

Unitarian Universalist Society
2355 Oakdale Road
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www.uusic.org



8 Principles of Unitarian Universalism

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part
8. Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions

The UUS News

January 2024 Newsletter

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From Your Minister

Rev. Diana

Dear Ones,

Soon we will be beginning a new year! This annual time of change carries so many meanings, which have built up over the years. Many of us find ourselves wondering what the new year will bring, often with a complex mix of emotions.

One of the things I'm excited about engaging with you on from January – June is discussing Unitarian Universalism's proposed new purposes, values, principles, and sources. This is foundational work for all Unitarian Universalists and our congregations. It asks us to reflect on what Unitarian Universalism means in the world today and what we are called to do.

As many of you know, the last year and a half we've been engaging with this process first by discussing and adopting the 8th Principle, which was one way we gave input to the national process. Then, after the proposed revisions for Article II of the UUA Bylaws, which contains our purposes, values, principles, and sources language, was released in January 2023, we discussed the process and draft, and gave input on it at the national General Assembly in June 2023.

And now, we're coming to a crucial new stage! The Unitarian Universalist Association, our national body, has released the final proposed revisions to Article II of the UUA Bylaws. This language is what Unitarian Universalists around the country will be discussing and taking a final vote on during our national General Assembly in June 2024. If the proposed language is adopted, these will become some of the ways we discuss Unitarian Universalism. What's more, they will help guide us in our future work. ([read about the process](#))

This is part of a process that Unitarian Universalists go through every 15 years as part of discerning how we understand our living religious tradition nowadays, as well as how we need to talk about who we are and what we are called to be and do. This time around the Article II Study Commission met with thousands of UUs in groups and as individuals, collected feedback on surveys, and held many discussions. To develop the first draft, they engaged in 45 feedback sessions with 4,611 participants, videos reached 7,765 viewers, and their 29 surveys generated 10,925 responses. And then they incorporated the amendments made at General Assembly in June 2023.

There are many important parts to the [proposed revisions to Article II](#). This winter and spring we'll be discussing them as a congregation in worship services and covenant groups, with a special focus on the proposed values:

- Love – January 2024
- Justice – February 2024
- Equity – February 2024
- Transformation – March 2024
- Interdependence – April 2024
- Pluralism – May 2024
- Generosity – October 2023

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I'm looking forward to engaging with you in these discussions as we celebrate what Unitarian Universalism means in our lives and community, and discern how we talk about this.

May this transition into the new year bring you joy, love, and renewal.

Love and Blessings,
Rev. Diana

Upcoming Services

January 2024 Sunday Services

January 7th: Marking Change

Join us as we mark the beginning of the year with a simple service of readings and ritual. We will be letting go of our regrets by burning or dissolving special paper. Worship Associates Marsha Cheyney and Quanda Hood will be leading this service.

January 14th: Liberating Love

Join us as we celebrate resilience, embodiment, and the many ways we are and can resist fascisms and extremism. We'll also begin exploring one of the open questions that the Board of Trustees is discussing with the congregation this year. After the worship service, the Board of Trustees will be leading open questions discussions about UUS's role in this. Rev. Diana Smith preaching.

January 21st: The Liberating Power of Laughter

Today for our all ages worship service we'll be laughing together and celebrating how we can savour the good things in life. After the worship service, we will have All Ages religious education. Each month on the 3rd Sunday, after our all ages worship service, there are diverse activities to choose from that will engage participants in the theme for the month. Rev. Diana Smith preaching.

January 28th: TBA

Join us for a service led by Rev. Diana Smith and Nic Kaplan, DLRE. Please watch for more information in upcoming updates and emails.

*Find more information on our Sunday Services on our website: www.uusic.org/services
Join us on YouTube Livestream: www.youtube.com/@UUS_IC*

January Offering

South District Neighborhood Association

The South District Neighborhood Association of Iowa City, a non-profit organization, sponsors the Diversity Market, among other community events. The market, held in the Pepperwood Plaza during the summer months, empowers minority entrepreneurs, including women, youth and those in the Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, LGBTQ+, refugee, immigrant and returning citizen communities.

