From the Minister’s Study

As I write, the words of a favorite Christmas hymn run through my mind: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*. The Holiday Choir will be singing it for the 5:30 service on Christmas Eve. When the sheet music arrived back in November, the first order of business was to write in different lyrics, changing them back to the original words that were penned by Edmund Hamilton Sears, a Unitarian minister. First performed in 1849, the hymn reflected Sears’ struggle to hear the message of Christmas while revolutions raged in Europe and the United States waged war with Mexico.

The hymn made its way into many a Christian hymnal with changes to the lyrics. The changes in lyrics changed the hymn’s original meaning to a heavenly battle won by a gracious king rather than the earthly wars that make our weary souls long for peace.

The lines from the original version that keep running through my head are these:

> And we who fight the wars hear not the love song which they bring.  
> O hush the noise of battle strife, and hear the angels sing.

Once again, the holidays come amidst the din of war and violence, making it hard to hear the message of peace that this season proclaims. Here at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson, our holiday season includes joyful celebrations and times for quiet reflection and contemplation.

The Holiday Pageant at 10:30 on Sunday, December 14 is *Would You Like to Hold the Baby*, a delightful, musical retelling of the Christmas nativity story. It’s a fun, joyous time for people of all ages.

The Winter Solstice falls on Sunday this year. Our usual service at 10:30 will include beautiful music by Leeza Beriyeva and the Desert Chorale plus poetry and reflections on darkness and light. At 5:30, we’ll gather on the patio for a more traditional Solstice celebration with music by harpist and vocalist, Megha Morganfield.

On Christmas Eve there will be two evening services. The 5:30 service is usually quite lively, including a child dedication ceremony and music by Leeza Beriyeva and the Holiday Choir. The 7:00 service is more contemplative with acoustic music by Brian Moon on the guitar and Celeste Rogers on the harp. Both services include the traditional lighting of candles while Silent Night is sung.

However you celebrate these holy days of winter, I encourage you to take time for stillness, time to open your ears and your hearts to hear the strains of angel songs. In biblical times, angels were considered to be messengers from God. Who are the messengers of peace in our world today? Will we hush the noise of battle strife long enough to hear?

In the spirit of the season,
Rev. Diane
Upcoming Services:

December 7, 10:30 a.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
A Grateful Life
More than a feeling, gratitude is an attitude, a practice, and a way of life. A grateful heart opens a deeper awareness of the rich and abundant gifts that come with being alive. When practiced faithfully, gratitude can build resilience and be a source of strength when times are hard.
Worship Associate: Celeste Rogers
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

December 14, 10:30 a.m.
Holiday Pageant
Would You Like to Hold the Baby?
A delightful, musical retelling of the Christmas nativity story: a fun time for people of all ages.
Music: Leeza Beriyeva and the Desert Chorale

December 21, 10:30 a.m.*
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Come Darkness, Come Light
There are rich gifts to be found in the darkness. We need not push it away but welcome it as part of the natural rhythm of life. The light will return in its own time, as it always does. On this solstice day, we’ll explore the interplay of dark and light through poetry and reflection.
Worship Associate: Randall Springer
Music: Leeza Beriyeva and the Desert Chorale

December 21, 5:30 p.m.
Winter Solstice Celebration
We’ll gather on the patio, around the fire, for a traditional celebration of the solstice, a time to enter into the darkness and to welcome the return of the sun. Music will be by Megha Morganfield, vocalist and harpist.

December 24, Christmas Eve* 5:30 and 7:00 p.m.
Rev. Diane Dowgiert
Messengers of Peace
In biblical times, angels were considered to be messengers sent by God. The Christmas nativity story is filled with angels bringing the news of a divine birth, who some would call the Prince of Peace. Today, more than two thousand years later, we still struggle to make peace in our world. Who are the messengers of peace in our world today? Can we hush the noise of battle strife in order to hear?
5:30 p.m. Music: Leeza Beriyeva and the Holiday Choir
7:00 p.m. Music: Brian Moon on Guitar and Celeste Rogers on Harp
Both services will include the traditional lighting of candles while Silent Night is sung.

*We will have a special Share the Plate collection during both services. Half of all non-pledge income will be shared with the Community Food Bank. We will also have a donation box for nonperishable food.

