

Standing
on the
side of LOVE
— and reason.

THE FIRST Unitarian

VOL. 91, DECEMBER 2009 • THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MINNEAPOLIS

From the Minister

The Unitarian Universalist tradition has always expected to be served by what is called “the scholarly ministry;” that is, we ask our ministers to be educated and literate, to pursue the life of the mind as part of their professional competence. This doesn’t happen without some intentional effort, and that’s why my colleagues and I form study groups; to help each other focus on issues that we ought to, or want to, know more about. My friend and colleague the Rev. Earl Holt wrote the following description of the group that he and I have both participated in for decades; I started attending, as I recall, in 1986. Earl so accurately captures the significance of this experience that I want to share his words with you.

“Every November since 1974, I have gone on retreat with about 35 of my ministerial colleagues, at Pere Marquette State Park in Illinois, not far from St. Louis. We gather for four days of fellowship, worship and primarily the study of some topic, which is chosen by a vote taken at the somewhat raucous business meeting that marks the formal conclusion of each year’s meeting. The Prairie Group, as it is known, was founded nearly six decades ago, and the members take both its disciplines and its accumulated traditions seriously. There is a required reading list, sometimes quite extensive, and members agree to accept whatever writing and other assignments they are given by the Program Committee. There are five formal papers read and discussed each year, which form the core of our discussions and work together. Many of the papers presented each year eventually find their way into publication in various theological journals. And news from those who have to be absent is always shared, though most of us attend every year, without fail.

“I still vividly remember attending Prairie Group for the first time as a young minister, 28 years old, just two years out of seminary, and feeling quite intimidated by the elders of the group, all men back then, who included some of the best preachers and scholars in our ranks. I was surprised to hear them talk about their predecessors in the group from years gone by, giants they called them; they themselves seemed like giants to me. The membership changes only a little from year to year, though there is inevitable attrition as time goes by. Awhile ago I realized that I can now be counted among the elders of the group, and that among the membership now are ministers I first knew when they did their internships with me, some of them a long time ago now. So it’s now my place to tell newcomers about the giants who came before.

“Our lives and careers bring some of us together at other times, but most of these men and women I see just once each year. Yet I feel a deep bond of fellowship with

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Order of Service
announcements are
due by noon on
Wed. of each week. Please
email your submission(s) to:
info@firstunitariansociety.org

Newsletter submissions are
due by the 7th of each month
and should be sent to:
[newsletter@
firstunitariansociety.org](mailto:newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org)

Forum and Assembly Previews

Forums are at 9:30 a.m. in the Lower Assembly Hall.

■ **12/6/09 FORUM: “A Plan for Minnesota Health Care”**

Presenter: State Senator John Marty

John Marty, DFL-Roseville, who chairs the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee, believes our society should view health care in the same way we treat police and fire protection—as a public service. For the past three years Marty has pushed a bill that would set up the Minnesota Health Plan that would shift the premiums we and/or our employers now pay for health insurance to a public entity. A recent interview with John Marty on this plan can be found at: www.minnpost.com/stories/2009/08/31/11176/sen_martys_lonely_quest_for_a_minnesota_health_plan.

■ **12/13/09 FORUM: “Sing-along With The Eclectics”**

Facilitator: The Eclectics

Join the band “The Eclectics” for a fun morning of singing holiday favorites and other great songs. We want to hear you sing with gusto, and look forward to hearing your requests! The Eclectics are a variety musical group that, simply, loves to get together and play. The group provides music for FUS assemblies periodically throughout the year.

■ **12/20/09 FORUM: “Local Food Needs and Local Solutions”**

Presenter: Arlene El-Amin

According to the StarTribune on November 12 the number of people visiting the Twin Cities’ 200 food shelves each month has increased 40 to 50 percent in the past year. This morning we will hear about the services and needs at the Masjid An Nur food shelf in north Minneapolis. During the Assembly there will be a social justice offering for both the Masjid An Nur and the Sabathani food shelves.

■ **12/27/09 FORUM: “Discussion with the Minister”**

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, Senior Minister

This is an opportunity to explore what’s on your mind in a freewheeling discussion with Kendyl—ask questions, offer observations, talk about the Society’s future, the nature of ministry, good books, or whatever is shaping your thinking these days.

Assemblies are at 10:30 a.m. in the Upper Assembly Hall.