Cash and check donations are collected during the Sunday service offering. Checks should be made out to UUS and have "SDNA" on the memo line. You can also donate online at <https://bit.ly/UUSPartner>, text "GivetoUUSIC Partner" to 73256, or mail a check to the UUS office.

UUS Offices Closed December 25-January 1

The UUS office will be closed and staff will mostly be unavailable for the week between Christmas and New Years. There will be no weekly email or congregational programming, although individual UUS groups and teams may still meet as scheduled. The staff on-call list is now available. They will be able to assist you or get in touch with the appropriate staff or volunteer team.

- December 25 - 26: [Rev. Diana Smith](#)
- December 27 - 28: [Emma Barnum](#)
- December 29: [Emily Pritchard](#)
- December 30 - 31: [Nic Kaplan](#)
- January 1: [Emma Barnum](#)

You will also be able to contact the pastoral care team at pastoralcare@uus.org.

Learning Space Update

Nic Kaplan, DLRE, and Rev. Diana Smith

The last six months have been a whirlwind. The hearts of trans families and their allies were broken again and again as anti-trans legislation was signed in our state and across the country. And the warmth and pride we felt in our congregation grew as you all lent your voices and your finances to our Learning Space campaign. You said these children deserve a safe space to learn and grow.

So, where are we now? What's happening with the Learning Space?

Over the course of the spring and summer, as we got the word out about the Learning Space, we felt confident that we would be serving more than a dozen students when school began in August. Based on meetings, conversations with families, emails full of questions and support, we even thought we'd have as many as 20 students joining us in August.

Thanks to the funding we received through our Faithify campaign, we were able to train volunteers in Youth Mental Health First Aid, Trans Inclusion in Congregations, and other needed skills. We were also able to do the administrative, advertising, and safety work needed to open the Learning Space.

When the first day of school came, we were surprised that our numbers were less than half of what we anticipated, with six students registered with the Learning Space. It emerged that many students wanted to begin the school year in public schools.

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(Learning Space update, continued from page 4)

Families shared that having the Learning Space as a backup if things didn't work was, and continues to be, an enormous relief. With only three students actively attending the Learning Space, in late September, Rev. Diana Smith and Nic Kaplan met with the families to discuss their needs and how we could best support them despite the low enrollment and participation.

The families, having nothing but good things to say about UUS and the program, volunteered to reduce the operating days of the Learning Space down to only Mondays and Wednesdays in an effort to reduce the strain on our small number of volunteers. That way, the students would still be able to join together in a space that welcomed all of who they each are and UUS would be able to keep providing this option to other families in our community.

As the fall has progressed, students are enjoying learning, building community, and receiving support from caring adults in the Learning Space. Emily Pritchard, UUS's music director, also regularly spends time with the students in the Learning Space.

Rev. Diana and Nic continue to receive feedback from families in the community who "are so relieved that [the Learning Space] is an option." There have also continued to be inquiries from families about joining the Learning Space, so we are grateful that we can continue to make this joyful, safe space available.

We are hoping to bring more volunteers on for the winter and spring, so please contact Anne Schons or Winnie Ganshaw if you are interested and please reach out to Nic Kaplan or Rev. Diana Smith if you have questions about the Learning Space. Thank you, once again, for your support!

From Your Volunteer Rentals Coordinator

Sue Kann

How Much Does it Cost to Rent at UUS?

There are many factors which go into determining the cost of a rental. After a discussion with the prospective renter about what they are envisioning, we determine their cost. By far, our most popular rental space is the Fellowship Hall with the kitchen available for catered food. We distinguish between light use and heavy use of the Fellowship Hall. If the group is 100 people or less and only uses the kitchen for catered food which is served buffet style, we label this light use. If the group is 100-250 people, is planning a sit down dinner served by a caterer and is serving alcohol, we call this heavy use.

