



**DECEMBER 17—10:30 AM—*HIDE AND SEEK WITH GOD* – REV. CLARE L. PETERSBERGER, TRACY HALL AND THE TUUC CHOIR, THE TUUC GROUP AND OTHER STUDENTS IN OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY; THE REV. KARYN B. MARSH AND LIZZA LEWIS AND SPICE KLEINMANN**

Through stories, songs, art, and even an interview with God, (in which we ask God the “big” questions) we will explore the Mystery in which we live and move and have our being. In our faith tradition, no one is compelled to believe a particular image of God so God has many names. In our faith tradition, no one is compelled to use the word God at all in order to be warmly welcomed into our faith tradition. Today we celebrate different understandings of God---one name of which is Love.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 ONLINE SERVICE INFORMATION**

For those who plan to join us on Zoom this Sunday, please see below for the Zoom information.

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/92618653886?pwd=SkIGeGZLVGhwaVFjVXlwUU5NMUY2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 926 1865 3886 Passcode: 664006

**YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Join us at the Christmas Eve Family Service at 5:30 PM for a short, no-rehearsal play called **The Smallest Star!** There will be parts available for children and adults.

We need some help with costumes and props. Especially six flashlights! Please let me know if you can help or have something we could borrow.

Want to Volunteer? Not sure how?

Come play with the youth of TUUC. All you have to do is sign up on the easel in the lobby or email Kara Tyler at [tuucdre@towsonuuc.org](mailto:tuucdre@towsonuuc.org). If you've never volunteered before, you'll be sent a Background Check form to fill out and submit. Once the background check comes back, presuming it's clear, Kara will schedule you! Easy Peasy Lemon Squeezy!

For January, we are looking for volunteers to help with class and for people who are interested in running a class. Share a passion, belief, or skill. Reach out to anyone on the RE committee or Kara for help.

## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AT TUUC

### **DECEMBER 24—10:30 AM—*LOVE AND JOY COME TO YOU* – TRACY HALL AND THE TUUC CHOIR, REV. CLARE L. PETERSBERGER**

On this Christmas Eve morning we gather to remember holidays past; to lower our stress levels; and to lift our spirits through song. We do not come a wassailing from home to home in the neighborhood nor for tangible gifts. But our worship service will include favorite holiday carols and songs to share the blessing of love and joy through music.

### **DECEMBER 24—5:30 PM—*OH, STAR OF WONDER!* – REV. CLARE L. PETERSBERGER, KARA TYLER, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, TRACY HALL, MUSIC DIRECTOR**

A central “character” in Matthew’s nativity story is the star the wise folk follow to find the baby Jesus. The appearance of the star in the Biblical story is brief. But its light continues to shine in the imaginations of artists and musicians who wrote Christmas carols. Tonight we celebrate the story of the nativity from the star’s point of view. You are welcome to bring a beloved star ornament to hang on our tree during the service (and then take home with you.) Tonight, we celebrate the wonder of the star and the stars which inspire us to look up and marvel at the gift of our life.

### **DECEMBER 24—7:30 PM—*THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION* – REV. CLARE L. PETERSBERGER, TRACY HALL, MUSIC DIRECTOR, AND THE TUUC CHOIR**

The poet, Alison Hawthorne Deming, wrote about a friend who is both a writer and a scientist. This friend went to a monastery and heard “a monk’s teaching that crucifixion was not the hard part...incarnation was. How to squeeze all of that all-of-that into a body.” In tonight’s candle light service, we ponder the mystery of the incarnation and its implications for our own lives.

### **CHRISTMAS EVE ONLINE SERVICE INFORMATION**

For those who plan to join us on Zoom for these services, please see below for the Zoom information.

