

TRI-UU NEWSLETTER

This Month:

Birthdays

Ginger Drake	12/04
Michael Connifey	12/07
Lenore Mickelson	12/07
Mary Ann Donato	12/08
Tom Murphy	12/09
Constance Stanley	12/09
Karen Letourneau	12/14
Barbara Woodson	12/14
Brenda Nelson	12/16

Calendar

• Building & Grounds	12/2	10 am
• Finance	12/8	2 pm
• Worship	12/11	10 am
• Forum: "Anti-semitism"	12/11	4 pm
• Board Meeting	12/15	1 pm
• Christmas Event-		
• Steve Burt	12/18	2 pm
• Christmas Eve Service	12/24	4 pm
• UU&U Christmas Potluck	12/25	3 pm
• Tri-UU Book Club	12/29	1 pm

Continue inside for more information!

Celebrating Solar Power!

On a beautiful sunny Fall day, Tri-UU folks gathered to admire our 71 new roof solar panels and enjoy speakers and lunch. Four speakers gave remarks on the value of our new solar system both as the environmentally right thing to do and for our budgets. Reverend Kristina welcomed us and emphasized our responsibility as stewards of the earth. "We understand our responsibility to care for the Earth as a core Unitarian Universalist value. And for us, where better to live our values as faithfully as we can than in our church building. Our congregation's President, Cindy Grossman, spoke of Tri-County values. "Unitarian Universalist is about people. We bring people together and together we come up with great ideas that help us live our values. We have built something special here that will last for generations and more importantly we will model for future generations that sustainable options do exist."

Bruce Twiss, who worked most closely with Susan Elwell, gave us statistics like this one: The monthly payment of \$300.00 plus a \$35.00 meter fee for a 71-panel system is less than 50% of the building's historical power company's kilowatt-hour charges. Savings are immediate and will increase as power companies continue raising rates for conventional power." The passionate environmentalist who made

this happen, Susan Elwell, noted that Tri-UU's solar system alone will offset 374 metric tons of CO2 over the 25 year lifespan of our system! That is the equivalent of planting 624 trees. "Solar energy helps protect wildlife and natural habitats by reducing pollution and habitat destruction associated with fossil fuel extraction and use."

(Cont'd on p. 6 - Solar)



Deadline for submissions to December's TriUU Newsletter will be December 24.



TRI-COUNTY
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

CHOOSING HOPE

December's theme is "Choosing Hope."

Dec 7:

Rev Kristina Spaude

"Waiting for Advent."

The spiritual theme for December is "Choosing Hope." This week we'll consider hope through the lens of Advent, the Christian liturgical season of expectant waiting that leads to Christmas.

Dec 14:

Rev Kristina Spaude

"Choosing Hope."

In November, TriUU member Roger Cooper asked Rev. K to wrestle with the question of theodicy (ultimately the question of why G-d permits evil) in the context of Hurricane Melissa. She will answer this and other questions on the theme of "Choosing Hope" from the congregation during this service. Questions may be sent in advance for consideration and inclusion (to triuurev at gmail.com).

Dec 21:

Rev Kristina Spaude

"Choosing Hope on the Longest Night."

This morning we will reflect on choosing hope through an Earth-based lens, given the Winter Solstice and the Pagan holiday of Yule.

Dec 24: Service at 4 pm!

Rev. Kristina Spaude

"When Hope is Hard to Find."

Join us for this special service at 4 pm, when we celebrate Christmas

Eve with a mix of contemporary readings and traditional carols. Together we will wonder at the mysteries and miracles of how we find hope, that we will carry into our daily lives.

Dec 28:

Rev Dr Tracie Barrett

TBA

I Breathe

I breathe in the warmth of this light, its glow filling the spaces where fear and doubt reside.

I breathe out the tension I carry. I release what no longer serves me.

I breathe in the strength of our community, a sanctuary of diverse voices and shared purpose.

I breathe out the urge to go it alone. I embrace the power of togetherness.

I breathe in the courage to speak truth, even when it trembles on my lips.

I breathe out the silence that holds me back. I make space for honesty and justice.

I breathe in the hope of transformation, knowing we are here to build and to heal.

I breathe out despair, trusting that change is born in small acts of love.

As we light this chalice, may each breath remind us of the sacred rhythm of life, the pulse of creation, and the power we hold to shape the world around us.



JOIN US

Antisemitism: What is it? What is it not?