◆ **12/6/09 ASSEMBLY: Music Sunday: “The Dance of the Seasons”**

Performers: The FUS Chorus and Orchestra

Mozart: Overture to “The Impresario”

Ravel: Pavane for a dead princess

Lutoslawski: Dance Preludes, David Pharris—clarinet solo

Kempe: Winter Chaconne

Ives: Holiday Quick-Step

Fauré: Masques et Bergamasques

Debussy: Golliwogg’s Cake-Walk

◆ **12/13/09 ASSEMBLY: “Christmas Present:**

A Yuletide Service for All Ages”

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

Unitarian Charles Dickens had an agenda in his classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge’s spiritual transformation, which is often overlooked in our modern renditions of the tale. The Ghost of Christmas Present has more to teach us than how to enjoy the holidays. See the Disney movie, but join us to consider a thoughtful message for old and young alike.

◆ **12/20/09 ASSEMBLY: “The Giver and The Gift”**

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

The human capacity for generosity and altruism would seem counter-productive in a superficial Darwinian understanding of how our species has evolved, but taking a more systemic view shows that our survival actually depends on the ability to give, appropriately. While the children prepare for the Solstice festivities scheduled for later in the evening, the rest of us will consider how our cultural holidays frame a necessity that is both social and deeply personal. A special collection to support our local food shelves will be received at this Assembly.

◆ **12/27/09 ASSEMBLY: “Golden Oldie”**

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons

A survey during the month of November will determine which sermon from past years members of the congregation would like to hear again. Some ideas are enduring enough, and some words are compelling enough, that they are worth repeating. Check the December orders of service to find out which sermon was selected. There will be no religious education or child care this Sunday.

Holiday Service Previews

Light-Sharing Celebration December 24

Leaders: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, Mary Bohman, Jan Devor, and The Asp Family Singers

As usual, we'll begin our Christmas Eve gathering with hot chocolate, holiday cookies (please let the office know if your planning to bring homemade cookies to this service) and informal conversation at 5:00 p.m. in the Dietrich Room. Then at 5:30 p.m.



we will sing songs with the talented Asp family, tell stories, decorate the mitten tree, share candle light, and celebrate the universal, human meanings of this special season. Join us for a few moments of calm reflection and community warmth in the midst of the chaos and the cold. The collection gathered at this service will help supplement the Minister's Discretionary Fund for assisting members and others in need.

A Timely Reminder—Stock Transfers
With the market up substantially, now might be the time to use stock to fulfill a pledge. Transfers need to be initiated by the third week of December to make sure the transfer happens by December 31. Contact FUS Administrator Will Hegeman for information your broker will need to make the transfer. Stock transfers provide an excellent opportunity to reduce taxes while benefitting FUS.



CELEBRATION

An intergenerational, earth-centered, and humanist celebration of the season.

Sunday, December 20, 2009

6:00 pm: Dinner and Sing-Along
7:00 pm: Midwinter Revels Program
8:00 pm: Dessert and Folk Dancing
Yule Fire Ring

Tickets available on Sundays at coffee hour.
Advance Tickets: Adults \$8, Youth (under 18) \$4
Ticket Price Day of the Event: Adults \$10, Youth \$5

Bring your own wine, if desired.

Childcare available on request.

Volunteers needed
Meal Prep/Set-up
Servers/Clean-up
Greeters/Program Assistants
For more information or to help,
contact Audrey at
akingstrom@comcast.net

The First Unitarian is published once a month. The deadline for submission of items is the 7th of the previous month. Items submitted may be edited for style, content, and to fit the space available. Submissions may be left in Morgan's mailbox in the FUS office, or made by mail, fax (612-377-2151) or email (preferred) to newsletter@firstunitariansociety.org.



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From the Minister

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these colleagues, a special relationship forged through the shared experience of just a few days each year. My relationship with them individually varies of course; many I feel I know well personally, a few minimally, but I feel special affection and real attachment with them all. Love is not too strong a word for it. Even those who I don't like all that much or know very well, I know I will miss when the time comes.

"We share a vocation of course. And we share the peculiar loneliness that is inextricably linked to the vocation we have chosen, so that to be with them is to feel less alone. I think we do that for each other. But mainly the affection grows out of the pattern, the tradition, the memories gradually formed from those hours and days spent together each year, this time that is both respite and anchor to all our lives. The same is true, I think, in the community that is gradually formed among those who gather each Sunday in churches both large and small: A growing bond of affection with those one may or may not know well, but who share a significant hour together every week, an hour in which all the highs and lows and in between of our individual lives are brought together and held, all unknowing, in common. And whether the liturgy is ornate and complicated or as simple as the silence of a Quaker meeting, a sense of belonging to and with these people emerges, whatever our individual relationships with them might be.

