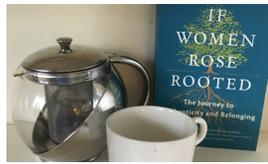


Member Contributions

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WOMENSPIRIT BOOK CLUB PAGE 4

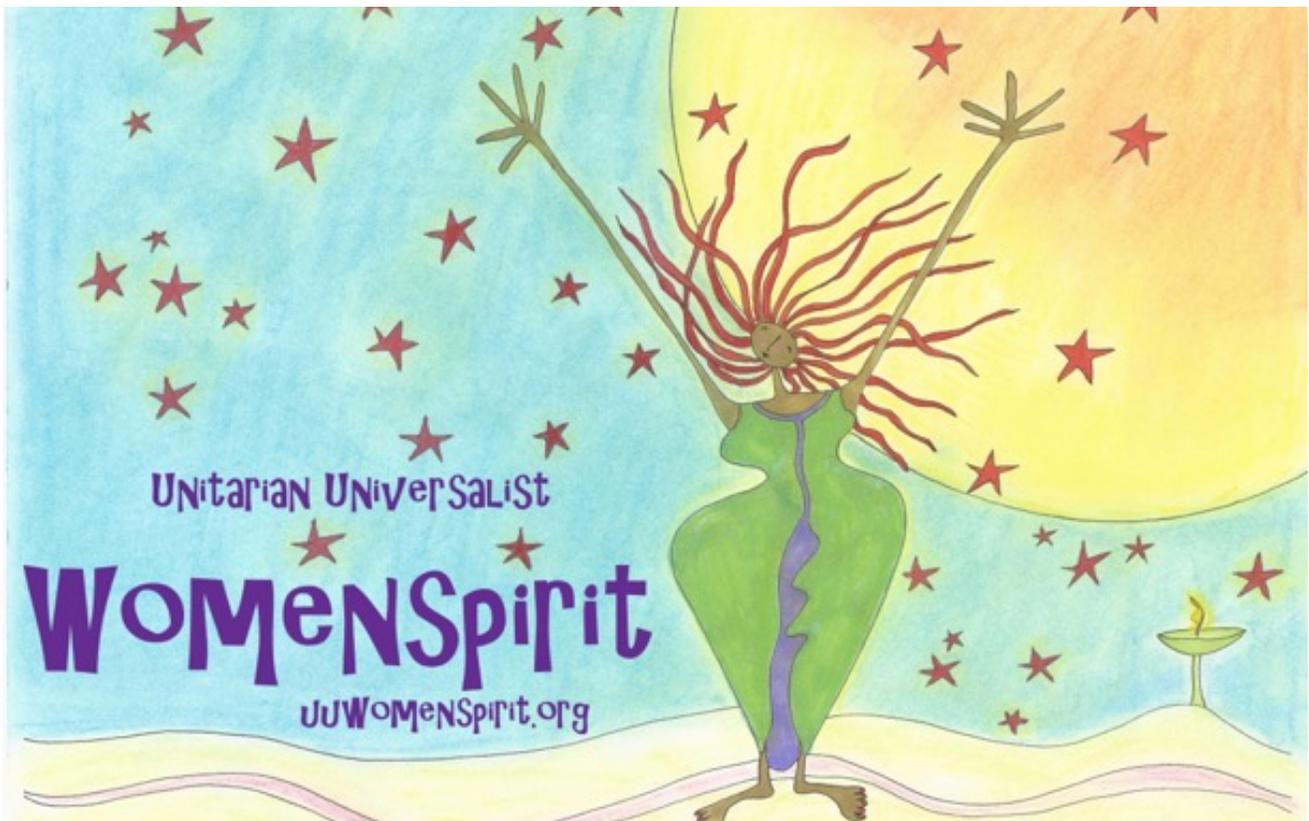


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SHE SPEAKS



Letter from the Editor

Dear Sisters,

I recently saw a sign outside a church as I passed by that instructed us all to count our blessings. This edict prompted me to think about the source of all the good things in life. Are we blessed? fortunate? lucky? privileged? Or, are we some combination of all these things? At its core, it is a question of agency

How fortunate are you?

and action. Are we, in fact, responsible for our own circumstances?

