

Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula

740 E. Main Street, Santa Paula, CA 93060 (805) 525-4647

uucspoffice@gmail.com website: uucsp.org

DECEMBER SERVICES, SUNDAYS AT 10:30 AM



December Theme: *Presence*

“The gift of presence is a rare and beautiful gift. To come - unguarded, undistracted - and be fully present, fully engaged with whoever we are with at that moment.”

— John Eldredge

Sunday, December 1 We Remember Them Jerry Gray, Neil and Keith Coffman-Grey

It is not just a coincidence that World AIDS Day is in December. It's not just that the word 'remember' rhymes with December. The closing days of the year have long been the perfect time for reflection on those who have gone before us. The work of planting, tending, and harvesting is done. Cooler days lead to time indoors, and occasionally time alone. There are also times of gathering, where we put the reflections to words, often with loved ones near. Join us for a time of reflection as we see and learn more about the AIDS quilts that will adorn our Sanctuary and Parish Hall.

First Sunday Plate to Interface Children and Family Services

Sunday, December 8 Helping Youth Find Their Voice Lynn Edmonds and Ruth Ricards

Lynn Edmonds along with three young adults who attended One Step a la Vez as high schoolers will share their stories on how they learned to empower themselves.

BIO - Lynn Edmonds moved to Fillmore in 1984 to be the principal at Piru Elementary School. Later she was promoted to be principal at Fillmore Middle School. Lynn left Fillmore Unified School District in 2000 to take a position at Moorpark School District as principal. She started One Step a la Vez in 2008 and was awarded a \$200,000 grant for 3 years. After she retired from One Step, she was elected to the Fillmore City Council in 2016 for a four year term.

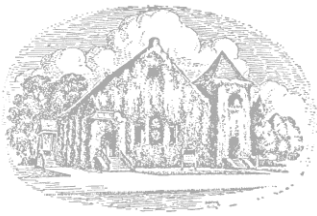
Sunday, December 15 The Three Marks of Existence in Buddhism

Rev. Kusala Bhikshu and Rev. Dr. Betty Stapleford

These three marks are core beliefs of Buddhists, along with the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Three marks – Impermanence, Dissatisfaction and Not-Self.

BIO - Kusala Bhikshu is an American born monk ordained in the Zen Buddhist Tradition of Vietnam, he lives and works at the International Buddhist Meditation Center in the Korea town section of Los Angeles. Rev. Kusala is a member of the Buddhist-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Los Angeles and 'MID' Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, a Benedictine Confederation to promote and support dialogue between Christian monastic men and women and followers of other religions. He has been active as a community volunteer for two decades, with volunteer work at the California State Prison for Men, the Los Angeles Central Juvenile Hall, the Garden Grove Police Department, and as Buddhist Chaplain for the University Religious Conference at U.C.L.A. In 2005 Kusala Bhikshu was awarded the 'Los Angeles Mayor's Certificate of Appreciation' for his interfaith and inter-religious community service. In July of 2024 his book was published – “Urban Dharma – 20 years of Buddhist stories from an LA City Monk.” – www.urbandharma.info

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is to practice inclusiveness, seek justice and foster spirituality.



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Sunday, December 22 Winter Solstice: In the Heart of Darkness, Light Awakens

Kate English and Ellen Deeb

As the longest night of the year cradles us in its embrace, join us for a service celebrating the Winter Solstice—a time when darkness is not an absence, but a fertile ground for reflection, renewal, and the seeds of transformation. Together, we will honor the natural turning of the seasons, our deep interconnection with the earth, and the gifts that emerge from the quiet, generative spaces of life. Through poetry, music, and shared ritual, we'll celebrate the beauty of this sacred season and the balance of darkness and light.

Tuesday, December 24 Christmas Eve - More Than Just a Star Lisa Popeil and Ruth Ricards

We gather on Christmas Eve to hear the story, *More Than Just a Star*. The story is about a young shepherd boy named Micha who asks his father, "How will I know what to watch for?" That night and throughout the next day, Micah's father shares signs of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, along with a symbol that the boy places in his shepherd's bag to help him watch for that wondrous birth. The congregation will sing Christmas carols throughout the play. The service will be filled with special music performed by Lisa Popeil, Bill Montei, Thomas Weisbecker and Ruth Ricards. We will end with the traditional candlelit Silent Night as well as a new Christmas carol for all to sing. Come join in the spirit of Christmas Eve!