Light use of the Fellowship Hall rents for \$200 for the first 3 hours and \$50 for each additional hour. For heavy use the rent is \$400 for the first 3 hours and \$100 for each additional hour. The rent includes use of our audio visual equipment. There is an additional charge of \$250 if the event is on a Saturday night so that we can clean up and be ready for our service on Sunday morning.

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(Rentals update, continued from page 5)

The Sanctuary is rented less often than the Fellowship Hall. Light and heavy use is determined by the number of guests involved. It rents for the same prices as the Fellowship Hall. The conference room rents for \$120 for the first 3 hours and \$30 for each additional hour. RE rooms are available for rent also at slightly lower costs. The most common use of the RE rooms is as a dressing room for a performance. The nursery is a real deal at \$50 per event.

Occasionally renters would like to cook their food in our kitchen. The kitchen rents for \$75 for the first 3 hours and \$15 for each additional hour. The kitchen can also be rented as a stand alone catering or commercial prep kitchen (without an event taking place) for \$20 per hour.

These are the rates for the public. Non-profit groups receive a 50% discount and UUS members receive a 75% discount. UUS members in good standing are welcome to rent for personal uses such as birthday, graduation and retirement parties. Life Celebrations are free for UUS members.

Weddings are a whole different animal. Weddings involve the use of many parts of the building over several days for set up, rehearsal, the ceremony and the reception. I will discuss the pricing for weddings in my next post.

Contact Sue Kann at rentals@uusic.org to learn more about renting the UUS facility for your event!

From Your Mission and Vision Team

Pastoral care is an essential aspect of congregational life. In some churches PC is carried out by the minister and members invited by the minister to serve as lay pastoral care associates. In some congregations, including ours, pastoral care is 'shared ministry' in which we minister to each other, sometimes day to day, at other times upon seeing each other week to week on Sundays.

Rev. Diana is the person to respond in circumstances of serious illness, surgery, death or some other crisis. Rev. Diana is supported by a team of UUS members designated as pastoral care associates. Upon requests they reach out to others. Another aspect of pastoral care that often goes unnoticed are the brief yet significant conversations between Rev. Diana and others as well as between UUS members with each other before or after a committee meeting, or during the social hour after worship.

During February the UUS Mission and Vision Team will offer opportunities for UUS members to share their experience of pastoral care, specifically during Roundtable Conversations after worship on Feb. 18. We encourage you to attend. Questions? Contact Winnie Ganshaw at wganshaw52@gmail.com.

Announcements

- **Compassionate Connection:**
Beginning in January, for those who would like to share their joys or sorrows in conversation in a smaller venue, the Pastoral Care Associates will be leading a Compassionate Connection circle in the Walnut Room immediately after worship services twice a month. These circles, which happen on 2nd and 4th Sundays, are opportunities to share with and support each other in our lives' journeys.
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Upcoming Events

Men's Sunday Social, January 7th

UUS adult men are invited to gather together the first Sunday of most months from 6 to 8 pm to socialize in a casual setting. Members and Friends are welcome. We define "man" as any adult who identifies as a man. Currently, our monthly gatherings take place at 2Dogs Pub (1705 First Avenue, Iowa City). Send questions to Russ Lenth and Phil Beck at menssundaysocial@uusic.org.

Rev. Diana Community Office Hours, January 10th

Rev. Diana will be at Press Coffee in Iowa City for members and friends to stop by and chat about whatever's on your heart or mind. You don't need to have an appointment. She hopes you'll stop by to say "Hi!"

Vespers, January 10th

Join us for a meditative evening service with singing or music, quiet reflection, and other spiritual practices.

Free Lunch Program, January 12th

The cornerstone of the Free Lunch Program is, "an open door, a full plate and no questions asked." A hot meal is served six days a week at 1105 S. Gilbert Court, Iowa City. Since 1986, UUS has provided the Free Lunch meal on the second Friday of every month to about 110 guests. This year we have returned from the pandemic limitations by creating the main meal using the UUS kitchen by our volunteer chefs under the guidance of Vicki Siefers. This change has reduced the costs of our offerings in the face of higher costs.