FORUM: Thursday, December 11 at 4 PM

Rabbi Dr. Erin Boxt, Temple Beth Shalom, Ocala

What is antisemitism? What is NOT antisemitism? Why is it important to discuss and learn about this today? How can we learn to be better humans?

Rabbi Erin Boxt was raised in Columbia, South Carolina, where he served as a religious school teacher and regularly active member of the youth group in his congregation, Tree of Life. It was there, in 1992, that Rabbi Boxt met Rabbi Gary Zola, then the Dean of Admissions at Hebrew Union College. Rabbi Boxt attended two conventions at HUC in Cincinnati, making connections to the city of Cincinnati and HUC that would last for almost 20 years!

Rabbi Boxt attended the University of Georgia, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Psychology in May 1999. In the summer of 2008, Rabbi Boxt, along with his wife, Batya and daughter, Carlie, moved to Jerusalem to begin the five-year HUC rabbinic student journey. While at HUC, Rabbi Boxt served as a student rabbi and rabbinic intern for several congregations in the United States.

After serving congregations in Marietta, Georgia and Knoxville, Tennessee, in July 2022, Rabbi Boxt, and his family – wife, Batya and three children, Carlie, Danika and Akivah - moved to Ocala, Florida to become the Rabbi for Temple Beth Shalom. He is excited about interfaith opportunities to present his views.

A potluck dinner will follow the forum. Call (352) 245-7944 for more info.



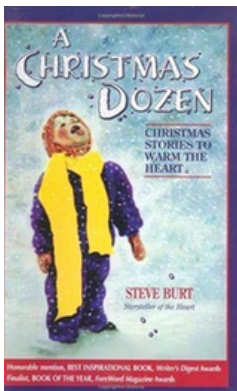
Tri-County Unitarian Universalists
7280 SE 135th St. Summerfield, FL

"Steve Burt's Christmas Stories and Cookies"

Thursday, December 18,
2:00 to 4:00PM

Our own Steve Burt will return for another public appearance as The Christmas Story Pastor. Bring a handkerchief and prepare to be moved by the power of his written and spoken words.

Admission is free.



Autographed books will be sold for \$20 each--while they last--with 100% of the sales price going to support Tri-UU!

Message from Reverend Kristina:



While October is probably generally my favorite month, I also love December. Even when it's hard, which it often is, largely because there's so much going on and as a religious professional, a little more than usual. As I was planning for the month's services, I felt like I was trying to push water uphill or nail jello

to a tree. Hopefully the wrestling will yield services you'll enjoy and find meaningful.

This month's spiritual theme is "Choosing Hope." I sometimes wonder, when there's a verb and noun construct, how I might approach the themes differently if the verbs were changed -- like instead of last month's "Nurturing Gratitude" and December's "Choosing Hope," what if it had been "Choosing Gratitude" and "Nurturing Hope"? I don't think I like that better, but it does make me wonder.

This month we'll be exploring the theme through the lenses of Advent and Winter Solstice and Yule, and you'll have an opportunity to ask me questions during one of our services. And Christmas Eve will again be at 4 pm this year. During that service, we will be taking a collection for the Minister's Discretionary Fund. (Please see the info about that in its own column).

As we approach the end of the year, I want to say thank you. Y'all are such a great congregation and wonderful people, doing such great things in a difficult time, caring for and supporting one another, and working hard to make this an island of sanctuary in a hurting and hard world. You are a blessing.

And as always, I look forward to seeing or hearing from you soon!

President's Message from Cindy Crossman

When Celebration Meets Tenderness: You Are Not Alone



The holiday season is in full swing, but as I get older, I recognize that often it requires us to hold a place for joy and sorrow at the same time.

For 26 years, I lived in Manhattan and my favorite thing to do after a long December day at work was to exit the subway early at Rockefeller Center. Instead of transferring to my next train to the Upper West Side, I would take an invigorating walk home.

I would briskly walk past the famous NYC Christmas tree, which was surrounded by ice skaters and a garden of angels lit up with soft white lights. I would stroll along Fifth Avenue looking at the decorated shop windows and the sound of holiday music on the sidewalk. Sometimes I would head to the Bryant Park Christmas Market and then go to Grand Central Station for a warm and satisfying Oyster Pan Roast at the the Grand Central Oyster Bar, a spectacular setting with Guastavino tiles and soaring arches! There used to be a time when I wasn't allergic to shellfish, and I could enjoy this hearty soup with whole oysters floating in the middle! One of the most delicious things I've ever tasted!