To contemplate this question necessitates beginning with vocabulary. What does it mean to be blessed? To be blessed implies the presence of a cosmic actor anointing us with blessings, bestowing us with the gifts and opportunities that manifest in our individual lives. To be blessed is to be a passive recipient of the vicissitudes of life.

Perhaps, we are instead lucky? To be lucky implies that life is a set of coincidences randomly generated by a chaotic universe. A lucky person is not one that a supernatural force smiles down on, nor one that creates her own fate out of hard work and determination. To be lucky is, again, to be passive in the face of the falling dominoes of life.

Are we, rather, privileged? Without a doubt, we all possess some form of privilege. Some of us experience great privilege by being born into circumstances without financial or safety insecurities. Some experience the privilege of being white in a country designed to allow us greater opportunity. We all enjoy the privilege of living in a country with a high standard of living, one not enjoyed in the majority of the world. Privilege is interesting because it implies both passivity and agency. To be privileged implies living in a system purposefully design to benefit some at the expense of others. Yet, people are passively born into these systems of inequality without their knowledge or consent.

So, where do all the good (and bad) things come from? From divine intervention? From individual activity? From a cosmic game of dice? From purposefully manipulated circumstances? Though it is a rather existential question, I believe deeply that the answer is all of the above. To live the fullest and most meaningful life requires that we recognize the privilege of the circumstances into which we were born. It also requires us to be grateful when opportunities and resources land in our laps through no fault of our own. At the end of the day, I believe we achieve greatness when we take stock of the privilege, luck, and blessings in our arsenal and use them to actively and defiantly make the world a better place, a place where all people can say that they are blessed.

Be Well,
Shannon Browning-Mullis, Editor

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Thank you for your patience as I learn with experience and develop the new voice and look of *She Speaks*. Please don't hesitate to reach out with feedback. I'd love to hear from you!

Shannon

Sbrowningmullis@gmail.com

Member Contribution from Sue-Anne Solem:

I light the seven Hannukah candles as the sun sets. Though I can't see it and the day has been dark, I know it is always there. The Light is always there for us, even in the darkest times. And as I gaze at the candles, seemingly shedding more light as the day grows darker, I am inspired by what I am now calling this Season of the Miraculous.

I first celebrated the miraculous appearance of the Goddess as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Here in Mexico, where I am now, they celebrated this miracle for twelve days with nightly processions and offerings, until her most holy day of celebration on Dec. 12. I was at home in NC at the time, and my household held what has become an annual virgin of Guadalupe party. We celebrated with Mexican hot chocolate, mulled wine, food, and Virgin de Guadalupe candles. I told the story of her amazing appearance in the 16th century on the hill of Tepeyac in today's Mexico City, and how she created miracles so the Native American she appeared to would give proof to the bishop to build a church in her honor. She made an image of herself appear on his apron, which hangs now in the Basilica in Mexico City, perfectly intact, to the awe of millions of visitors each year. Some say she is really the Aztec Goddess Tonantzin, but we know what name we call her does not matter! It is what she represents that is important, and that is the appearance of the Miraculous in Life, and the Divine Qualities, which are also in us, of compassion, mercy, healing, forgiveness, serenity, trust, and support.

We celebrate at this darkest time the Miracle of Light: Hannukah, the solstice Return of the Sun, and the Birth of the Son, the Divine Child, who is the Light of the World. What a grand series of Celebrations of the Miraculous!

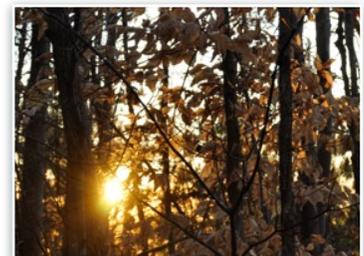
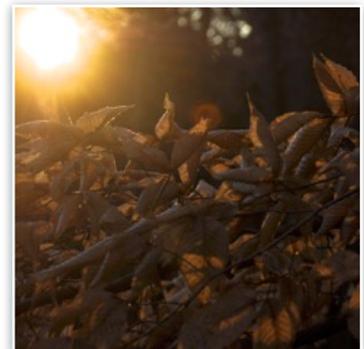
At Solstice, we witnessed the Miracle of the Return of the Power of Light, reminding us that Light will always overcome darkness. As the sun is certain to come up each day, it is certain to regain its strength in the midst of the darkest time.

