

'A Guest At Your Table'

Thanksgiving Intergenerational Service 2011

Gathering Hymn – #168 - “One More Step”

Welcome & Announcements (Carlton, Zoe & Liz)

Carlton - Good morning! My name is Carlton Harrington and I am a member of this congregation. Along with Toniann Read, director of our Ministry with Children and Youth our MCY Worship Coordinator, Liz Garcia, Social Justice Coordinator, Jennifer Ratcliffe, music director, Huu Mai, the UUMAN Chalice and Family Choirs and a cast of, well, everyone, I welcome you to the Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North congregation, a church home that we affectionately call UUMAN.

Zoe? - We are a community of young people & adults travelling together on a journey of religious exploration, where our relationships allow for mutual transformation. We are guided by our UU Principles & a spirit of love for one another and the world in which we live.

Liz - Do we have any visitors with us this morning? (*pause & recognize visitors*). Please join us after the service next door in Fellowship Hall so that we might get to know each other. Whoever you are, wherever you are from, you are welcome here.

Announcements - Decorating Party after church next Sunday, bring a snack to share, a toy donation for North Fulton Community Charities and a camera for pictures with Santa.

Chime & moment of silence...

Call to Worship & Chalice Lighting (Setting the Table)

Gentle music plays in the background...

Liz invites young people to help. Liz & Carlton help young volunteers to set the table for the service with a setting for Hanukkah, Solstice, Christmas and Kwanzaa...

Jennifer - Today we are celebrating the beginning of our winter holiday season. As we prepare for the upcoming holidays and our family celebrations, we are reminded that this is a time of gratitude, hope and hospitality.

The seasons mark a continuous cycle: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. During this time of the year we've been celebrating Fall, a time of harvest, a time to rest, a time to appreciate our abundance. Fall leads to Winter and the many celebrations of stories and of being together. But it's also a time for introspection and silence. This year we've been exploring our heritage, where we come from, and how our ancestors shape us. Our young ones have already embarked on a discovery of their roots. Some of their mobiles are displayed in the Narthex. We encourage the adults to participate in this revealing activity also, Heritage kits are available at the MCY table for all who wish to be included. We'll be marking all the places we're from in a World Map, to acknowledge the tapestry of our beginnings and rituals. We agree that the way we build community is by sharing our stories, and sharing our gifts and traditions. One of those traditions has been to support the UUSC, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. It's a giant Social Action and Justice Committee, who helps people around the World. A little like UNICEF does by helping children. Our church supports the work of the UUSC by hosting "A Guest At Your Table" this time of the year, every year. Today we'll hear stories about some of the people the UUSC has helped. Our religious heritage marks this rite of opening our homes and our hearts to special guests as we honor our diverse community and share our full measure with others during this holiday... come, let us gather together in a human circle of love and compassion.

Please join me in this morning's chalice lighting which can be found in your order of worship ...

To face the world's shadows, a chalice of light.
To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth,
To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.
To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.
May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

By Lindsay Bates

Family Choir "Family Tree" by Tom Chapin

Holiday Table #1 - Hanukkah

Family (?) – Along with Jewish families all over the world, some of us at UUMAN will soon be celebrating the eight nights of Hanukkah. This special holiday reminds us that sometimes things that seem impossible at first can happen if we make a start in the direction of what is right. Some people call that a leap of faith. Much of the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is just like

that...a leap of faith towards justice! We are excited to tell you about a special holiday program at our church called 'A Guest at Your Table'. This is a program that helps us to get together with other UU's to make a big difference in the lives of many people all over the world. We will use this collection box to set an extra place at our holiday table for a 'special guest'. We will collect change and ask visiting friends and family to participate if they wish...

Enter 'Dalia'...

Dalia's Story (Liz, Lilyan, Maeve & Maya)

Hello, my name is Dalia Ziada. I am from Egypt where I am a youth leader & human rights activist. When I was 25 I opened & was the director for the American Islamic Congress's North Cairo office. There I work to protect free expression, promote non violent protests, & advance woman's rights. When I started my work there was not a word in Arabic for non violence so I had to create a translation, which is now commonly understood in Egypt. I worked with the UUSC to translate a comic book about the Montgomery bus boycott into Arabic.

Recently I worked to educate voters throughout my country, many who had never voted before, to be prepared for our elections which were just held. With the support of UUSC I created a program to teach voters about their rights & how they could educate themselves about the candidates.

I helped launch an annual human rights film festival held in Cairo. I have a blog & help other youth, from around the world, with online advocacy & non violent conflict resolution. I believe everyone should have a voice & a choice in a democratic society!

I've heard that some of you have been learning of non violent conflict resolution in your re classes. I'd love to see a demonstration of what you've learned!

Toniann helps out with demo...

Musical refrain –

Hand of Friendship

Jay? – We change the world by being connected to one another. Here at UUMAN we treasure and celebrate the ways in which young people and adults learn from each other.

Carlton – Young people, who come to us with hearts and minds so wide open, can help us adults who spend time with them to reach **our** full potential as human beings.

Jay? - We are all growing together in this ministry. In that spirit, I invite you to look around for someone near you who is a different age from you - older or younger, bigger or smaller...please rise in body or spirit and join all ages together in sharing the Hand of Friendship.

Everybody - Hand of Friendship...

Holiday Table #2 - Solstice

Family (Elliotts) – Midwinter is coming and we have been snuggling in during these cool dark days. Soon we will celebrate the Winter Solstice, the shortest day. We will celebrate our hope and faith that the days will soon be bright with sunshine again as the wheel of the year keeps turning. We love our precious Mother Earth and thank her for making such a beautiful and bountiful home for us. When we share our fortune with others, we help to make sure that everyone benefits from Mother Earth's gifts...