BIO - Lisa Popeil, has an MFA in Voice and has taught singing and speech beautification professionally for 50 years. Lisa is the creator of the Voiceworks® Method, and brings her passion for singing and music to vocal enthusiasts around the world. As a singer-songwriter, her self-titled album was a Billboard Top Album Pick in 1984. She has performed and recorded with Frank Zappa and her voice has appeared on many "Weird Al" Yanovic albums, on his latest film "Weird" and toured the US and Canada with Weird Al in 2019. Her vocal work spans classical, pop, R&B, jazz, country, and musical theater and she currently is focusing on teacher-training courses and voice research with universities, including UCLA.

Sunday, December 29 On Becoming a Troublesome Priest Rev. James Ishmael Ford and Ken Stock

As it happens, Thomas Becket, onetime archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in his cathedral on this day in 1170. It feels like a perfect day to consider this past year, the year to come, and what it might mean to bear witness as religious liberals in tumultuous times.

*BIO - The Reverend James Ishmael Ford served as a parish minister for twenty-five years and is minister emeritus at the First Unitarian Church of Providence, Rhode Island. Today he is a community minister affiliated with Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena. James is also a long time Zen practitioner and teacher, and is the author of six books on aspects of spiritual life. His most recent book, the *Intimate Way of Zen: Effort, Surrender, on the Spiritual Journey* was published by Shambhala Publications this past summer. He also has a substack page, *Unanswered Question*. He and his spouse Jan currently live in Tujunga, where they care for Jan's 97 year old mother.*

UUs of Our Past with Leslie Nichols



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Message from Board of Trustees

The Board continues to meet once a month and oversee the business of the church, even as the holiday season works its way into high gear.

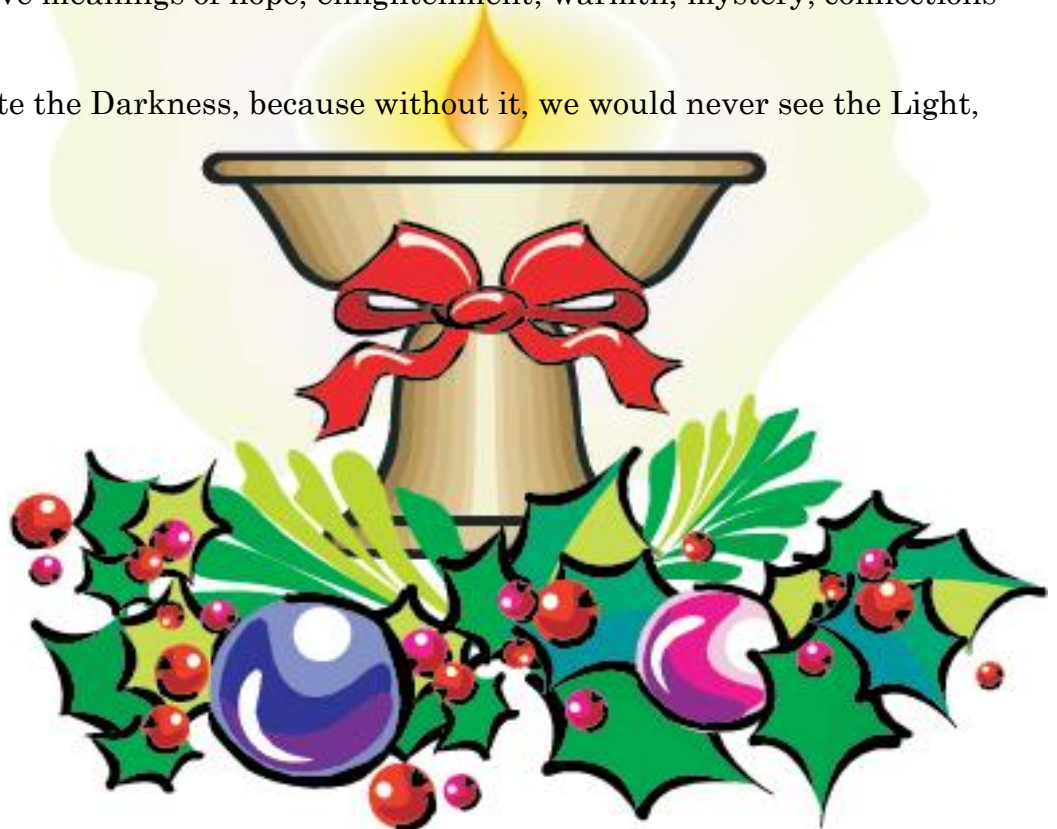
For me, Halloween preparation began the holiday season. It gained momentum with Thanksgiving. It races into December, a time of lights to assuage our ancient fear (possibly, part of our DNA) of darkness and the shortening days of winter. Fear of darkness drove ancient Europeans to huddle by their fires, make torches, candles and rituals to call upon the Sun to come back and warm the earth. Winter Solstice marked the beginning of the return of the sun. The days began to lengthen. Today candles and lights are integral in celebrating Hanukkah and Christmas. Of course, Secular Christmas has gone beyond candles and relies on electronic lights. Private homes, sometimes entire neighborhoods, have not only decorated Christmas trees and houses, but made elaborate displays, of electronic life-size, often with moving parts, (sometimes as tall as a two-story building), figures of Santa, reindeer, snowmen, you-name-it, and an occasional manger scene or Jewish display. When I see these amazingly beautiful spectacles, I feel warm and charmed to see something more beautiful at night than it is in daylight. I think I love them, too, because the people, the community has driven the darkness away and made the night a friendly fun place for children and all of us.