#### **10:30 AM SERVICE:**

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/92997317821?pwd=ck8rQ2UvQ09qV2cwUnR2eFFIVIRKdz09>

Meeting ID: 929 9731 7821

Passcode: 053112

#### **5:30 PM SERVICE:**

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/95566129822?pwd=R1R0VThaZFg4Sy9ZV284ZkJKcFlzZz09>

Meeting ID: 955 6612 9822

Passcode: 913732

#### **7:30 PM SERVICE:**

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/96213553160?pwd=WEpmS0RObUN0cDVOaVZ3dERHanI1dz09>

Meeting ID: 962 1355 3160

Passcode: 228553

## CLARE'S COLLOQUY

*Direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder are primary sources of Unitarian Universalist inspiration. These experiences open our hearts, renew our spirits, and transform our lives.*

(from the amended proposed Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association)

The stories retold at this time of year are all about direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder. The Hebrew people expected to have enough oil to burn for only one night to rededicate their temple. They watched the flame burn for eight days. By the fourth century, Christians celebrated the journey of the wise people, following a bright star, who worshipped the holy in a human baby. For centuries before that humans sang and feasted when they noticed the minutes of daylight lengthen and knew that the natural world and their own lives would continue.

These were all direct experiences of mystery and wonder that opened hearts, renewed spirits, and transformed lives. A few delegates to the UUA General Assembly in June expressed concern that this language implied that Humanism was becoming a second-class theology in our faith tradition. But one can be a Humanist and still have direct experiences of mystery and wonder. Andre Comte-Sponville, a retired professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, (and self-identified Atheist) wrote:

*...Some friends and I had gone for a walk in the forest we liked so much. Night had fallen. We were walking. Gradually our laughter faded, and the conversation died down. Nothing remained but our friendship, our mutual trust and shared presence, the mildness of the night air and of everything around us...My mind empty of thought, I was simply registering the world around me – the darkness of the undergrowth, the incredible luminosity of the sky, the faint sounds of the forest...only making the silence more palpable. And then, all of a sudden...What? Nothing: everything! No words, no meanings, no questions, only – a surprise. Only – this. A seemingly infinite happiness. A seemingly eternal sense of peace. Above me, the starry sky was immense, luminous and unfathomable, and within me there was nothing but the sky, of which I was a part, and the silence, and the light, like a warm hum, and a sense of joy with neither subject nor object ...Yes, in the darkness of that night, I contained only the dazzling presence of the All.... ...'This is what Spinoza meant by eternity', I said to myself – and naturally, that put an end to it.'*

With humility and humor Andre Comte-Sponville lifts-up how trying to think our way into direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder does not work. But we can open ourselves to such experiences. Each December we light tiny flames to re-enact the wonder of the oil that burned for eight days; the wonder of the holy being born in a baby; the wonder of the return of sunlight. We light flames that we might have our own direct experience of union with nature, with others, and with “the dazzling presence of the All.” May our experiences and celebrations this December bring us closer to one another and move us to work for a world made fair with all her people one.

## TUUC ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### LET'S GET THE RECORDS STRAIGHT!

The end of the year is creeping upon us and we want to be able to supply you with correct financial records for your 2023 calendar year end contributions. **Members**, please check your profile in Breeze and look under Giving to determine if your contributions have been credited to the correct fund. **Friends**, since you do not have access to Breeze, please contact us at [churchoffice@towsonuuc.org](mailto:churchoffice@towsonuuc.org) or [bookkeeper@towsonuuc.org](mailto:bookkeeper@towsonuuc.org) for a copy of your current giving report before December 31st so we can make sure your contributions are coded correctly. Should there be any discrepancies, please let us know. The final year end statements will be sent out the second week of January 2024. Thank you in advance!

### GREEN SANCTUARY TIP OF THE WEEK

The excitement of gift-giving also includes the delight of presenting a beautifully wrapped present. It is all part of the experience. However, the wrapping paper and ribbons are immediately discarded, are generally not recyclable, and go into a landfill. Presents can be just as lovely when scarves and other fabrics, as well as reusable gift boxes and bags, are used for wrapping. After the gift-giving, they can be folded and tucked away in a small area to be used again.



