With the coming winter lengthening over us, the blanket of nighttime darkness grows ever longer. We enter a season of holidays and holy days. Short days and long nights invite a gathering in of family, friends, and community. Together we celebrate the mystery and miracle of life – and the light that sustains it.

The season invites another kind of gathering in. Just as we gather loved ones into the interior spaces of our homes and houses of worship, so too, the season invites each one of us to dwell more fully in the interior spaces of ourselves.

Too often, the spirit of the season is a bit schizophrenic, as two impulses pull us in opposite directions. One impulse of the season is to engage in frenetic activity – shopping, entertaining, and partying. The other impulse is to enter the stillness and silence of the long hours between dusk and dawn.

Practices of contemplation, meditation, and prayer can be gateways to experiences of peace and serenity. With a quiet mind, we check in with ourselves, asking, “How’s my life going? How are things with the people I love most? How are things with my soul?” Cultivating a quiet mind can actually enliven the sense of mystery and miracle so present in this season.

In a noisy world, silence is the way we find the way back to our own inner wisdom. Without the distraction of the outer world, an inner realm opens. It’s as Native American poet Joy Harjo says, “To pray you open your whole self.”

My prayer for you this holiday season is that you open your whole self to holy days filled with both joyful activity and peaceful silence, that you may rediscover the miracle of your own birth and the miracle of light that warms and brightens your life.

Blessings of the season,
Diane
Faith Development plays an important part in our church life. That fact is marked by the fact that we have three part-time staff positions that help support this ministry. The third leg of the tripod that supports faith development at UUCT is the Lifespan Faith Development (LFD) Administrative Assistant, a position filled admirably by Mike Greenbaum. Mike imposes organization into a whirlwind of activities and their logistical details including lectures, times, rooms, keys, projectors, flyers, articles, emails, deposits and supplies — in only 10 hours per week.

The LFD Administrative Assistant works closely with the LFD Director, Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings, to help set goals and a vision of faith development for groups that include post-high school through our most senior adults and supports Lisa in providing direction in adult faith curriculum development. Most of the week-to-week work however is more hands-on, stemming from the goals and vision set by our community.

Mike manages many of the details of AFD classes:
- helps the LFD Director recruit facilitators for Adult Faith Development (AFD) and Covenant Circles (CC)
- prepares newsletter articles, website materials, flyers and announcements for AFD classes and workshops
- sets up tables for publicity and registration for AFD offerings and ensures that the tables are staffed between and after services
- responds to email and telephone questions about AFD presentations
- coordinates with AFD facilitators to ensure that there are rooms, keys and adequate equipment available
- prepares the bi-monthly AFD Schedule of Programs and program brochures
- manages the AFD calendar and coordinates room reservations and setups
- maintains registration and attendance records for AFD and CC programs and generates monthly attendance reports for all LFD programs including Religious Education (RE) for children

The LFD Administrative Assistant also maintains the financial records for both the RE and AFD programs and reconciles those records with the monthly treasurer reports. He makes deposits to the church safe and prepares reimbursements for AFD and RE as needed.

Mike says that he spends most of his hours on three different areas. The first is advertising and registration for AFD classes and events at church on Sundays. The second is creating publicity for classes and events in the form of flyers, announcements, web sites articles and brochures. The final set of tasks that is done weekly is taking care of the financial details: entering deposits and expenses into the LFD spreadsheet and reconciling that with the larger church budget.

I asked Mike what he liked best about his job at UUCT and he responded with a complex answer. Mike believes that the essence of Unitarian-Universalism is the search for the answers to life’s big questions. The job that he performs at UUCT helps adults to pursue those big questions and answers to them. He especially likes to challenge UUs who might have settled down with the answers that they have arrived at in the past to move outside of their comfort zone and reconsider their own beliefs.

*As part of his ongoing outreach, Mike would like to encourage members to join the Adult Faith Development Team, to help decide what classes, activities and programs will be offered in the future.*