



# UUCB News



December, 2014

**MISSION  
STATEMENT  
of the  
UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
CHURCH OF  
BARTLESVILLE**

*The Unitarian  
Universalist  
Church of  
Bartlesville  
seeks to create  
a loving  
community that  
nourishes the  
spirit and mind;  
whose members  
joyfully work to  
build a just and  
sustainable  
world.*

June 2012

## What a Year!

While 2013 brought us immense sadness with the passing of our beloved minister, Kathryn Reese, 2014 saw many positive things for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bartlesville.

The most obvious is our new student Minister, Steven Williams. The Phillips Seminarian comes to Bartlesville twice a month to take the pulpit and meet with church members for counseling and conversation. So far, members agree that his messages have been very interesting and positive. Best of all he will continue into at least May of 2015.

One thing that has made Steven's presence possible is the transformation of the annex from a storage area into a very nice apartment. Steven uses it when he is in town. After that, it will be rented out and the money will go into the capital fund to help pay for the remodeling of the 424 house for future use as a parsonage. The annex project took a little more than a month in the summer and came in under budget.



The fall saw a wedding at our church. After 35 years together, Jim Jennings and John Duncan took their vows on October 25th with Steven Williams officiating. It was Steven's first time officiating. Jim was in a wheelchair, suffering from terminal cancer, but nothing could stop him from this long awaited day.

Unfortunately, Jim died over the Thanksgiving holiday. He was 62. Yet he lived long enough to share what was one of the happiest days of his life with his friends at UUCB. He will be missed

May we all see as much happiness in the coming year.

## December Sermons

December 7 — Steven Williams: "Tis the Season" - The winter holidays are upon us. How do we honor them, each other, and ourselves?

December 14 — Steve Hine: "It's Christmas...relax" - does the whole celebration of the birth of Christ make you uneasy? There are reasons to celebrate.

December 21 — Steven Williams: "Here Comes the Sun" - A solstice reflection on death and rebirth.

December 28 — Warren Sapp—TBA



## Congregational Meeting January 11

Every year the member of UUCB meet to decide whole will comprise the Board of the Directors for the coming year and to approve the church's budget for that year. The 2015 meeting will take place after services on January 11. As always, we seek volunteers to sit on the Board. If you are interested in serving your church, please contact any member of the board, or just shout it out in church. We would love having you.

## Discussion Group

The topics for the Sunday morning discussion group for December are:

- Dec 7: Virgil Reese will review some of the important Discoveries of 2014.- What have we learned about our universe, ourselves and our past this year?
- Dec 14: Kat Closmann and Lisa Roll will facilitate discussion from watching 3 charming, humorous and delightful short films. We will view "Mendel's Tree" which gives us a view of a Jewish Christmas, "Ousmane" is about a young African boy followed up with "Gratitude", a beautiful look at humanity.
- Dec 21: Steven Williams: "UU 201"

Presentations begin at 9:45 and end around 10:45. Coffee, tea and other sustenance provided.



## Minister's Message

Hello, UUCB!

I hope you were all able to spend Thanksgiving in good company, be it with your blood relations, your chosen family, or yourself.

We are officially in what is both the most festive and most difficult time of the year in our society. While there is much to celebrate from many traditions, let us remember that not all of us in the church or the wider community get to enjoy the holidays with loved ones, and some among us may be struggling. Please be mindful and considerate of our variety of experiences, and be hospitable to those who may feel alone this month.

Suicide rates skyrocket during this time of year. If you or someone you know is in need of support, please know that I and many others in the church are available, and that the community loves you and wants to see you held and healed. If you see someone in need and don't know how to support them, please come talk to me. I (and a few of our members) attended a Suicide Prevention Network training that we hosted at the church in November; many are on hand to help.

This month in services, we will explore the themes of celebration and transition. I hope to see you all there and for my office hours, which are as follows:

**Office Hours at UUCB, 2-4 Saturday 12/6 and 12/20 (for more private discussions)**

**Coffee and Conversation at Jude's, 4-6 Friday 12/5 and 12/19 (for more casual chats)**

Additionally, I invite you, in or out of those meeting times, to bring to my attention any transitions, celebrations, joys, or concerns that you would like me to lift up during our meditation times in services. Not everyone is comfortable standing in front of the congregation to share, but that needn't bar you from the community's support!

See you all soon.

Namaste,

Steven

## Oklahomans May Not Like Muslims, but They Accept Them

In the most recent Oklahoma Poll, almost 80 percent surveyed said Muslims should enjoy the same religious freedoms as other Americans, and only 15 percent disagreed.

The poll, which surveyed 404 likely voters statewide, also found that more than half — 54 percent — viewed Islam unfavorably, and 35 percent were very unfavorably disposed toward it. Those percentages rose above 60 percent for Republicans and those who identified themselves as “very conservative,” and among married women.