"Tomorrow the members of the Prairie Group will gather once again, between the river and the mountain, in the same lodge where we and others before us have met for going on sixty years. As a group we look more motley than saintly, but I will feel great comfort and joy to be among them again, my friends and colleagues, who share a common calling and common longing too, gathered in a beloved community of memory and of hope, sharing and partaking of the blessings we have to give to one another."

Like Earl, I am startled to find myself to be these days a senior colleague at Prairie Group, striving to communicate to my young successors the greatness of those who once filled that role. We bless one another with the continuity of affection and instruction across the years, and something profoundly meaningful and true grows out of that constancy. In my view, this is the whole purpose of religious community, wherever it is found; may it continue to flourish here at FUS as well.

Kendyl Gibbons, Senior Minister

From the Intern

One focus of my internship is the area of social justice and prophetic outreach. I am seeking to know more deeply how I can carry the Unitarian Universalist commitment to peace, justice, and democracy out into the world and be a voice for change. I have chosen specifically to concentrate on the issue of homelessness.

It is important for ministry to be grounded in the world and informed by real people's lives. Relating to societal problems only through an abstract political or ideological lens can create distance, narrow thinking, and risks dehumanization. Our task of creating a more just world requires a multi-layered approach: service, education, community organizing, and advocating for public policy change. I can best speak to homelessness issues and the structural changes needed to end it by learning first hand about people's experiences while also exploring social and political systems. I hold a fundamental worldview that relationships are vital. How you and I relate to people on a micro and macro level creates reality. It is a relational world—an interrelated world! So for me, it is a matter of integrity that I choose to spend some of my time volunteering at the Dignity Center, participating in Project Homeless Connect, as well as attending the meetings of the Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness task force. By working directly with homeless people I hope to open my heart. By learning about systemic inadequacies and how to advocate for change, I hope to awaken the passion within me that longs for a just and equitable world. I take to heart words from Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, "May your life preach more loudly than your lips."

I will join five other FUS members in volunteering at the Dignity Center. The Dignity Center is an outreach program of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church that offers a continuum of services to help poor and homeless people become more stabilized on a journey towards greater self-sufficiency. In its seven years of service over 10,000 client visits have been made. To learn how you can get involved in a new FUS social action project related to the Dignity Center, **go to page 8.**

Put your values into action!

Mary Bohman, Ministerial Intern

Stewardship Corner

How to Increase Your Pledge— Without Giving More Money!

It sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Actually, it is true, there is a simple way to make your investment in FUS go farther—it's called Auto Pay, and FUS has had it for several years. It's convenient, accurate, and it really helps ensure FUS's financial stability.

Did you know that the FUS Annual Operating Budget includes a "shrink" factor to account for people who pledge but don't pay? For many years, the shrink factor has been budgeted for 7 percent of pledge income. That means that for every dollar you donate to FUS, only 93 cents actually goes towards funding the Society's needs. If more people paid their pledge with Auto Pay, more pledges would be fulfilled on time, which would help FUS to budget more accurately and pay its bills on time, and eventually FUS could reduce the shrink factor. That would be like a pledge increase!

If you have a stable income, and typically pay your pledge monthly by check, you are a good candidate for Auto Pay. The Stewardship Committee has set a goal of doubling the number of people who use Auto Pay this year. Can you help us meet our goal? It's easy to sign up—just speak to a member of the Stewardship Committee, or visit Will Hegeman or Bob Calgren in the FUS Office. Thank you for your continued generosity!

The FUS Stewardship Committee



Trustee Tidbit

Studies have shown that during economic hard times, individual contributions to religious affiliations hold surprisingly strong. In theory. The Board of Trustees has noted that FUS contributions have been slow to pick up this year after the normal summer lull. If you recall, we are dipping into scarce reserve funds to meet our obligations for this budget year, and it is not sustainable in the long run. What can you do? Keep up on your pledge payments. Increase your pledge if you can. Bring a friend to join. Let's not disappoint those researchers!

online at: www.firstunitariansociety.org/newsletter/main.html

Membership

New Year's Eve with FUS

Come hang out where everyone knows your name! We will be hosting a New Year's Eve extravaganza. Starting at 8:00 p.m., we'll have appetizers and dancing to your requested music (thanks to the magic of ipods). You can also organize card games. An elegant surf and turf dinner will follow with a chocolate fountain for dessert. A concert in the upper assembly hall and a meditation ritual led by Kendyl Gibbons will lead up to a toast to top off the night. We have a sign-up sheet on the Ask Me table. Please sign up early, as we need to reach critical mass to pull this off for about \$40 per person. We can organize car pools, too.