(Cont'd on p. 5)



President's Message...(cont'd from p.4)

Sometimes I would continue along Fifth Avenue taking in the scent of chestnuts roasting in metal carts on many corners. (Still one of my favorite city aromas!) I would walk past St. Patrick's Cathedral, to 59th St. where the world's largest Menorah was lit across from the Plaza Hotel. Walking into the Plaza I would take in the decorations, reminding myself of how many times my late husband Neal and I would go to the Palm Court for a Christmas dessert or a cocktail. (We never really had the money for a full meal, but this holiday treat was something that we truly looked forward to.)

I still enjoyed those holiday walks even after I lost my husband to a 10 year illness. But there was something bittersweet about them too.

When I moved to Florida, I would appreciate the beautiful decorations in each of our Town Squares, but somehow it never really seemed like the holidays to me. The hardest part was learning not to compare what I did in NYC to what I do here.

We sometimes need to make new traditions. I've learned that there is something really special about going for a swim in a heated pool on Christmas Eve. I may not go to the Plaza, but Bonefish has a wonderful Winter White Cosmo that is worth a special trip. Once my friends and I actually re-created it for a Hygge party that we had at our house.

The holidays can be a season of consumerism and overwhelm, but as I get older, I learn that I have the agency to make it into something that suits me better. It is a wonderful time to write an old friend a long letter, to meet a newer friend for a holiday coffee and deep conversation. Rich and I often settle in for a Christmas movie and a hot chocolate or a Peppermint Bark Cool Winter Herb Tea (My new low calorie favorite!)

Throughout this newsletter, you will find many ways to connect with our congregation through the holiday season. I'm really looking forward to Steve Burt's Christmas Stories on December 18. (I hear there will be Christmas cookies afterwards!) Nancy Garrison and her husband are graciously opening their lovely home for a Christmas Day potluck dinner. As always, we will be filling our wagon weekly to take your offerings to the Community of Gratitude Food Bank. (Perhaps you can toss in a little extra something to make someone's holiday brighter?) We also have our Giving Trees in the Lobby where you can select a local child and help brighten their holidays with a special present.

Most of all, let's remember to be present for one another. If you're struggling this season, there are many people in our beloved community who are willing to provide comfort and camaraderie. Be kind to yourself, and let's go gently into this season with open hearts and open hands.



TRI-UU IN ACTION

Solar...(cont'd from p.1)

Ending her remarks, Reverend Kristina said, “We are so grateful that Susan Elwell found us and learned of our interest in going solar — an area she is an expert in! Thank you, Susan, for helping us achieve this dream.”

For a closer look at how the system works, a colorful diagram is in a frame near the kitchen.



Christmas Eve's service will be at 4 pm again this year.



When Hope is Hard to Find



Welcome to Unitarian Universalism!

Reverend Kristina

We are a covenantal faith. We tend to favor "deeds not creeds," and being in relationship and traveling on our spiritual journeys together over right or specific beliefs. This is because while once upon a time we were Christian denominations (Unitarian and Universalist), we are now a pluralistic faith — meaning that we are made up of people who come from and may still identify with other religions. UUs often have what I refer to as "hyphenated identities" — Christian UUs, Jewish UUs, Pagan UUs, and so on, although it is also perfectly wonderful to identify "just" as Unitarian Universalist.

This means that our services and practices don't follow any one particular tradition's holy book, leader, teachings, or anything else. We draw from many sources of wisdom, including our own pews with our own members. We deeply value personal experiences as a source of spirituality in our living tradition.

So given all of that, what keeps us together? Covenant. Covenant is the cornerstone of our faith and is what binds us as a people of faith together. Covenants remind us that we are all equal and that we need each other. They are also a way for us to practice creating the beloved community.

A covenant is an agreement, a commitment, and an aspiration to be together. To journey together as we explore our spiritualities. To support, celebrate, and challenge one another as we go, but ultimately committing to that being in relationship. We know we're going to mess up — that is what it is to be human — but unlike a contract, a covenant asks us to find a way back to each other, to restore right relationship between us, and to begin anew.

One of the covenants that gets used a lot is the Blake covenant, written by James Vila Blake and published in 1894 (reading #473 in the hymnal): Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another. I've been reciting this covenant for 19 years, as it was used regularly in my home congregation.