And yet, despite their disapproval, Oklahomans are accepting of Muslims in their midst.

Paula Haight of Broken Arrow, who said she has a “somewhat positive” view of Islam, said “I don’t know a great deal (about Islam),” she said, “but I do feel people should have the right to practice their religion. Even Protestants are different from one another. When our forefathers said ‘freedom of religion,’ they meant it.

“As long as they’re law-abiding citizens, they should be allowed to practice their religion the same as (anyone).”

*Tulsa World*

## The Pagan Origins of Christmas Traditions

No one knows when Jesus was born, so why do we celebrate Christ's birthday as Christmas, on December the 25th? The answer lies in the pagan origins of Christmas. In ancient Babylon, the feast of the Son of Isis (Goddess of Nature) was celebrated on December 25. Raucous partying, gluttonous eating and drinking, and gift-giving were traditions of this feast.

In Rome, the Winter Solstice was celebrated many years before the birth of Christ. The Romans called their winter holiday Saturnalia, honoring Saturn, the God of Agriculture. In January, they observed the Kalends of January, which represented the triumph of life over death. This whole season was called Dies Natalis Invicti Solis, the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun. The festival season was marked by much merrymaking. It is in ancient Rome that the tradition of the Mummers was born. The Mummers were groups of costumed singers and dancers who traveled from house to house entertaining their neighbors. From this, the Christmas tradition of caroling was born.

In northern Europe, many other traditions that we now consider part of Christian worship were begun long before the participants had ever heard of Christ. The pagans of northern Europe celebrated their own winter solstice, known as Yule. Yule was symbolic of the pagan Sun God, Mithras, being born, and was observed on the shortest day of the year. As the Sun God grew and matured, the days became longer and warmer. It was customary to light a candle to encourage Mithras, and the sun, to reappear next year.

Huge Yule logs were burned in honor of the sun. The word Yule itself means "wheel," the wheel being a pagan symbol for the sun. Mistletoe was considered a sacred plant, and the custom of kissing under the mistletoe began as a fertility ritual. Hollyberries were thought to be a food of the gods.

The tree is the one symbol that unites almost all the northern European winter solstices. Live evergreen trees were often brought into homes during the harsh winters as a reminder to inhabitants that soon their crops would grow again. Evergreen boughs were sometimes carried as totems of good luck and were often present at weddings, representing fertility. The Druids used the tree as a religious symbol, holding their sacred ceremonies while surrounding and worshipping huge trees.

In 350, Pope Julius I declared that Christ's birth would be celebrated on December 25. There is little doubt that he was trying to make it as painless as possible for pagan Romans (who remained a majority at that time) to convert to Christianity. The new religion went down a bit easier, knowing that their feasts would not be taken away from them.

Christmas (Christ-Mass) as we know it today, most historians agree, began in Germany, though Catholics and Lutherans still disagree about which church celebrated it first. The earliest record of an evergreen being decorated in a Christian celebration was in 1521 in the Alsace region of Germany. A prominent Lutheran minister of the day cried blasphemy: "Better that they should look to the true tree of life, Christ." The controversy continues even today in some fundamentalist sects.



# December 2014



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Interfaith Contemplative Service 6pm	4	5	6
7 Service 11am Forum 9:45am Board Meeting after service	8	9	10 Interfaith Contemplative Service 6pm Drumming 7pm	11	12	13
14 Service 11am Forum 9:45am Decorate Church	15	16 Hanukah begins	17 Interfaith Contemplative Service 6pm	18	19	20
21 Service 11am Forum 9:45am Potluck	22	23	24 Hanukah ends Christmas Eve	25 Christmas	26 Boxing Day (UK)	27
28 Service 11am Forum 9:45am	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			

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## Unitarian Universalist Church of Bartlesville

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Over 50 Years of  
Liberal Faith in  
Bartlesville

**On the web at  
www.uubville.org**



### What do UUs believe?

What Do You Say When Someone Asks You . . .

"So What Do Unitarian Universalists Believe In . . . ?"

Sometimes new Unitarian Universalists are unsure about how to explain their new religion to friends, relatives or coworkers. Here is a response to consider:

Rather than saying, "I'm a Unitarian Universalist because I can believe anything I want . . ."

. . . it's better to say that Unitarian Universalism is a faith tradition (or religion) which encourages each individual to develop a personal faith. It draws from many different religions, in the belief that no one religion has all the answers and that most have something to teach us. From Christianity we take the teachings of Christ. From Buddhism we take the power of meditation. From Judaism we take the belief that working together we can achieve peace and justice. From Native American and other earth-centered traditions we take respect for the earth and reverence for natural cycles.

For other excellent response ideas, go to <http://www.uua.org/interconnections/membership/believe.html>.

*from UUA InterConnections*

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