

# FOCUS

DECEMBER 2023

# Mystery



Hope  
UNITARIAN CHURCH  
TULSA, OK





Photos from first "Trim the Tree Party" in Hope's Main Building. December 17th, 1977.

## *December at Hope*

As we welcome December, Hope Unitarian Church is buzzing with the spirit of the season. Join us for three special events that promise to fill our community with joy and celebration.

On December 2nd, participate in the heartwarming "Hanging of the Greens" ceremony. This event marks the beginning of our festive season as we come together to adorn the church with holiday decorations, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for all.

December 10th provides you with an opportunity to immerse yourself in the magic of "Sing Noel," a musical celebration featuring our talented musicians and choir. Join us for a service filled with festive tunes and communal joy that captures the essence of the holiday spirit.

On Christmas Eve, bring your family and friends to our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service! 6:00 PM Sunday 12/24. This family service will be a woven tapestry of music, carols, words and inspiration for this special season ~ followed by holiday refreshments.

Don't miss this special evening!

We invite everyone, whether long-time members or newcomers, to share in the warmth of our community. Mark your calendars, invite friends and family, and join us in making this holiday season truly special at Hope Unitarian Church!



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# REFLECTIONS FROM THE MINISTER

## Mystery, Magic, And Christmas

There is a special magic dispersed in the ether during the month of December. When I was a child, that magic centered around my family's celebration of Christmas, though we did not celebrate it as a religious holiday. We did have one manger scene in the house, but it was not central to our family's celebration. However, we did have a lot of Santa Claus', reindeer, elves, lights, and stars in the house. Each year we watched *Rudolph*, *Frosty*, and the Rankin and Bass classic *Santa Claus is coming to Town*. I loved the scene when the Burgermeister, Meisterburger got his special gift from Kris Kringle. For us - Christmastime was about peace, love, and generosity toward others.

Even in my Christian tradition to not celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, it wasn't until I became a Unitarian Universalist that Christmas began to have any religious meaning. To me Christmas had always been about family, food, kindness, and the culmination of that special magic I mentioned in the beginning.

When I was a child, I would sit in the room dedicated to our Christmas Tree, a virtual winter wonderland created by my mother. Outside, snow blanketed the ground, the front porch decorations shined through the windows, the colorful lights reflected off the mirrored decoration, and I would lay in a ball underneath the Christmas tree, in anticipation of the days to come, absorbing the magic that had settled in this space. We would gather Christmas Eve, my parents, and grandparents, my brother and I and open some presents, but we knew most of the fun presents came the next day, delivered to us through the magic of Christmas.

Christmas Eve night I couldn't sleep, the magic too invigorating, the anticipation too strong, and the mystery too prominent. What kept me up, however, wasn't the idea that I would have new toys the next day, but that something special was about to happen, something I couldn't explain, something mystical ...and it would only happen when I closed my eyes and drifted to sleep. The spirit of Christmas would visit our home. It was a mystery I could not know; it was magic I could not reason, and it was bigger than me or any difficulty life could throw at me.

It wasn't until I became an adult that I realized the real blessing of Christmas was the mystery, the magic that something was happening that I couldn't see and couldn't reason. That the next day I would see my cousins, my aunts and uncles, and my grandparents again. We would eat turkey, ham, dressing, and pie.

As an adult I see the magic from another side, but it doesn't mean the mystery is gone, it just means it is different. It means that on my best days I wield the magic, and on the difficult days, I can still take in the magic that descends in Advent.



**Rev. Justin would love to meet with you to provide pastoral care or just to get to know you!**

**His usual office hours are Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 AM through 3 PM.**

**Please email him at [revjustin@hopeuu.org](mailto:revjustin@hopeuu.org) to schedule an appointment to meet in person or via Zoom.**

**If your need is urgent, call him at 918-481-0999, x2.**





# BOARD REPORTS

Submitted by James Donovan  
President of the Hope Board of Trustees

Thanks to all of you who attended the Annual Hope Auction! Thanks, also, to those of you who volunteered and donated. Thanks, especially, to Rebecca Jones for chairing the event.

We reached our goals of raising \$20,000 and having a very good time!

The Board would also like to thank the staff for getting us through another successful year at Hope. We appreciate all that they do for the congregation.

After the holidays, you'll begin hearing from our Stewardship Committee about making an annual pledge and supporting Hope financially. You'll also hear from the Nominating Committee. I hope you'll consider becoming a lay leader of the congregation.

I appreciate those of you who attended our Safety and Security Adult Forum. Your comments and suggestions were very helpful. Hopefully, we'll have another related Forum this spring.