If you would like more information about how you can contribute to Free Lunch, please contact Bob Littlehale (freelunch@uusic.org or 419-297-7812)

Compassionate Connection, January 14th

For those who would like to share their joys or sorrows in conversation in a smaller venue after worship services, the Pastoral Care Associates lead a Compassionate Connection circle immediately after worship services on 2nd and 4th Sundays. These circles are opportunities to share with and support each other in our lives' journeys.

UUS Board Meeting, January 17th

The UUS Board of Trustees holds a meeting, open to all members, each month at 7 pm on the third Wednesday. Look for an agenda in the weekly email or on the website before the meeting. ([Link to Join](#), Meeting ID 891 3256 0297, password 228948, or join by phone).

UUS Men's Sharing Circle, January 21st

All adult UUS members and friends who identify as male are invited to join us to our monthly sharing circle. You are invited to share your joys and sorrows, practice deep listening, and offer support when asked for, all in a confidential environment. We will meet in the Hickory & Oak Rooms at UUS on the third Sunday of each month from 6-8 pm. For questions, contact Ron Pile and Niklaus Jakob at menssharingcircle@uusic.org.

Rev. Diana Community Office Hours, January 24th

Rev. Diana will be in the community for members and friends to stop by and chat about whatever's on your heart or mind. You don't need to have an appointment. She hopes you'll stop by to say "Hi!"

Sound Bath Meditation, January 24th

Join Tina McCoy in the Fellowship Hall for a mini-retreat from the distractions and busy-ness of life in an immersive sound meditative bath. The unique sound experience offers a peaceful respite to enjoy feelings of relaxation and serenity. This is your time to reconnect with heart and spirit, all supported by soothing vibrations and sounds from singing bowls, gongs, chimes, and other instruments.

We will begin at 6:30, please plan to arrive 10 minutes early to create your comfort space for the session. Bring props (e.g., yoga mat, blanket, etc.) to support and deepen your comfort. This is a free-will offering event.

Faithful Grounding, January 25th

Join the Unitarian Universalist Association Side with Love Fun & Spiritual Nourishment Squad for an hour of spiritual sustenance and

grounding with others organizing on the side of love. Show up as you are, with whatever is in your heart, and have your camera on or off as you need.

Come drink in the music, meditation, play, and prayer. We end with a Connection Cafe for those who wish to talk together. This gathering happens monthly on the 4th Thursday of the month at 6:30 CT. Register here: [January 25](#).

Full Moon Conspiracy, January 26th

Come celebrate the full moon! We gather as individuals in a community, each of us unique, combining into a beautiful harmony. We will collaboratively create a ritual of celebration and magic. Gathering will be outside on the UUS patio when weather permits and include a fire if participants desire. When weather is bad we'll be in the Fellowship Hall.

Please bring your unique spirit, altar items, a drum if you have one, snacks and/or drinks if you like, water bottle, locally sourced firewood if you would like a fire. Altar items, a kit of ritual supplies, and activities for ritual creation will be available for use.

People of all ages, spiritual paths, and physical abilities are welcome at this gathering. This gathering is hosted by the UU Pagans (cuups@uusic.org).

Long Term Stewardship Webinar, January 30th

Long Term Stewardship Webinar with Mark Ewert. Please look for more details in coming announcements!

***Find our full list of January Events at
www.uusic.org/upcoming-events.***

UUS Committee and Team Reports

BUDDHIST SANGHA

The UUSIC Buddhist Sangha will conclude 2023 with a meeting on Dec 18. The group will resume their Monday eve meetings on ZOOM on Jan 8, with four meetings in Jan 2024. Login ID and password are on the monthly calendar.

COVENANT GROUPS

In our December gatherings, group members contemplated “the gift of mystery.” The first mystery is, what does that mean? It doesn’t necessarily mean looking for an answer of any kind. As December’s “Soul Matters” puts it, we tend to regard “the unexplainable [as] simply a lock to be picked, a code to be cracked, a puzzle to be figured out. But what if mystery isn’t just something to solve? What if it’s also something to be listened to?”