Enter 'Chrisiantus'...

Chrisiantus's Story (Jennifer)

My name is Christiantus, I'm from Kakamega, Kenya. I'm here to talk to you about what I do in my country. I'm teaching other Kenyans how to conserve water by planting trees and plants that help keep water in the soil. In America, you simply go to the kitchen or the bathroom, you turn the faucet and, tadah, out comes water. In my country we get water from streams or rivers. Sometimes that water is contaminated by fertilizers or waste. I want to ask a few young people to help me with an experiment to illustrate what happens when we pollute water we use to drink, bathe or cook. (Plant Experiment)

Musical refrain –

Offertory - (Carlton) – Just as UUSC and their partners all over the world work together to achieve great things, it takes all of us, together, to support the work of our church. All that we are, all that we do, all that we have depends on the generosity of the members and friends of this community. This morning's offering will now be received.

Offertory Music – “Stand by Me”

Ushers will pass baskets & bring them to Carlton.

Offertory Response “We sing now together in joyful thanksgiving acclaiming creation whose bounty we share; both sorrow and gladness we find now in our living; we sing a hymn of praise to the life we share.”

Thanksgiving (Carlton) - For the work of this church, which is weaving a tapestry of love with our lives, we give thanks for this offering.

Holiday Table #3 - Christmas

Family (Ann, Dirk & Danielle?) – We are so excited that it will soon be Christmas! Some of us will soon be celebrating the birth of the baby Jesus who grew up to be a wise teacher. Jesus asked us to take care of each other. He once told a story about a man who helped a stranger when he was hurting. This lesson reminds us that it’s up to us to take care of one another when times are hard. When we send our money to the UUSC they will use it to help people who have been having hard times and partner with them as they work to make things better...

Enter Patrick...

Patrick’s Story (liz)

Greetings, my name is Patrick Lafontant. I am from a poor neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Many of the youths where I am from turn to gangs & drugs to make friends & money. At a young age my father passed away & my mother turned her back on me, forcing me to live on the streets. I could have taken the path of so many I grew up with, but I found a new life through an art workshop. There my talent blossomed. I showed my work in several exhibitions & with the money I made from selling my paintings I was able to return to school. Through my art I have reclaimed my dignity & even reconnected with my mother & step father. Because I have been so fortunate to be given a new life I now give back. I teach art workshops to at risk youth in my community. The students are able to sell their work & keep the profits. Art allows these youth to communicate their feelings that they can not yet speak aloud. It gives them a voice.

There are many ways to express your feelings through art. It can be done with paintings & drawings, with sculptures & photos, even with music & dance. Many people find they are able to express their spiritual beliefs through song. Now I’d

like to invite everyone to join us in singing hymn number 123 in the grey hymnal. Let the music & words move through you as you sing.

Hymn – #123 (Grey Hymnal) “Spirit of Life”

Joys & Sorrows

Carlton – Now is the time in the Service where the love that binds us together is spoken out loud. This is a sacrament of our service, a communion of sharing the most profound experiences of our lives. If you have a joy or a sorrow that you would like to share this morning please come forward & light a candle...*(YP hand each person a candle from the basket & the mic)*...when it seems like everyone is done say...

Spirit of life and spirit of grace, rest with us this day, in this place. We lift up every joy, every gladness, we hold up every hurt, every sadness spoken in this good company as well as every secret feeling held quiet in the hollows of our hearts.

Carlton - *(light a final candle)* I light this final candle for all those joys & concerns still too tender to escape the folds of our hearts. Let us keep one another in our thoughts for the coming week.

Musical Reflection – “I’ll Be There” – Youth Trio

Holiday Table #4 - Kwanzaa

Family (Clarisse) – Some of us will soon be celebrating the 7 days and nights of Kwanzaa. People of African heritage and their friends and allies will come together to renew their commitment to 7 principles introduced by Dr Karenga in 1965. These principles are rooted in African culture and tradition and serve to strengthen and unify African heritage families and communities all over the world. On day 4 we will renew our commitment to Ujima, the Swahili word for Collective Work and Responsibility. This means that African heritage people will build and maintain a strong, unified community where problems are shared and solved by working together. This is an inspiring principle that we can all support. On the first Sunday of the New Year we will bring our collection boxes to church in honor of the Guests at Our Tables. We will put all of the money collected by UUMAN families together and send it off to the UUSC. The UUSC will be collecting money from congregations all over America and together that will be a LOT of money. When that money is then put together with the good ideas, creativity and energy of people and organizations around the world, well, what a BIG difference that will make!

Enter 'Maria'...

Maria's Story (Jennifer)

My name is Maria. My parents came to this country a long time ago without the proper documents. My parents worked very hard and lived in horrible places so I could get an education. I lived and worked in farms in California. Now I live in Arkansas, helping workers in a poultry processing plant. I help them organize themselves into groups to ask their bosses for basic rights, like working a certain amount of hours a day; or getting time off to go to the doctor; or have a clean home, with running water. If my parents and others hadn't helped me, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go to school and learn what my rights are. I need some helpers to build a pretend city and what happens when something goes wrong. (Earthquake Reconstruction with Building Blocks)

Closing Hymn – #1053 (Teal Hymnal) - “How Could Anyone?”

Benediction (Liz) – May we give ourselves to the gentle and powerful work of transforming ourselves, our communities, and the world into a more peaceful, just, and blessed place for every living being. May it be ever so.

Carlton – The Service is ended. Go in Peace.