Visitor Orientations

We will be holding three more orientation sessions this year. Please let me know if you plan to attend, if possible, as we will provide a light lunch. The sessions will be held after service at noon on the following days: January 17, March 21 and May 23.

You can become a member anytime you wish. Contact me, Teresa West, membership director. We recommend attending the orientations and then joining us for the New Member discovery group, which is held once a month after service. These groups are a great way to meet others and to learn from Kendyl, our minister.

In between the orientations, we would love to meet you at the Minister's Tea in the Upper Assembly Hall after service on Sundays. Look for us by the wall opposite the window wall. The minister, a board member and the membership director are available to meet you and answer any questions, regardless if this is your first visit or your twentieth.

Happy December Birthdays!

Maya Bozicevich	Jeffry Magnuson
Colleen Curran	David L. Marks
Raynelle Delvo	Cate McKegney
Hawken Habig	Luella Nolte
Adele Hansen	Vincent O'Connell
Haley Holsather	Shaun Pettigrew
Lois Hultberg	Elisabeth Rosenberg
Maureen Hunt	Jan Scofield
Molly Illes	Jenny Warner
Lorraine Madison	

Teresa West, Membership Coordinator

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Religious Education

December and the HOLIDAY SEASON!!! Fun, celebration ... and anxiety. Will I get everything done? How will I handle Aunt Ethel when she comes to dinner? Who should I invite to the house and when? The budget is tight so how will I do presents for everyone? The list is endless. Add holiday anxiety to regular life anxiety and you have the recipe for being a crying puddle on your bed.

Anxiety equals the devil to me, and I was happy when Meg Barnhouse addressed the topic at the summer retreat I went to on Star Island. She is a UU minister and songwriter and she began her talk about anxiety by singing a song that begins, "Move over, move over, now. You're standing in the spirit's way!" She went on to ask what kind of things might be standing in your spirit's way, and calling out anxiety as being one thing that makes us not live life fully... or spiritually, or spiritedly. She called anxiety the anti-seed to a spiritual life. Living in the present, and being a non-anxious presence, is the key to having a life that is filled with spirit. And how can one become this non-anxious presence, one might ask, when the pressures of the holidays are making you quite the opposite?

Here are a couple of her recommendations:

1. Become adept at self-definition. Recognize realistically what you can and cannot do. In waitress terminology: what is your table and what is not your table? You can't serve all the needs in the whole dining room. One can't do it all. I loved this statement which she taught us, "I'm sorry I can't fix this situation, but I'll be right here for you."
2. Be open hearted: Allow yourself and others to mess up. Assume good will in interactions and become less reactive. Meg taught us the Buddhist Loving Kindness Meditation (also known as the 12-step Resentment Prayer), which has you praying/wishing for those we love and especially those we don't, to have the things we want most for ourselves!

So, as this HOLIDAY SEASON begins, *try* to get rid of the anxiety by being in the present, creating realistic "to do" lists, and being open hearted when you feel that black cloud moving in. And come to church where we will always be (well, trying to be!) a non-anxious presence in your lives.

Jan Devor, Director of Religious Education

Sunday RE Activities in December



December 6: Drama and Drums
Children in grades K-3 will be doing drama activities around the various holiday season stories. Children in grades 4-7 will be doing drumming activities.



Parents' Night Out
Saturday, December 12
5:00-9:00 p.m
here at FUS

Games, toys and care for children in Kindergarten and up!

Please bring a bag dinner for your children. Reservations required. Cost: \$8 per hour for one child, \$10 per hour for two or more. Care will be provided by the FUS Senior High Group, with proceeds to help fund their trips to Boston and General Assembly.

December 13: Attending Assembly

This is an intergenerational service so all children, grades K- 7, will be attending service. If there are any families that would be interested in baby dedication at this service please let Kendyl or Jan know.

December 20: Solstice Fun!