For inspiration on wrapping gifts with scarves or other fabric, go to <https://www.bhg.com/christmas/gift-wrapping/wrap-gift-with-fabric/>

### NEWS ABOUT US

Our TUUC community sends healing wishes to:  
Dr. Neil Porter following hip replacement surgery;  
to Sean Mackey who is now, after his hip repair, walking with a walker--Go Sean!;  
to Susan Woolhiser following her successful procedure;  
and to Marilyn Thorn who is making slow but steady progress in physical rehab.  
Neil, Sean, Susan, and Marilyn welcome cards of encouragement.  
Their contact info is in Breeze.

Congratulations to Spice Kleinmann and Lizza Lewis on the recent publication of their book "Grandmother Moon Tells a Tale: How the Moon Got Up In The Sky!"

Congratulations to The Reverend Karyn Marsh! After being ordained by our congregation in May of 2022, Rev. Karyn became a Board Certified Chaplain in October and is serving as a part-time chaplain in several local hospitals. Rev. Karyn recently accepted a contract ministry part time position with the Unitarian Universalists of Fallston, MD. We will miss having Rev. Karyn serve as TUUC's Affiliate Community Minister. We are grateful that she will continue to be a member of TUUC (along with her husband, Barry.) We are excited for this new chapter for the Unitarian Universalists of Fallston and for Rev. Karyn!

---Rev. Clare

## **YULE RITUAL AND POTLUCK—SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 5:00 PM**

Join us in celebrating the returning of the light and our hopes for the new year in ritual and song! We'd like to take this time of transition to begin the new year with positive intentions. The ritual will begin at 5 pm. (Please arrive between 4:30 and 4:50 PM.) Snacks and drinks to follow the ritual. The participation is free and open to all. However, cash donations are always welcome. We are asking participants to bring a non-perishable food item for the Assistance Center of Towson Churches basket.



## **FAIR TRADE SALES—COFFEE, CHOCOLATE, AND MORE—DECEMBER 17**

Stop by the Fair Trade table in the lobby this Sunday to purchase stocking stuffers and hospitality gifts, and celebrate the arrival of winter with TUUC's Green Sanctuary Committee. Available items include coffee (including decaf, ground, and whole bean), a variety of chocolates, teas, almonds, cashews, and olive oil. When you buy fair trade and organic products from us, you support sustainable farming, small-scale farmer co-ops, and the fair trade coffee served during our Sunday coffee hours. Learn about some of the producers who supply fair trade products: <https://www.info.equalexchange.coop/partners>

## **TUUC SOCRATES CAFÉ TO PROBE THE REALITY OF SANTA CLAUS—MONDAY, DECEMBER 18**

The next Zoom TUUC Socrates Cafe will meet on Monday evening, December 18th, from 7:30-9:00 PM. Santa Claus will be the focus. As Socrates would have us do, we will be probing a question, an interesting one suggested by Sharyn Rhodes at our November meeting: "Is Santa real?"

Denise Reddy, of TUUC, found a helpful writeup on Facebook: ["ATTENTION TO ALL PARENTS WHO NEED TO TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT SANTA."](#) There is plenty on the Internet when Googling "Is Santa real?" There's a [scientific analysis](#), for one, and there's [a Woman's Day article written on 10/30/23](#); there's a Hotel Chocolat article about ["the real story about Santa Claus,"](#) a [Wikipedia entry entitled "Santa Claus,"](#) and Coach Myrna offers her two-cents worth with ["Is Santa Claus real?"](#) Enjoy browsing!

The point is: whatever we, each of us in our own unique way, think (believe!) in response to the question, is what makes Socrates Cafe unique! Every point of view is valued and appreciated. To join us on the 18th: send an email to [socratescafe@towsonuuc.org](mailto:socratescafe@towsonuuc.org), and you will receive the Zoom Link by email the day before. Should prove to be an intriguing discussion!

## **OUR MESSY LIVES TO EXAMINE "CONTEMPLATION" - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21 AT 3:00 PM**

What comes to mind when you see or hear the word **CONTEMPLATION**?" What is its deep meaning? What is deep contemplation? What is its meaning in Urdu? In Hindi? Does it have a spiritual connotation? Does it ever lead to enlightenment? How and when, for example? Synonyms of **CONTEMPLATION** include: reflection, consideration, introspection, thought, pondering, reverie, rapture, deliberation, meditation, rumination, speculation, musing, study, and brainwork. Is processing contemplation? What else?