TriUU has a behavioral covenant — an agreement about how we will be together, including our speech and actions (the "Covenant of Right Relations," for those who have attended the Nu to UU recently) — but no general covenant at this time.

Our faith is a web of covenants. Congregants covenant with one another, they covenant with their minister(s) and/or other religious professionals and other staff, they covenant with the UUA, ministers covenant with one another... We are all bound in covenantal relationships throughout our faith.

More info from the UUA can be found here:

<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/congregational-covenants> among other sources.



*Unitarian
Universalism*



KNOW TRI-UU

MINISTER'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

December Collection



On Christmas Eve, we take a collection to support the Minister's Discretionary Fund. We recognize that not everyone is able to attend, so please know that donations are welcome throughout the month (and year!) by making a note on a check or envelope during worship, sending a check by mail, or by making a note when using a credit card on our website.

This year, Rev. Kristina has used the funds in this account to support members of the congregation with transportation needs (gas money), housing (rent), utilities, and other related living expenses (like groceries). This has been due to underemployment, the escalating cost of living, and/or other factors. She has distributed about \$2000 this year.

Your generosity keeps everyone in this beloved community safe, fed, and cared for, and is deeply appreciated. When we are often left wondering what we can do in these hard times, the support for those in this congregation in need makes all the difference.

Holiday Gathering

December 25

3:00 - 7:00

Home of Nancy and Ken Garrison
(Village of Fenney)

There will be a spiral sliced ham.

Side dishes: salads, desserts and plant-based dishes are welcome.

RSVP to Nancy, or sign up on the clip board behind the AV station at Tri-UU.



"Nu to UU" Class -
January 24, 2026, 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Are you curious about Unitarian Universalism or interested in learning more about Tri-County Unitarian Universalists? Join Rev. Kristina and me for our "Nu to UU" class, where we'll explore the values and beliefs of Unitarian Universalism and introduce you to our local Congregation. This is a great opportunity for newcomers or for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding.

Date: Saturday, January 24, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Location: Tri-County Unitarian Universalists

We hope to see you there! For more information or to RSVP, please sign up in our sanctuary or contact Helene Kirschbaum at helenekirschbaum@gmail.com

Tri-UU Member Spotlight Get to Know Your Fellows!

Joyce Mills has been a member of Tri-County Unitarian Universalists since 1987, when we were a congregation of just twenty-four meeting in Silver Springs Shores. From there to rented spaces in Belleview and the Elks Lodge, she was happy our increased membership had allowed us to erect our own building and hire a minister. Though she sometimes misses the intimacy of our smaller days, she is grateful for all the talent, intelligence and creativity in our expanded fellowship. She loves to hear the stories of each person's life journey and appreciates learning to be aware of the importance of inclusiveness of each person's differences.



Joyce was born and reared in Corning, New York, home to the famous glass factory – a building which her father worked on. She attended the State University of New York at Geneseo, where she was active in their theater program. She met many famous personalities there, including French mime Marcel Marceau, actress Joan Blondell, the science fiction writer Isaac Asimov, and the novelist, poet and essayist James Baldwin. After graduating, Joyce worked for more than fifty years as a speech and language pathologist, a career which took her to South Carolina, Georgia, Miami and finally to Ocala, Florida. She had the pleasure to work with diverse populations of students and says she has always known “kids are kids,” no matter their background or abilities.

One of ten siblings, Joyce has enjoyed a lifetime of having a large, extended family. As one of the eldest, she grew up naturally learning how to be a helper. She now lives with three of her great-granddaughters and has just welcomed her first great-great-granddaughter, born November 17! Sadly, Joyce lost her older sister Christine Schooner in October. Christine's home in St. Petersburg, Florida was the center of all the large family gatherings for many years, and she will be keenly missed this Christmas.

Besides her broad sweep of volunteer activities for Tri-UU, Joyce enjoys watercolor painting, live theater and attending concerts by the Ocala Symphony Orchestra. She wants to learn something new every day. She says her great-granddaughters keep her abreast of the latest developments in technology and have recently convinced her to try her first Jimmy Dean sausage biscuit, with which one of them has an obsession.

Please next time you see Joyce, thank her for her years of service bringing us to where we are today as a fellowship, and wish her healing, peace and joy this holiday season.