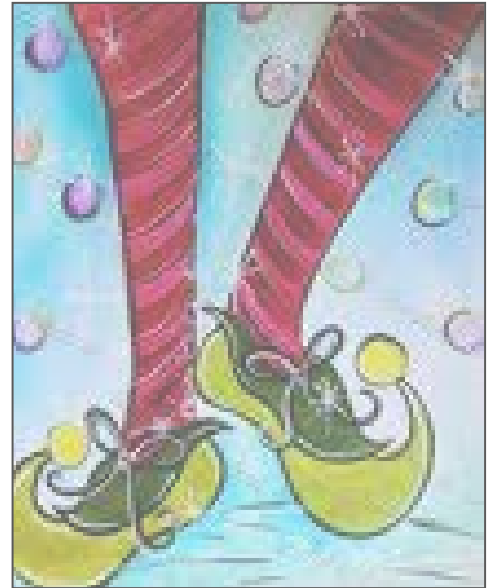
Children in grades K- 7 will be doing Solstice activities.



Music Notes

“The Dance of the Seasons” Music Sunday, December 6

The members of the FUS Chorus and Orchestra have been gratified by the enthusiastic response to our performance of Howard Goodall’s “Eternal Light: A Requiem” as part of the Society’s “Day of the Dead” observance on November first. Thank you so much for your wonderful response! We hope you will join us for our next performance on Sunday morning, December 6, when we will present a program called “The Dance of the Seasons.” The program will include the premiere of “Winter Chaconne” by Bill Kempe, FUS Chorus member and bass section leader. Bill’s piece was one of only seven compositions selected from a field of over one hundred submissions for a special workshop presentation by Philip Brunelle and VocalEssence last April. “Winter Chaconne” is a beautiful setting of a text by Shakespeare from his play “The Taming of the Shrew.”



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Office Hours: Mon.–Fri. 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.;
Sunday, 9:00 a.m.–Noon

Main phone number: 612-377-6608

A chaconne is a musical form with a long and distinguished pedigree. Originating as a dance traced back to the 16th century, composers subsequently adapted the form for use in concert works. J. S. Bach’s magnificent Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 for unaccompanied violin is a particularly famous example.

With the idea in mind of traditional dances inspiring our contemporary composers, I have built a program of dances old and new to complement Bill’s composition. As the seasons turn in the grand dance of life, so composers breathe new life into old forms and music continually renews itself.

In addition to Bill’s “Winter Chaconne,” you will hear an overture by Mozart and music of Ravel, Fauré and Debussy—these Frenchmen were fond of dances. We also will present a novelty by the American Charles Ives: his “Holiday Quick-Step,” written for a Christmas celebration when he was only 13 years old. And we will welcome Minnesota Orchestra clarinetist David Pharris, who will play the solo part in Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski’s folk-influenced “Dance Preludes.”

Barbara Brooks, Music Director
Dr. Jeffery Stirling, FUS Orchestra Conductor

Social Action

The Social Action Committee has formed issue groups around common social justice interests. The purpose of forming issue groups is to give people an opportunity to meet with other FUS members interested in the same issue and to give them the freedom to pursue that interest without involving the whole committee. The members of each group own it and they



decide: what they want to do; when they want to meet or connect via email to study an issue; to take action; get speakers; go to community events, etc. The Social Action Committee is available to help if the group wants to do something that involves the rest of the congregation or greater community. The FUS Green Team is an example of how this has worked. Having the groups checking in now and then with SAC would be very welcome even if help isn't needed.

The issue groups that have been formed so far are:

- 1) Homelessness/poverty/economic justice
- 2) Health Care Reform
- 3) Immigration
- 4) Peace

There is a leader for each of these groups. If you would like to join any of these groups, drop by the SAC table and sign up or email sac@firstunitariansociety.org.

Dates to Remember:

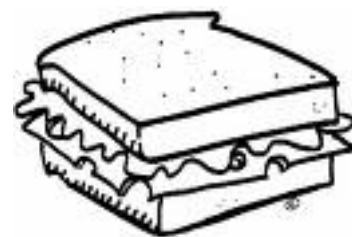
- December 7 – Project Homeless Connect
December 18 - Christmas Party for Clients of the Dignity Center.
December 17 – 25th annual Minnesota Homeless Memorial March and Service

For more information about these events and others, go to the SAC table on Sundays and/or read the *SAC Flash*. If you are not receiving the *SAC Flash*, email sac@firstunitariansociety.org.