Here at the church, our Christmas Eve celebration incorporates the lighting of candles. In years past, we stood in a circle in the sanctuary and lit each other's candle and darkness was driven from the building. In that ritual, I often feel, not only connected with all of us in the building, and not only connected with people around the world, but I feel the connection with the ancients that developed rituals to survive in a dark world. Our UU religion took a flaming chalice for its symbol, with all its connotative meanings of hope, enlightenment, warmth, mystery, connections to nature and Love.

Happy Holidays and Celebrate the Darkness, because without it, we would never see the Light,

Margaret Wilson

Board Member at Large



Spiritual Growth Center

SPIRITUAL GROWTH CENTER

In 2015 we gathered some of activities we already did and those we hoped to do under the umbrella of the Spiritual Growth Center at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula. It provides opportunities and programs to awaken and sustain love, compassion, service and personal transformation. Our goal is to help individuals discover how spiritual practices, learning, and community service can transform their lives and move the world toward peace and justice. The activities of the center are yoga on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Meditation on Wednesday nights at 6 PM and Twilight Gathering on the second Tuesday of the month, now coordinated by Kate English. Over the years we have had Singing Meditation, T'ai Chi, Sound Baths and more. There is room for book discussions, craft events and the sky's the limit. All it takes is the ideas and someone to organize them. For questions be in touch with the office.



SOARING HEARTS YOGA

Soaring Hearts Yoga meets in the Parish Hall. Join them on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 AM.

Bring your own mats and props.

Please contact Lisa Hammond at 831-801-2276 or soaringheartsyoga@gmail.com for more information.

MEDITATION PRACTICE GROUP

In person in the Parish Hall and on Zoom and FB

Call church office for the Zoom address and password.

Like the FB page: Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula

December 4 with Thomas Weisbecker

December 11 with Jim Cole

December 18 with Thomas Weisbecker

December 25 or January 1 NO MEDITATION

EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 6 PM

For Zoom info, email office@uucsp.org ~Free Will Offering



Twilight Gathering



Tuesday, December 10 7:00 PM

Join us for joyous music and prose at this special Holiday themed Gathering at 7pm on December 10th with our own Vincent Sorisio who will share some seasonal music with poetry curated by Kate English and Atul Ranchaud. This is our final Gathering of the year where we share silence, poetry and music in a centering practice. We hope to see you there!