To join us for our next meeting, Thursday, December 21st from 3:00-4:00 PM, go to BREEZE, the TUUC Member Directory, and send an email to Nancy Caswell. She will email the Zoom Link to you the day before.

**CONTEMPLATION:** let's subject the word, **CONTEMPLATION**, to a bit of **CONTEMPLATION!**

## SOCIAL ACTION

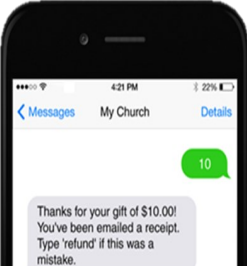
### NONPERISHABLE FOOD

Nonperishable food can be dropped off at these locations:

- Mondays, 12 to 2 PM: Ascension Lutheran Church parking lot (7601 York Rd.)
- Thursdays, 12 to 2 PM: Trinity Episcopal Church parking lot (120 Allegheny Ave.)
- Thursdays, 5 to 6 PM: Valley Baptist Church parking lot (1401 York Rd.)

### EARL'S PLACE

Thanks to those who have provided Christmas gifts for Anthony. More gift cards for other residents would be most welcome.



## DONATE BY TEXT

Send an amount to  
**(410)834-0700**

## PASSING THE PLATE

DONATE TO TUUC VIA PAYPAL, TEXT, OR BREEZE  
MORE INFORMATION ON THE [TUUC WEBSITE](#)

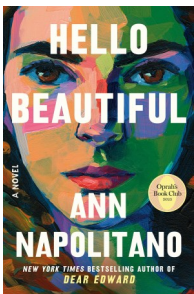
## CABIN FEVER

**MAY DECEMBER (2023)**  
**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7**  
**4:30 PM DISCUSSION**



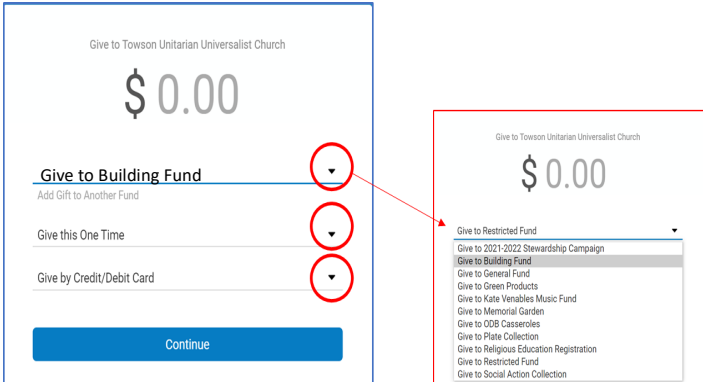
## BOOK CLUB

**HELLO BEAUTIFUL**  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27**  
**7:30 PM**



### ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS

When making your contributions online, please be sure to designate your donation to the correct fund by using the dropdown arrow. Click on the fund you wish to contribute to and write the entity (ex: ODB) in the note area for clarification.



## BE A MONITOR AT TUUC!

Towson Unitarian Universalist Church (TUUC) derives income from renting our facility to external groups when not in use by the congregation for church events. The monitor ensures that both the Church and the renter are satisfied with their use of church facilities.

The monitor role is to ensure that the church facility is appropriately used and in accordance with the TUUC Facility Use Policy to protect the Church building and resources from misuse and damage. As a representative of TUUC it is also the monitor's responsibility to ensure that the renter's use of the facilities is as smooth and trouble free as possible.