At Hannukah, we celebrate another Return of the Light. We honor the Miracle of the Return of Faith in a dark time, as it was for the Jews under foreign rule. After their defeat of the ruling power, they lit the temple lamp for the first time in a very long time, and the oil lasted 8 days, instead of the one day expected. Hannukah then represents a time of renewal of the Light: to renew our devotion to our spiritual path, a time for rededication for ourselves, as it was a time for the Jews to rededicate the temple. And when we do this, we see that re-kindling our inner light at this time can last a long time, just as the oil lasted not one day but eight. We renew our dedication to our own Inner Light, the Light of Understanding of our true Divine nature.

And in a few days we will honor the birth of the Divine Child: the potential of every human being to be that child, to realize the fulfillment of our Divine Potential. We are all here to be a Light Unto the World. We all have within us the innocence of the Divine Child.

In this season, let us rekindle our Inner flame, let us each shine our Unique Light for ourselves and for all. Let us rediscover the Divine Child qualities of joy, innocence, delight, wonder, enthusiasm, and trust.

May we all be filled with the Magic of this season. May we deeply know indeed the Magic, Mystery and Miracle of Life!



News from Members:

Please remember Toni's family as her son Roy recovers from a recent heart attack.

News from the CoCo by Gail Stephenson, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator

For those of you who have not seen it yet, we have a revamped website. Stacy Leona has been hard at work for months redesigning the website. If you have any questions about it, or run into an issue, please go to the "contact" tab, drop down to "General" and send me a message about it. Or you can email me directly at marketing@uuwomenspirit.org.

The Coordinating Council is working on a new volunteer position. We will be asking soon for a volunteer to increase our visibility, presence, and retention of younger women. This position will help younger women's exposure to UUWomenspirit as well as find unique ways to keep younger women coming to our events.

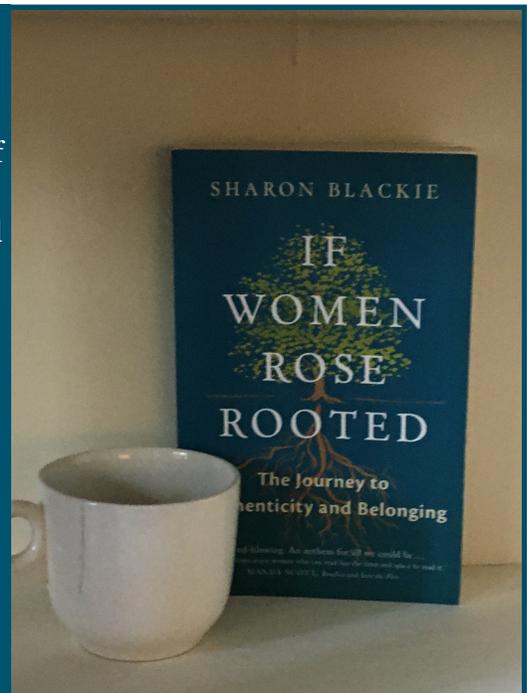
Speaking of volunteers, UUWomenspirit is looking for volunteers to fill a few positions. The Coordinating Council will soon be having Alice Carnes as Volunteer Coordinator and Gloria Hausser as treasurer rotating off. We will need to fill those two positions. We have Event Coordinators and Planning Committees for 2020, but need to be looking to 2021. Susie Sherman-Hall just is rotating off as a Searchette and Nancy Hagman will be replacing her. If you would like to contact Alice about any of these positions, or know of somebody that you think would be a good fit, please feel free to email her at volunteer@uuwomespirit.org.

Womenspirit Book Club

Introducing UUWS Book Club! Did you ever wish you could stay more connected with your sisters or that you had a way of knowing what they were thinking about or reading throughout the year? Here's your chance! Each newsletter will now include a review of the previous book, plus an announcement of the next book club pick. The Womenspirit facebook page is the perfect place for discussion. Please consider volunteering to review a book. Special bonus: if you review a book, you get to pick our next selection! Please email me at sbrowningmullis@gmail.com to let me know if you'd like to volunteer to review our first book.