# Embracing Mystery as a Spiritual Practice for Children and Youth

By Tennille Wilson

In the fast-paced and information-saturated world, introducing mystery as a spiritual practice for children and youth can offer a profound way to cultivate a sense of wonder, awe, and connection to something greater than themselves. This intentional engagement with the mysterious aspects of life can contribute to their spiritual and emotional well-being.

**1. Encountering the Sacred in the Unknown:** Mystery invites children and youth to recognize the sacred in the unknown and to appreciate the awe-inspiring aspects of existence. Whether exploring the wonders of nature or contemplating life's profound questions, mystery becomes a gateway to spiritual connection.

**2. Fostering Mindfulness and Presence:** Spiritual practices often emphasize mindfulness and being present in the moment. Engaging with mysteries encourages children and youth to slow down, observe, and fully experience the world around them. This mindful approach can deepen their spiritual awareness and appreciation for the present.

**3. Developing a Sense of Reverence:** Mystery instills a sense of reverence for the mysteries of life, encouraging children and youth to recognize the beauty and complexity of existence. This reverence lays the foundation for a spiritual outlook that extends beyond routine experiences.

**4. Exploring Personal Beliefs:** Spiritual practices involve exploring personal beliefs and values. Introducing mystery allows children and youth to question, reflect, and develop their own understanding of spirituality. It provides a safe space for them to explore their beliefs and values.

**5. Building a Connection with Others:** Shared experiences of mystery, whether through storytelling, rituals, or nature exploration, can foster a sense of community and interconnectedness. These shared spiritual practices help children and youth understand that their journey is part of a larger, collective mystery.

**6. Cultivating Gratitude:** Mystery encourages gratitude for the beauty and complexity of life. Spiritual practices often involve expressions of gratitude,

and engaging with mystery can deepen children's and youth's appreciation for the wonders that surround them.

**7. Nurturing Compassion and Empathy:** Spiritual growth often involves the development of compassion and empathy. Exploring mysteries, especially those tied to the human experience, can cultivate understanding and empathy for others, fostering a compassionate perspective

Incorporating mystery as a spiritual practice for children and youth is not about providing definite answers but rather encouraging a lifelong journey of exploration, contemplation, and spiritual growth. By embracing the mysterious, children and youth can develop a resilient and open-hearted approach to spirituality that enhances their overall well-being and enriches their understanding of the world.





# Life Senior Services

## DECEMBER GENEROSITY RECIPIENT

Since its inception in 1973, LIFE Senior Services has been a leader in providing services to the aging population of Tulsa and its surrounding communities. By implementing a multifaceted approach to Senior care, LIFE's services provide assistance to an average of 28,000 seniors per year – aiding in enhancing the overall well-being of seniors in our area.

LIFE Senior Services not only provides essential services for seniors, but they foster a community that cherishes and upholds the independence, dignity, and well-being of older adults.

Throughout the past 50 years, LIFE Senior Services has grown into a comprehensive program that specializes in providing both home and community based services for Tulsa seniors and their caregivers.

LIFE's services encompass a diverse range of offerings. Senior Centers, tailored for active adults aged 50 and older, provide engaging environments for social interaction and personal growth. For older adults facing challenges in maintaining independence, services like Case Management and Adult Day Health become invaluable lifelines.

Beyond these critical services, LIFE is committed to enhancing the overall well-being of seniors. The organization helps beneficiaries understand their Medicare options, provides assistance with tax returns, and develops affordable senior apartment communities—allowing independent adults to downsize and simplify their lives.

The mission of LIFE Senior Services is clear: **to promote and preserve independence for seniors today, tomorrow, and always.**



Donate  
Volunteer

 **LIFE**  
**SENIOR SERVICES®**







# MESSAGE FROM THE CARE TEAM

**vol-un-teer**; a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task.

Jean Coffey and Joan Scheulen are our volunteer honorees this month. They are longtime members of our congregation and have participated in numerous aspects of church life. These sisters work together on all the projects. Most recently, they arranged for and set-up the dining area for the Annual Hope Auction. That's not their first rodeo, so to speak. Jean and Joan have set-up the silent auction for years.

They have arranged the formal seating for 100+ members and friends at numerous Fellowship Dinners. They have led the UUSC, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. They have provided food for different events and memorial services. Jean and Joan have served on the Board of Trustees. Their contributions of time and talents have added so much to our congregation. We're grateful for their support of Hope.

Thank you, Jean and Joan!





# AUCTION



THANK YOU!

As a direct result of your support and contributions,  
Hope was able to raise \$21,154 at this year's auction!







