil; collection box for school points labels from food boxes; collection jug for non-recyclable plastic caps to benefit a local school.

**COMING NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27**

**UUCS, 3975 Fruitville Rd, Sarasota 34232**

**There will be no 9 am service this Sunday.**

\* **11 a .m. "Woman Spirit Rising for Justice," sermon by Bridget Mary Meehan**

Bridget Mary Meehan is an activist in the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests. She leads a local Catholic mass which has women priests and married priests. The local Catholic hierarchy has threatened excommunication for anyone attending her services. Bridget Mary answers:

"In response to the Spirit's call in our time for a more just church and world, we are following our consciences and ordaining women in prophetic obedience to the Spirit who created women and men as spiritual equals. According to Galatians 3:28, In Christ there is neither male nor female, all are one. Therefore, in our movement we disobey an unjust law, canon 1024, that prohibits women's ordination. In order to change an unjust law, we must break the law. We are leading the [Catholic] church, not leaving the church. Women priests are needed in church to give women voice and vote in church decisions in all areas of church life. Women priests at altars are visible reminders that women are equal images of God."

Come hear this courageous woman tell her story.

\* **Music: 11 a.m. Mindy Simmons, guitar, Darren Server, piano**

\* **10:05 Forum: 10:05 am Forum: "Boundaries: Finding Your Personal Balance"** What are boundaries in relationships? How do we establish and maintain them? How do we communicate this in a caring and consistent way? If setting boundaries leads to self-empowerment, how can we communicate our truth and risk disappointing others? Practical approaches that make a difference in the quality of personal and work relationships. Presenter,

Linda Williams.

Linda Williams has an MA in Group Dynamics and for more than 35 years has been a facilitator and consultant to organizations and individuals nationwide. She is founder of *RelationShape*, President of Linda Williams Consulting LLC and Communications Director for the *Living in Community Network*.

### **Lakewood Ranch**

Because of historically low attendance on the Sunday after Christmas, **there will be no service December 27 in Lakewood Ranch**. Please join us in Sarasota for the 11 am service, described above.