Imbolc 2020 Book Club Pick:

If Women Rose Rooted: A Life-changing Journey to Authenticity and Belonging by Sharon Blackie



Spring 2020

Registration opens Mid February

Journey to the Soul of Ancient Egypt

The winter holidays are over and the Planning Committee is in high gear for Spring 2020 (APRIL 22-26) Journey to the Soul of Ancient Egypt. We hope you will join us in exploring the Nile River pantheon. Of course, we can only explore a few Goddesses, but maybe your curiosity will be piqued to study further.

The track and workshop sessions will be led by both familiar faces and new facilitators. There will be familiar activities and new ones, too. Look for the upcoming registration in February 2020.

Join us for a "cool" time. (April in Highlands, NC has an average high of 63 and a low of 39.) The Planning Committee is looking eagerly forward to seeing you at the Mountain and to share our offerings with you.

Please help make the first APRIL session of Unitarian Universalist Womenspirit a success and remember to register early for tracks and workshops.

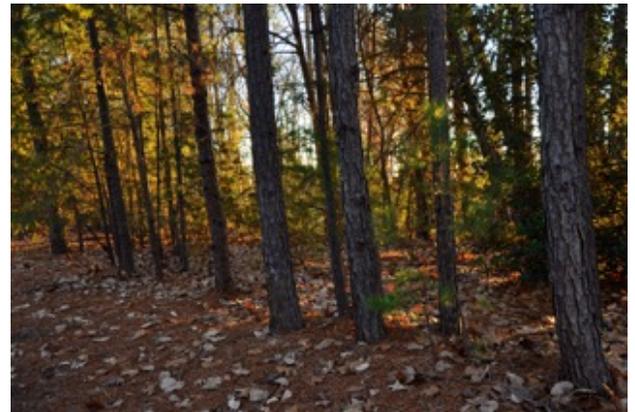
For any questions or concerns, please email or phone me.

Linda Myers, Event Coordinator Spring 2020
lindaruthmyers@hotmail.com
 678 451-8049

Planning Committee:

Linda Myers, Event Coordinator
 Maggie Lovins and Kim Sitton, Worship
 Em Stecker, Tracks and Workshops
 Shauna Ireland, Sales and Activities
 Carolyn Pilgrim, Scribe

Ever wondered about Ancient Egyptian Goddesses other than just Isis? Come along with your Spring 2020 PC as we present to you our recreation of Ancient Egyptian Goddess worship on the Nile! We will dive into the way in which worship was viewed, how it was incorporated into daily life and how it could be as much fun as it was Sacred. Combining elements of décor, Sacred words and activities we hope to make Worship into Magic! We will get to know the Goddesses Ma'at, Hathor, Bast, Sekhmet and of course Isis. Come Sisters...Ancient Egypt is calling!



Photographs - Lisa Sherman

Original Meme - Carole Dixon & Cheryl Dent



Imbolc Plant Profile:
Rosemary
Salvia rosmarinus

Rosemary is a faithful plant ally that is available to assist us anytime of year, but she is particularly relevant at Imbolc. Imbolc is a time of purifying and cleansing and is the original inspiration for spring cleaning. It is a time to purify the mind, body, and home. Rosemary is a wonderful herb for purifying and protecting. It can be added to the bath to purify the body and burned to cleanse the home. It can also be planted near your home for extra protection. It is easy to grow yourself and readily available fresh and dried in stores. Of course, rosemary is also a culinary herb found in common recipes. Try infusing oil, honey, or vinegar with rosemary to enjoy for weeks to come.



Firewalk!!!

We are hoping to bring back the amazing firewalk experience that many of you had at the Fall 2017 event. Lori Hudspeth is a Master Firewalking instructor who will teach you how to walk safely and relax into the fire energy by trusting your intuition. You can learn to transform your fear and doubt to reshape your reality during this powerful activity. This is an additional cost that is paid directly to Lori, (\$57 each). If you are curious but unsure, I highly suggest giving it a try. I had no intention of doing it last time and Lori promised that if I signed up and didn't feel like I got my money's worth by having a transformative experience, that she would refund my money. Once I was in front of the fire with my Womenspirit sisters, the ritual before the fire walk created a trusting energy and safe space, so much so that I ended up walking across those hot coals twice, as did many other women.