In person at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula
740 E Main Street, Santa Paula
OR ON ZOOM

Free will offering (\$5-20 suggested)

People and Doings

2024 4th QUARTER 1st SUNDAY OFFERING December 1



Established in 1973, Interface Children & Family Services is the region's most comprehensive nonprofit social services agency providing direct, responsive, wrap-around services to address the complex needs of clients and our local community.

As a critical safety net for children and families, Interface provides 30 distinct programs across seven core program areas including [mental health & trauma treatment](#), [domestic violence & child abuse prevention](#), [youth crisis & homelessness](#), [human trafficking prevention & intervention](#), [justice services](#), and [211 information & assistance](#) in 31 California counties.

Today, Interface serves tens of thousands of local individuals annually, assists 250,000+ callers through the 211 call center across the state, and continues to earn the respect of individuals, businesses, and foundations, which provide grants, donations, and in-kind services to ensure that the work of Interface is sustained.

Interface works collaboratively with many other service providers. We are the only agency with a presence in all existing, formalized "under one roof" facilities across Ventura County. With collaboration, Interface best provides family support, domestic violence intervention, outreach, and youth activities, as well as prevention and counseling within economically challenged communities. To establish a foundation of violence prevention and mental health, Interface embeds five family-strengthening objectives into its programs:

- Help parents develop resiliency
- Help families develop a support system
- Help families secure practical help when they need it
- Teach parents how to raise healthy children
- Help children to develop socially and emotionally



Guest At Your Table (November 17 through December 22]

This year we will be participating in the annual Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) Guest at Your Table fund raiser. During the holiday season our thoughts turn to Thanksgiving and people around the world and in this country who need a helping hand, whether it is for disaster relief, food scarcity, education for their families, human rights, including women's issues and gender equality, and environmental issues. Guest At Your Table is personal. We are encouraged to think of a member from one of these communities who would share a meal with us and tell us about their life and hopes. Gifts of \$150 will be matched.

People and Doings

December Friendship Bridge "Pop Up" Sale!

Constancia is hosting the last Friendship Bridge "Tipica" (handicrafts and jewelry) in the back porch of her home on **Sunday, December 8th** starting at **1:30 pm!** Get those last minute holiday gifts, enjoy some delicious taste treats or just hang out!

All proceeds support the "Handmade by Friendship Bridge" program benefiting our artisan clients who are so proud of the beautiful items that they design and make! Any questions, contact Constancia! (**cash or checks please**) www.friendshipbridge.org

SIP AND CHECK IN WITH SHARON KUFELDT TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10 AT 4 PM ON ZOOM

After a few minutes of casual chat as people arrive, we light a chalice with a reading and then invite people to take turns checking in about what's going on for them, answering the question, "How is it with your spirit today?" If there is still time left after the individual check-in's, the group will chat about topics of shared interest to them all or the monthly theme. We aim to be inclusive of everyone present who wishes to talk or ask questions.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/7312177775>
Meeting ID: 731 217 7775 Password: uucsp93060



CARING COMMITTEE will host a Blue Christmas service on Thursday, December 12 at 4:00 PM in the sanctuary.



People and Doings

SANTA PAULA CINEMA SOCIETY

A movie poster for the film 'Hugo' by Martin Scorsese. The central image shows a young boy, Asa Butterfield, climbing a large, ornate clock tower mechanism. The clock face is visible, with numbers 11, 12, 1, 2, 5, and 6. The scene is set against a dark, starry background. Text on the poster includes the cast: Ben Kingsley, Sacha Baron Cohen, Asa Butterfield, and Chloe Grace Moretz. The title 'HUGO' is written in large, golden, 3D letters. Below the title, it says 'SANTA PAULA CINEMA SOCIETY' and 'FRIDAY DECEMBER 13, 2024'. At the bottom, the location and time are listed: 'Universalist Unitarian Church of Santa Paula • 740 E. Main Street • 7PM • Free! • Enter Side Door'.