Carol Koepp, Social Justice Coordinator

Supporting the Homeless: Dignity Center Sandwich Sundays

The Dignity Center (see “From the Intern” column this month) distributes over 800 sandwiches to homeless clients each month. The center is in need of a consistent supply of sandwiches because they often run short. In response, *FUS has committed to providing 100 sandwiches on a regular basis*. We need your help! We are looking for volunteers to make sandwiches for the Dignity Center on the *first Sunday of each month*. It will take no more than 25 minutes of your time and a little of your cash.



Here's how it works:

1. **Sign up your committee, family, group, or R.E. class to make the sandwiches for a particular month**—this is a great intergenerational activity. Sign up sheets are on the SAC table. There needs to be 8-10 people per Sunday. Each participant will be asked to donate \$3 towards supplies. Then, show up on your scheduled “Dignity Center Sandwich Sunday” and a sandwich-making table will be set up off the FUS kitchen with the supplies you need.
2. **Attend the Soup Lunch after the service on December 6.** As a congregation, we will be making sandwiches that day so everyone can learn the process and also raise money for supplies. FUS staff made the November sandwiches. An R.E. group will make January sandwiches.

We need others to sign up for the rest of the year. If you would like to be on the Sandwich Sunday Support team, contact ministerial intern Mary Bohman. If you have questions or would like to get involved in other ways to help end homelessness, contact Carol Koepp or Mary Bohman.
Put your values into action!

Announcements

Think "FUS Bookstore" for Your Holiday Gift Giving

Find gifts for people of all ages at your FUS Bookstore. It's filled with wonderful books, exploring many different topics of interest to humanists and UUs. You will also find copies of Kendyl's sermons, works by famous UUs, and books by FUS authors. AND we have a wonderful array of jewelry, bumper stickers, cards, CDs, art items and more. The bookstore is open before and after each Sunday service. Visit soon!



Interested in being on the Bookstore Committee? Contact any Bookstore staff person. Bookstore proceeds support literacy programs in the greater community and FUS.

FUS Bookstore Offers FREE Holiday Gift Wrapping—It's Retro Wrap!



Shades of the 1950's. It's free "Retro Wrap" of your bookstore purchase during December—using colorful papers and handmade bows of shiny ribbon. We'll have a 1950s specialist on hand on the following Sundays: December 6, 13, and 20, to hand wrap your purchases. We know you'll want to take advantage of this special offer!

Art in the Gallery

The art works in the FUS Foyer Gallery this month are photographs by Robert Roscoe and oils by FUS member Herbie Sewell. The theme is exploring abstraction through parallel viewpoints of two different mediums. The show will be up through December 27. The artists welcome your comments.

The Alliance

Tempting homemade goodies and gifts will sold on **Sunday December 13**, at social hour for the annual **Holiday Temptations and Gift Sale**. They will go fast!

Holiday Temptations and Gift Sale Sunday, December 13



On December 12 the FUS Alliance visits the Universalist Women at First Universalist Church for a Holiday Tea.

The next regular Alliance program will be February 3 with Professor Barbara Frey discussing "How Human Rights Advocates Are Changing the World." The Alliance is a dynamic group of dedicated members and friends of FUS. New members are welcomed at any time. Contact Clara Asp for more information.

Women's Awareness Group

The December meeting of the Women's Awareness Group will be held on Monday, December 14, at the home of Pat Jordan. Carol Koeppe is the cohost. FUS women are invited to join us at 6:30 p.m. for a pot luck supper followed by a discussion of "Giving and Receiving." Women are encouraged to bring a practical unwrapped gift (gloves, hats, socks, toiletries, etc.) for women staying in a women's shelter. Please call Pat or Carol to RSVP and for directions.



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The First Unitarian Society

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December 2009

December 6:
Music Sunday

December 12
Parents' Night Out

December 13:
Yuletide Service for All Ages
Holiday Temptations & Gift Sale

December 20:
Winter Solstice Celebration

December 24:
Light Sharing Celebration

December 31
New Year's Eve at FUS



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Mary Ann Lundquist (Treasurer)

For an up-to-date listing of events at FUS, check the calendar online at the FUS website.

1. Go to www.firstunitariansociety.org
2. Click on "Calendar" on the left menu bar.

If you do not have access to the web, contact the FUS Office at 612-377-6608 for event information.