Perhaps mystery is less something we should chase after than something we let find us. We’ve probably all experienced a moment of insight into ourselves or the world, a sudden feeling of joy at being alive, a glimpse of the spirit that permeates all existence. Moments like those make us feel that we’re part of something greater than ourselves. What that greater something is—that’s the mystery. But keeping ourselves open to it, to the unknown, the “what ifs,” might be the best way we have of transforming our lives.

The covenant group program offers its members the opportunity to share their views and deepen their understanding of a wide range of issues while creating closer ties with other UUs.

You can learn more about the program and how to join a group by contacting Jan Locher (354- 6260, locherj@mchsi.com).

FREE LUNCH PROGRAM

The weather was spring-like on Friday, December 8th. The ICUUS chefs, under the supervision of Vicki Siefers and Frank Waldensee, created a gourmet meal of chicken divan donated by Diana Miller and Carmen Griggs. The chicken divan was enjoyed by 128 guests with our popular green veggie and fruit salads. The meal and sides were completely gone and savored with a variety of cookies, apple juice, and other drinks by the guests. There were no leftovers, and it was a wonderful day.

Our efforts have been well-coordinated by Frank Waldensee's new "sign up" approach using a Google app for volunteers. It has been successful and will probably be tweaked a bit for January 12th and the new year coming.

It should be noted that our UUS FLP has been doing its own cooking using our UUS kitchen and the 1105 facility for the main meal this calendar year. This is a wonderful post-Covid success both in economy and quality. We hope the congregation knows what a significant job your friends, the volunteers, have accomplished this year. We proudly serve both the UUS and the community.

We are grateful for your support and welcome that help in the coming year. To learn more about the Free Lunch Program, email Bob Littlehale at freelunch@uusic.org.

GREEN SANCTUARY

Cranking up our Composting! Since moving to its new location, UUSIC composting has been provided by committed Iowa City residents who have been hauling compostables home to put in their own household bins. A big thanks to Sally Hartman, Deb Schoelerman, Virginia Melroy, and Sue Kahn for doing this! The good news is that beginning in January, composting services will be provided by Ecocare Supply, a local specialist in commercial composting. Green Sanctuary member Bonnie Penno and Volunteer Rental coordinator Sue Kahn set up the contract with Ecocare, and will both be working on training renters, volunteers, friends, and members on how to compost to minimize contamination. Keep an eye out for the green bins!

Cooking Electric! Join Green Sanctuary on Sunday January 21 for an All Ages RE event on Cooking Electric. Adults can learn how to use induction cooktops and hot pots to make delicious meals. Plus, kids and adults can learn how to use a knife safely to cut up fruit to make a snack. Why try electric? Gas ranges leak methane even when they are not being used. Methane has 25 times the heat trapping potential of carbon dioxide, so they are a potent, if passive, contributor to global warming. When gas ranges are being used, they produce nitrogen dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter in amounts that can easily exceed indoor air quality standards. Getting a new electric range may not be an option for everyone, but there are countertop alternatives that might help reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Charting a New Course! Thanks to all who have filled out Green Sanctuary's Climate Justice Survey. We have had almost 100 responses. The survey is part of our reaccreditation as a UU Green Sanctuary Congregation. We will use the results to guide which activities and projects to take on over the next few years. Respondents indicated that they wanted to learn more about all seven areas, but Resiliency, Water Protection, and Endangered Species came out on top.

We are Better Together! Change can happen when we work as individuals but working together can result in even bigger changes. Green Sanctuary is the space in our congregation where we work together to protect our shared planet. To learn more, email Sally Hartman at sallyhartman@hotmail.com or Jan Weaver at jan.weaver57@gmail.com. Our next meeting is Wednesday, January 10 at 7 pm. Join us on Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88132264216>. Meeting ID: 881 3226 4216. Passcode 533092. On the agenda: climate justice survey, a resiliency center, composting update, future programs.

PRISON MINISTRY

UUS's Prison Ministry Team (PMT) "endeavors to become informed advocates for justice and build relationships to decrease isolation of those confined in the Iowa Justice System." In November, the Team sent members to two events sponsored by other organizations supporting the incarcerated. First, about 15 people answered our call for volunteers to participate in Inside Out's Trivia Night fundraiser, which took place in the UUS Fellowship Hall on November 6. That was enough for three tables.