**MARY A. LIVERMORE SOCIETY &
THE SOCIAL CONCERNS ACTION COMMITTEE
will not meet in December**

Universalist Unitarian Church
of Santa Paula
Spiritual Growth Center

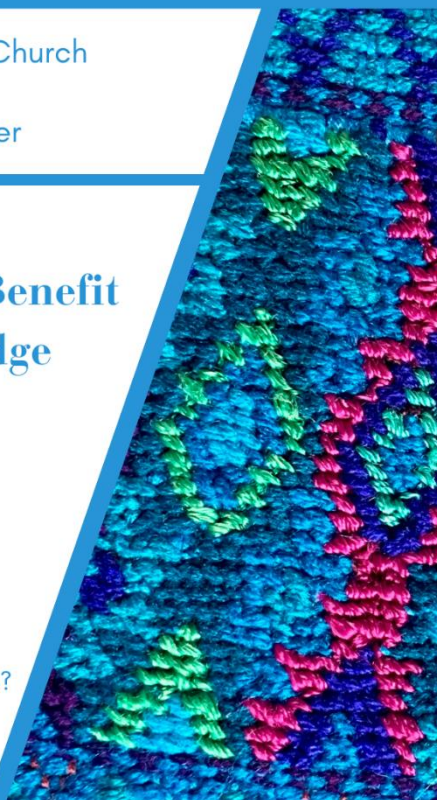
Sound Bath & Tipica Sale to Benefit Friendship Bridge

January 25, 2025
1:00-2:30 p.m.

740 E Main Street
Santa Paula, CA

\$30 suggested donation

Can't attend but want to help?
Make a donation online at
www.friendshipbridge.org



People and Doings

DAY	DATE	TIME	EVENT/MEETING	Zoom/In-person
Sunday	1-Dec	10:30am	Worship	
Tuesday	3-Dec	9:30 AM	Yoga	In-person
Wednesday	4-Dec	6:00 PM	Meditation	both
Thursday	5-Dec	10:30am	Yoga	In-person
Friday	6-Dec	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Sunday	8-Dec	10:30am	Worship	both
Tuesday	10-Dec	9:30am	Yoga	In-person
Tuesday	10-Dec	4:00pm	Sip & Check In	zoom
Tuesday	10-Dec	7:00pm	Gathering	both
Wednesday	11-Dec	6:00pm	Meditation	both
Thursday	12-Dec	9:30am	Yoga	In-person
Thursday	12-Dec	4:00 PM	Caring Committee Blue Christmas	In-person
Friday	13-Dec	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Friday	13-Dec	9:30 AM	Finance Committee meeting	zoom
Friday	13-Dec	7:00pm	SP Cinema Society	In-person
Sunday	15-Dec	all day	Jan Newsletter submission due	
Sunday	15-Dec	10:30am	Worship	both
Tuesday	17-Dec	9:30am	Yoga	In-person
Wednesday	18-Dec	6:00pm	Meditation	both
Thursday	19-Dec	9:30am	Yoga	In-person
Thursday	19-Dec	5:00pm	Worship Team meeting	zoom
Thursday	19-Dec	6:30pm	Board of Trustees meeting	In-person
Sunday	22-Dec	10:30 AM	Worship	both
Tuesday	24-Dec	5:00 PM	Christmas Eve service	both
Friday	26-Dec	7am - 1pm	Church Cleaning	
Sunday	29-Dec	10:30am	Worship	both

THE UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA PAULA

740 East Main Street
Santa Paula, CA 93060
Office: 805-525-4647



office@uucsp.org
www.uucsp.org
www.facebook.com/uucsp

Sunday Worship Services at 10:30 am

Rev. Maddie Sifantus, Minister Emerita
Rev. Dr. Betty Stapleford, Affiliate Minister
Krystal Johnson, Office Administrator
Vincent Sorisio, Church Musician

Board of Trustees:

Mitch Stone, President,
Ken Stock, Vice-President
Ann Hewitt, Secretary,
Jerry Gray, Treasurer
Margaret Wilaon, Member at Large

Tech Support Team:

Monika Murillo Giselle Larios

HOW TO CONNECT WITH UUCSP

**JOIN US SUNDAYS AT 10:30 AM IN PERSON,
ON ZOOM**

Read our newsletter which you can find at

<https://uucsp.org/newsletter/>

Contact our office if you want to be added to our
Friday email and our monthly newsletter email or
want to have a nametag for in person events.

Visit our website to see more about UUCSP and see
what's new at www.uucsp.org

Join our Facebook page at

www.facebook.com/uucsp

*Dated Material
Time Value*

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