We will only be able to bring Lori back for this amazing experience if we have a minimum of 25 people participate. Our brochure for the Spring event 2020 will be going out soon, so we will need to know ASAP if we have enough interest. If you haven't done so already, please contact me and let me know if you would be interested in doing the firewalk. Thanks so much!

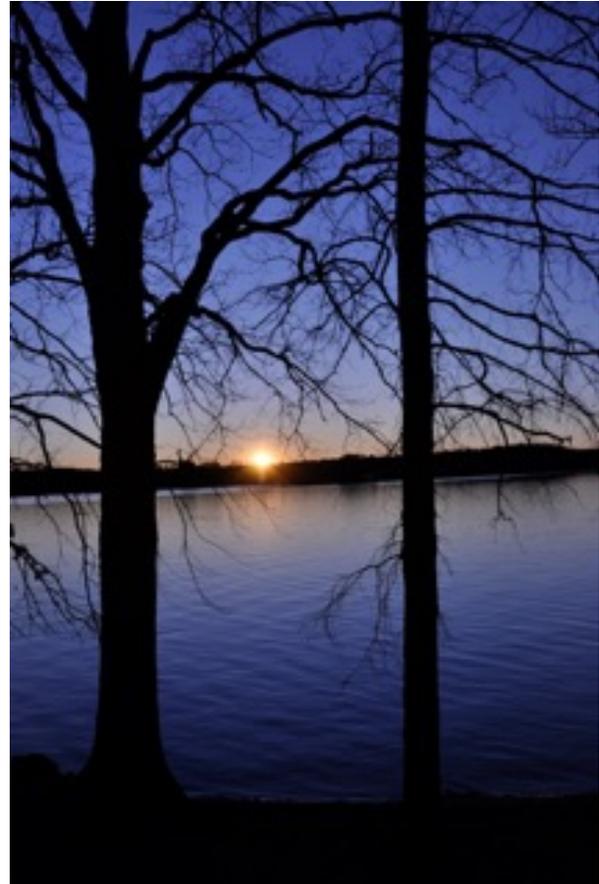
Shauna Ireland

IMBOLC RITUAL

Find a dark, quiet space where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Prepare yourself and your space however feels right to you to prepare for deeply grounded focus. You'll need several candles, a bowl of water, your journal, and a writing utensil. The ideal bowl is wide, shallow, and a dark solid color, but work with what you have. Once you have grounded yourself and created sacred space, light your candles and peer into the water. This is not an exercise in speed. Give yourself time. Allow your eyes to unfocus and your mind to wonder. Think about individual components of your life, your home, your location, your job, your relationships, your spiritual practice. One by one, consider the origin of these components and how they have evolved over the years. Allow your mind to wonder into the past as you relive your growth without judgement, pain, or shame. Everything you have experienced has brought you to this point, to the woman you are today. You may also consider how you would like each of these components of your life to evolve in the coming years. You might consider your hopes and dreams, but this is not the time for detailed plans. Just to fully examine and consider is work enough for one evening.

Once you are done, record your thoughts in your journal. Take your time and record anything that comes to mind without judgement. This exercise can be repeated year after year to help you better understand and embrace the trajectory of your life and individual growth.

When you are done journaling, blow out the candles, thanking air for her service and fire for her presence. Then release the water back into the Earth, thanking the water for her presence and the Earth for her grounding spirit.



IMBOLC

At Imbolc, the coldest, darkest time of year, many of us turn inward. We hibernate from the activity and giving of the spring and summer, and instead, ruminate on more philosophical endeavors. Often, we use this time to consider our lives more quietly and deeply. We think of the things that make life more meaningful and those that just create extra clutter. In our tradition, often referred to as that which serves and that which needs to be released.

It is an important time to remember that, contrary to what we have been taught by western culture, darkness is not evil. It is simply the absence of light, a time for rest rather than activity, a time for turning inward rather than outward.