Amanda McWilliams
November 2025

"Lake in the Forest Resort" Camping Trip

Recently 16 Tri UU members spent a few days on a camping trip at Lake in the Forest Resort, located in Ocklawaha on Half Moon Lake. RV and tent camping sites were available and also rustic cabins. The 35-acre resort borders the Ocala National Forest.

Deb Anderson, a friend of Tri-UU, hosted this event (along with Jan and her crew). Among the many activities scheduled were glass fusing and etching, transforming a small block of rosewood on a lathe into a beautiful pen. Quoting Bob and Judy, "It looked like a work of art". Several of us also took part in kayaking on Half Moon Lake, sky gazing, and nightly bonfires where we roasted hot dogs and marshmallows.

To quote Bob and Judy Kemp " We all enjoyed the time spent with our friends from Tri-UU who we became better acquainted with over coffee in the mornings and the fireside chats in the evening. It was definitely a community building experience that brought us all closer together."

Thank you to Deb for a very peaceful and relaxing time and for graciously donating the fees collected to Tri-UU.

Brenda Nelson



Erin Woodsome,
Deb Anderson
enjoying the view on
the dock at Half
Moon Lake

Sally Bethart and
Liz Perdue getting
ready to kayak
around Half Moon
Lake



TRI-UU IN ACTION

Tri-UU Pride 2025!



Join Us for Richer Music and Singing!

The Choir and our Music Director, Tom Zitkovic, would like to invite YOU to join us in the choir. We practice on Wednesdays from 4:00PM-5:30PM in the TRIUU Sanctuary. Your presence and voice are needed for a richer sound.

Also, if YOU have directed a choir or singing group before and want to help with the singing, volunteer to lead the hymn singing with a microphone during the Sunday Service and/or attend choir practice and lead the choir, volunteer to help us. Tom finds it challenging to play the accompaniment and lead the choir to perform its music at the same time.

If you play an instrument, sing with a group and want to perform with the choir, or perform a solo with accompaniment or without, we need YOU to enrich our music program.

Hymnbooks. If you read music and want to see the notes so you can sing the hymns better, hymnals are on a metal rack on the left side of the sanctuary as you enter. The Order of Service you are given at the door lists the hymn numbers we will sing. We have two hymnbooks. The older dark gray book: "Singing the Living Tradition" Numbers 1 to 415.

The newer teal book: "Singing the Journey" Numbers 1000 to 1074.

Contact Nancy Solberg or Tom Zitkovic to volunteer or if you have any questions.



Grief Support Group

Grief hits us in many ways. It could be from losing a loved one, a pet, or a change in your living situation. It could be from losing who you used to be. It can even be grief over what could or should have been, but wasn't.

TriUU will be starting a peer Grief Support Group in January. This is not intended to replace any form of therapy, but as an opportunity for mutual sharing and encouragement. It will be coordinated by Lenore Mickelson and Sally Primc, and facilitated by the Rev. Trish Schwartzberg, with assistance from the Rev. Kristina, if needed.

If you are interested in this group or have questions, please contact Lenore or Sally. There will be sign-up sheets in the sanctuary, with a place to indicate days of the week, times you would be able to attend, and frequency of getting together. The group will meet at the TriUU Building (this will be in person only, no Zoom).



GREAT DECISIONS

Great Decisions will begin on January 20, 2026, with Dr. Mark Welton moderating our class.

The Foreign Affairs Association offered a 20% reduction on the price of books purchased during the week of October 20, 2025. The board authorized the purchase of 15 of the books. Gretchen has ordered them, and they will arrive in early January.

A sign-up sheet will be in the back of the Chalice Room. Those first 15 books purchased will be \$30 each. If you purchase your book later, you will be responsible for ordering your own book.

Classes will be held on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm until around 2:15pm. We will skip the week of February 3, due to the Rummage Sale. The last class is March 13.

Topics are timely and include such discussions as Trump Tariffs and the future of the World Economy, U.S. - China Relations, Ukraine and the Future of European Security, for example. Questions?

Contact Gretchen Lewis



Tri-UU Annual Rummage Sale February 5, 6, 7.

Mark your calendars for the return of this annual event.
Start putting aside sellable items such as:

- Household items
- Decorative items
- Small appliances
- Games
- Jewelry
- Accessories
- Purses and bags
- Sport items
- Books
- Children's toys
- Dishware and tableware
- Small furniture
- Garden items

Donations may be brought to the building Feb. 2, 3, 4.
Look for more details and ways to help in the coming weeks.

Joyce Mills and Andrea Coburn