Services Continued

December 28, 10:30 a.m.
Guest Speaker: Gilbert Moore
Explorations on the theme of Christmas Past, Present, and Future
Worship Associate: Wendy Gordon Weeks
Music: Leeza Beriyeva

Share the Plate

Volunteer Position Available
Our Share the Plate program needs someone to help keep the program alive. Duties include: (1) notifying the organization, or the person who nominated the organization, to offer the opportunity to send a speaker and arrange to get information materials; and (2) writing a newsletter article and brief announcements for the weekly email and Orders of Service. An organizational spreadsheet and article/announcement template are already created. Training available. If you are interested, please contact Heather Reed at hreed@uuctucson.org

December Share the Plate

Half of all non-pledge income in the offering on December 21st will be shared with No More Deaths (NMD), which is a ministry of our church. NMD works to end death and suffering in the Mexico US borderlands through civil initiative: people of conscience working openly and in community to uphold fundamental human rights. Their work embraces the Faith-Based Principles for Immigration Reform and focuses on the following themes:

- Direct aid that extends the right to provide humanitarian assistance
- Witnessing and responding
- Consciousness raising
- Global movement building
- Encouraging humane immigration policy

For more information about NMD visit their website at http://www.nomoredeaths.org/

We will have a special Share the Plate collection on Christmas Eve to benefit the Community Food bank. We also have a donation box for nonperishable food in Holland Sanctuary’s foyer for the entire month of December.
**Artist of the Month’s December Gallery Show:**

*Talk to the Animals*

**Photographs by Ginny Moss**

The December Gallery show presents the intimate animal photographs by Ginny Moss. She shares her love for the many creatures she has come to know from her backyard by documenting their activities and behaviors with her camera. She is a graduate of the University of Arizona with a BFA in Fine Arts. She is also known for her colorful mosaics. The opening reception for this show will be on Sunday, December 14th at 11:45 AM in Holland Sanctuary. Come greet the artist and enjoy the show. Refreshments will be served. The Gallery is open during church office hours, 9-1 pm, Tuesday through Friday and Sunday, 11:30-1 pm. The show runs through Sunday, January 1st.

**There is life after Christmas! Save these dates:**

**Friday, January 16, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm**  
**Saturday, January 17, 9:00 am – 4:00 am**

Our four UU congregations in southern Arizona will gather at UUCT for a mission/vision workshop. Okay, I saw your eyes roll. I know what you are thinking. With so many wonderful things to do on a Friday and Saturday in Tucson, why would anyone want to come to a workshop at church? Why? Who wouldn’t want to be part of shaping the future of Unitarian Universalism in our congregation and southern Arizona? Who wouldn’t want to spend time with the dynamic Rev. David Miller, a facilitator from San Diego who brings not only his experience as a UU minister, but his expertise from 25 years spent in the corporate world helping businesses to be strong, healthy, and successful? Who wouldn’t want to spend time with bright, interesting, curious, dedicated Unitarian Universalists? Really. You’ll want to be there.

**2015 UUCT Auction**

Our 2015 UUCT auction will be Saturday, January 31, starting with a delicious Chinese buffet dinner. Your $10 ticket buys you a great meal and a bidding number. In addition to a good time, this event is our largest fundraiser of the year, aside from the annual pledge drive so put it on your calendar now. As always, kids’ meals and child care are provided.

We need your donations of artwork, jewelry, books, household appliances, and other items. The biggest money-makers, though, are services and entertainment. Services could be several hours of tax preparation, or rides to the airport. Entertainment might be a movie night, theater tickets, or the ever-popular dinners. Gift certificates (for example, Target, Fry’s, Frost….) are easy, and we’ll even get them for you.

Beginning December 7, there will be an auction table in Goddard every Sunday after the worship service. Buy tickets, get or leave donation forms, or sign up to help on auction night. For questions, to donate, or to volunteer, contact Bob Gordon, bobgordonrg66@gmail.com, 329-8242, or Jan Dowling, rubytues98@hotmail.com, 940-7930. Or check us out under the Auction tab on the church website.

**Amazon**

Use this link, https://smile.amazon.com/ch/86-6006433 to buy your Books, Music, Movies, Electronic Gear, Computers (and anything else that Amazon.com sells), and UUCT will get a Rebate from Amazon!

You will pay the same cost and shipping charge (or free shipping) you would otherwise get from Amazon on your own. There is NO additional cost to you.

Just be sure you get to Amazon.com by clicking on the link above or from the Amazon logo on our church website www.uuctucson.org. (A new browser window will open.)

The only way the church receives a rebate from Amazon sales is if you use link above or on our website to the Amazon.com and then make your purchase. If you use the Amazon link on this page to do your window shopping, and then you later go to Amazon.com by a different route to make your actual purchase, the tracking mechanism that ties the sale to the church will be lost.

Amazon.com is not endorsed by UUCT. The link to Amazon.com is provided for your shopping convenience and to provide a creative way for our church to raise additional funds.

**District Assembly 2015**

Save the dates of April 24-25, 2015 for the annual District Assembly, to be held this year at Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Chandler, AZ.

**Newsletter Deadline**

The deadline to submit an announcement is the 24th day of the month and the newsletter will be printed and available online the first week of the following month.