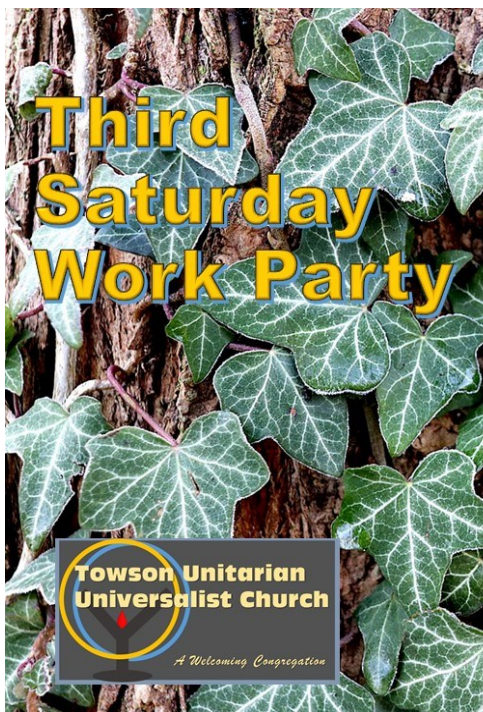
This is a paid position. Rate of pay is \$15.00 per hour. A W-9 must be completed and kept on file should you work over 40 hours within a year.

Duties include:

- Promptly open the facility at assigned time.
- Follow special instructions section contained in the monitor assignment notification of any additional services such as Audio, Custodial, Rights to serve alcohol, etc.
- Regulate room temperatures as needed.
- Check and make sure that the space rented is ready to accept guests.
- Develop working rapport with rental contact.
- Be available and attentive to the needs of the renters/rental contact.
- Close facility as directed in procedures.
- Be prepared for any emergencies.

Monitors must attend a thirty minute orientation session at a convenient time during TUUC business hours.

Contact Kai Aiyetoro at [churchoffice@towsonuuc.org](mailto:churchoffice@towsonuuc.org) for more information or to sign up. Thank you!



**December 16, 2023**  
**9:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

Contact Todd Robertson  
(listed in Breeze) for more  
information.

**-Invasive Species Removal: Multiflora Rose**  
Multiflora Rose is an eastern Asian plant brought to the US as rootstock for other roses and for erosion control. Now considered invasive in the Eastern US it forms dense, thorny thickets. Manual removal is the way to go. We will be removing it from around the parking lot and Cherry Grove.

**-Invasive Species Management: English Ivy**  
English Ivy was brought to the US as a garden plant. It has quickly become established as an invasive. Currently impossible to eradicate, it must be managed in a forest setting to prevent damage to mature trees. We will be working on the trees in and around the parking lot.

**-Invasive Species Management: Porcelain Berry**  
Native to SE Asia, the Ampelopsis Glandulosa was brought to the US and is still planted as an ornamental in gardens. It can overwhelm smaller trees. We will be working on the trees in and around the parking lot.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TUUC

Calendar is subject to change. Check the website calendar [here](#) for most current schedule.

15 Dec	Friday	Parkinson's Support Group	12:30 PM
15 Dec	Friday	Writing As a Spiritual Practice	1:00 PM
16 Dec	Saturday	Third Saturday Work Party	9:00 AM
16 Dec	Saturday	TUUC Choir Rehearsal	1:00 PM
16 Dec	Saturday	Yule Celebration	5:00 PM
17 Dec	Sunday	YRE—Making Faith	9:00 AM
17 Dec	Sunday	YRE—OWL	10:00 AM
17 Dec	Sunday	Sunday Service	10:30 AM
17 Dec	Sunday	Green Sanctuary Fair Trade Sale	11:30 AM
18 Dec	Monday	Mindful Way Meditation	7:00 PM
18 Dec	Monday	Socrates Café	7:30 PM
19 Dec	Tuesday	Women's Group Meeting	7:30 PM
21 Dec	Thursday	Our Messy Lives	3:00 PM
21 Dec	Thursday	TUUC Choir Rehearsal	7:30 PM
23 Dec	Saturday	Commitment Ceremony—Bill Bonta and Nancy Mears	2:00 PM
24 Dec	Sunday	YRE—Making Faith	9:00 AM
24 Dec	Sunday	Sunday Service with Carols	10:30 AM
24 Dec	Sunday	Christmas Eve Family Service	5:30 PM

**Don't Work Sick**  
**Don't School Sick**  
**Don't Church Sick**

## SUNDAY SERVICE ATTENDANCE REPORT

(Does not reflect actual number of people watching)

Date	Time	In-Person / Online
12/03/2023	10:30 AM	80 / 21