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(Prison Ministry update, continued from page 10)

We didn't win but were proud to do our part for a group that does incredibly valuable work helping the formerly incarcerated and their families adjust to life after prison. Then at the end of the month, Team members and other volunteers attended an event called Artlinks, sponsored by the Prison Learning Initiative at Coe College. We viewed a virtual exhibit of artwork by individuals incarcerated in institutions around the country and were given the opportunity to write them and tell them what we thought of their art. The creativity on display was amazing, and truly inspiring.

Artlinks fit especially well with our own mission because one of the main ways we're active is through our Pen Pal program. Members regularly correspond with incarcerated individuals either by "snail mail" or through the Iowa Department of Corrections' e-mail system, CorrLinks. We are always looking for volunteers to write to inmates. Incarcerated persons tell us over and over how important it is for them to hear from those of us outside. Just knowing that there are caring people who haven't forgotten them and are willing to spend time writing to them is a deeply meaningful, positive experience for them. And it is very rewarding for volunteers, too. We can set you up with contacts, instructions for using CorrLinks and postal mail, and a sample introductory letter to use or modify as you see fit. If you think you might be interested, please email prisonministry@uusic.org and one of us will get back to you.

The UUA has a prison ministry through the Church of the Larger Fellowship, the Worthy Now Prison Ministry Network. They're also looking for people to become pen pals to

incarcerated individuals nationwide. For more information, go to worthynow.org.

The UUS Prison Ministry Team meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the UUS Conference Room. You are welcome to join us at our next meeting on January 2, 2024, either in person or via Zoom (Meeting ID: 848 0842 4430; Passcode: 193553).

SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM

1. The **MidAmerica Regional (UUA)** team would like to call your attention to Adrienne Maree Brown's op-ed about how to work together when fighting oppression. This article honors that we fight for the people and things we love, and that this social justice work calls for doing self-examination. Capturing the zeitgeist of our political period, noting the proliferation of diversions and propaganda since 2016, the author adrienne maree brown appeals to readers to pause, to listen, and to respect "the power of our attention" by resolutely investing care and time into building community, even when our feelings are big and difficult to process. Go to:

<https://leadermorphosis.co/pages/episodes/adrienne-maree-brown-on-emergent-strategy-and-being-in-right-relationship-with-change?>

2. From the **Interfaith Alliance of Iowa**. "Faith & Racial Justice: The Intersection of Public Education and Racism" is a study guide for faith communities to dive deeper into the context and factors that connect racism and public education — looking through the lens of their faith or beliefs to understand the intersection of faith, public education, and racism. Find info about it here.

<https://www.interfaithallianceiowa.org/education-initiatives/faith-racial-justice-the-intersection-of-public-education-and-racism>.

UU MYSTICS

UUMystics gather on 1st Wed each month at 7pm in the conference room or with Zoom.

The Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition draws from many sources, including mystical experience, referring to it in our first Source as the “direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.”

As one group member said recently: “I feel that the group is very important as an activity deeply relevant to our UU principles, especially to spiritual inclusiveness and increasing awareness and support for those members whose spiritual identities and experiences emerge from a special sensitivity to transcendent mysteries.”

We are a self-creating community with shared leadership. As with most groups who enjoy

personal sharing, we will follow the covenant we created together to guide our gatherings.

Our Mystics group has currently chosen to engage together in the exploration and experiences relating to: What happens when we die? (touches on reincarnation & past lives, Near Death Experiences, contacts with the deceased, channeling, etc.) Please join us if this is of interest to you, and stay tuned for notices of future topics.

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm at UUS in the conference room and on Zoom.

Our gatherings are also open to anyone from the public who is referred by a group member and agrees to comply with our mutual covenant. Please contact (miriam.kashia@gmail.com) if you have any questions or wish to be added to our mailing list. Please put “UUMystics” in the subject line.