FEATURING:  
BARRON RYAN

# DAVE SAHLER MEMORIAL CONCERT







# DECEMBER EVENTS

## Board and Committee Meetings

All Hope members are welcome to attend the following meetings, which are held at the church unless otherwise indicated:

- Finance Committee: 6:00 PM, Tuesday, December 19th
- Board of Trustees: 7:00 PM, Tuesday, November 19th

## Church Events

All are welcome to attend the events listed below. (This is not a complete list of events taking place at the church this month; other events may be private or limited to members of specific church groups.) Dates and times listed below may change! Please check the church's online calendar at [www.hopeuu.org/calendar](http://www.hopeuu.org/calendar) for the most current schedule of events.

- Sing Noel: 11:00 AM, Saturday, December 10th
- Women of Hope: 6:00 PM, Thursday, December 7th
- Christmas Eve Service: 11:00 AM, Sunday, December 24th
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: 6:00 PM
- Sundays: Children and Youth Religious Education: 9:45 AM, Adult Forum: 10:00 AM, Sunday Service: 11:00 AM

## Log Cabin Rentals

The following support groups currently rent the Log Cabin on a weekly or monthly basis:

- Sundays, 2:00-3:00 PM: Gamblers Anonymous (GA)
- Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM: SouthSide Recovery/Narcotics Anonymous (SSR/NA)
- Wednesdays, 10:00 AM-noon: Al-Anon
- Wednesdays, 5:45-7:00 PM: Codependents Anonymous (CoDA)
- Usually the 3rd Saturday of each month, 4:00-6:00 PM: Victims' Voices (victim impact panel).

Check their website or [www.hopeuu.org/calendar](http://www.hopeuu.org/calendar) for specific dates.

## Cereal Days

Breakfast cereal (no Cheerios, please!) for the Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless can be dropped off at the church on Sunday morning, December 10th; between 10:00 AM and noon on Friday, December 15th; or from 2:00 to 4:00 PM on Saturday, November 18th.







# DECEMBER EVENTS

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Rick Eagleton - December 4th

Lisa Dunn - December 5th

Maggie Scott - December 9th

Cate Potter - December 10th

Susan Swatek - December 13th

George Krumme - December 15th

Eric Reiman - December 19th

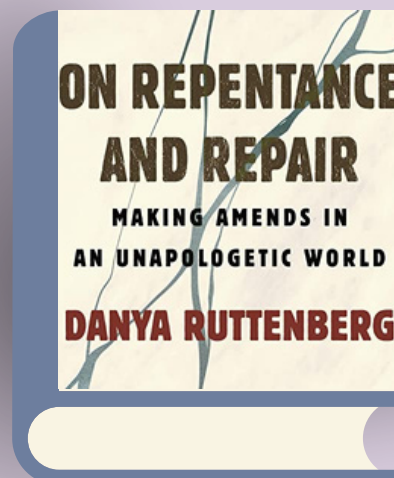
Jacci Hamilton - December 22nd

Sherrill Womeldorff - December 22nd

Anita Ward - December 22nd

Brandy Morgan - December 22nd

Mary Newman - December 31st



### UU Common Read 2023

When we do a UU Common read together, we share in reflection, learning, and action. This year's common read book is "On Repentance and Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World" by Danya Ruttenberg.

### December Adult Forum Topics

December 3rd: Our Generosity Recipient for December, Life Senior Services Stocking Drive

December 10th: While the choir is preparing for their Sing Noel performance in the Great Hall, the rest of us of all ages will be creating holiday crafts in the Fellowship Hall (and we may have a few surprises)

December 17th: Libraries, Little Free Libraries, and Book Bans

December 24th: Coffee and Conversation in the Fellowship Hall

December 31st: Coffee and Conversation in the Fellowship Hall







## ABOUT HOPE CHURCH

### HOPE'S MINISTER

**Rev. Justin M. McCreary**

Rev. Justin's usual office hours are Tuesdays-Thursdays, 10 AM-3PM.

Please email him in advance at [revjustin@hopeuu.org](mailto:revjustin@hopeuu.org) to schedule an appointment to meet in person or via Zoom.

If your need is urgent, call him. 918-481-0999, x2.

### SUNDAYS

Children's Church and Youth: 9:45 AM

Adult Forum: 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Services: 11:00 a.m.

Weekdays

Hope's general office hours are 9:00 AM-3:00 PM Tuesdays through Fridays. If you wish to visit the church in person, please call ahead to check staff availability. (For security reasons, external doors are kept locked unless an event is in progress.) We respond to email and voicemail messages from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Tuesdays through Fridays.

### HOPE'S STAFF

**Eve Bjornsgaard**

Worship Tech Coordinator

**Morgen Cavanah**

Church Administrator

**Lenny Hope**

Assistant Director of Children and Youth Religious Education

**Elizabeth Obal**

Church Accountant

**Christy Stalcup**

Music Director

**Tennille Wilson**

Director of Religious Education

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### 2023-2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**David Tracy**, President Elect

**Rebecca Jones**, Past-President

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**Mary Baird**, Vice President of Programs

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