

The Torch

DECEMBER 19, 2016

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Upcoming Services

December 18th

9 am: **"Come All Ye Faithful"** - a homily by Rev. Tom Goldsmith

11 am: **Christmas Pageant** - Religious Education

Jazz Vespers (7:30 pm)

Christmas Kool

December 24th (Services at 5:30 and 7 pm)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Music, words, candles, and hope

December 25th (One service only at 11:00 am)

"Extraordinary"

-Rev. Tom Goldsmith and David Owens

Music and homily for a Christmas morning

January 1st (One service only at 11:00 am)

"Radical Faith & Anxiety in the New Age"

-Rev. Matthew Cockrum

January 8th (Services at 9:00 and 11:00 am)

"Tilting Right"

-Rev. Tom Goldsmith

Reverently Yours (Rev. Tom Goldsmith)

The Christmas season opens doors to reflection. It's a good time to ask ourselves: "How much is enough?" It also presents an opportunity to consider our own generosity. First, do we even want to be generous? And should we decide that's a good thing, then where do we go next?

As income inequality becomes increasingly glaring, but also more accepted as one of those realities for our times, we may feel uneasy about what we're supposed to be doing. It's confusing to figure out the moral guidelines when we want to

act fiscally responsible towards our family, and yet part of our sensibilities register the anguish of those who have so little.

I have long raged against professional athletes, whose salaries might well come close to some oil sheik in the Middle East. Occasionally profiles of athletes reveal their excessive accumulation in cars, houses, and anything extravagant. Many reach professional status from impoverished beginnings. Although some athletes (Magic Johnson in particular) feel a need to "give back" to blighted neighborhoods, and offer new opportunities that government programs neglect, many athletes (if not most) fail to share in their largess. If I had the dictatorial powers of a Donald Trump, I would mandate athletes to tithe for funding social programs. In Sweden, athletes would be taxed 50%, so I'm a failure at socialism. But still, it would be nice if something were returned to benefit society.

But then there are athletes who follow the old rule of generosity by giving silently, not calling attention to themselves. One such player is an outfielder for the New York Mets, Curtis Granderson. He's from Chicago originally, and has funded two little league playing fields with artificial turf and light towers on the South side. Tours are arranged to take these kids to the University to begin conversations on higher education, an element conspicuously missing from their lives. Granderson's contributions to improve social conditions currently stands at \$5million with new projects on the horizon which he directs.

Ultimately, generosity is exceedingly personal. Either one feels it, or not. There must be infinite variables that go into the decision-making process about sharing one's own wealth. Christmas is a good time to reflect on our own propensity, or lack thereof, towards enabling people and/or

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organizations that struggle at a distinct disadvantage.

Granderson also sheds light on diversity in professional sports. The TV image shows more interracial solidarity than is actually the case. In truth, race remains complicated, where while stretching before games, Latinos, blacks and whites stay in their own group. There are also subtle divisions among the races confronted daily, like food, spice, music, clothes, and cars.

A perfectly integrated society may never be a dream fulfilled. Yet there must be an effort among all racial groups who find extreme privilege in their laps to offer help in a decidedly unfair society. Or so one would think.

Christmas prods the conscience of the affluent. Especially if we tune into the religious message of the holiday, we will hear an exhortation to make the world more just. It's so individual, isn't it? Some of us will merely decorate a tree and buy things and more things until closets are ready to be reorganized. But some of us will reflect more deeply on the message, and perform acts of generosity that often seem inexplicable. TRG

In the Life (Rev. Matthew Cockrum)

Among my cherished winter holiday memories is of a murder mystery New Year's Eve dinner party I attended while in high school. My friend's parents cooked a fancy dinner for the guests, all high-school classmates of mine, who came dressed in costume for our assigned roles. I recall being a duke of some sort, drawing on a moustache with an eyeliner pencil and wearing jodhpur pants with knee-high boots, a jacket with padded shoulders, epaulettes and a satin sash which I thought indicated some sort of high office. Other than the costumes I don't remember much of the mystery or its solution. I do remember that night as the time I discovered that I didn't like pesto sauce, the night I first ate escargot (which I *did* like), and one of the first times I had an experience of entering a new year with a group of friends with whom I had the beginnings of an adult-type relationship. At that point I'd only known those folks for 4-6 years, having moved to South Dakota from Colorado during the summer before my 7th grade year. I'm still in touch with a few of those characters from New Years. It's a simple link to a seemingly long-

ago past. It serves as an anchor for me, a reminder of both where I'm from and how far I've come.

Now here we are on the cusp of 2017.

Being with you here in Salt Lake City at First Unitarian Church has been a delightful surprise in Life's journey. I have been honored to serve alongside the Rev. Tom Goldsmith and the rest of the staff and leadership at First Church in support of the mission and ministries of this great, good place. As we ring out 2016 and ring in 2017 it is, indeed, with a bit of anxiety at the unknowns of the coming year. It is also with no small amount of gratitude for the good work that is happening here - the activism that abounds in this place along with everyday acts of service whether through the Hospitality Committee, the Caring Network, the Refugee Resettlement Committee, the work of the Anti-Racism and Environmental Ministry committees, the budding relationship with the Homeless Youth Resource Center or the years-long sistership with San Esteban. There is still (and will always be) great, good work to do in pursuit of Beloved Community and building a progressive and just world. There will always be new additions to the "cast of characters" engaged in unraveling and addressing the mysteries of our times.

As agreed upon when I first arrived here in the fall of 2015, I will be leaving the staff of First Church this coming June. My consulting role with you was intentionally set (and generously funded) for two years. This has been a time to explore the possibility of funding a second minister on-staff, a time to investigate what kinds of work might best support a vision of Congregational Life that cultivates more connection, more intentional integration of newcomers into First Church's ministries, and how clergy involvement in youth ministry might work. Though funding for a successor in this role was not accomplished, we have glimpsed sight of great possibility for the continued maturation and growth of this community. I have no doubt that years from now I will look back on this time and cherish my place in this cast of characters and the work we have shared.

On the cusp of 2017, rest assured that the staff and leadership of First Church is diligently planning for this transition. There will be surprises, unexpected guests, clues to discover and sleuthing to be done. The Work of building Beloved Community, the Common Good and a progressive and just society

always lies among us, within us and before us. We - and you - are suited to the task. (What's your costume? What'll be on the menu? That's part of the mystery!)

It is good to be in The Work with you.
Peace, Faith & Passion,
Matthew

More from Matthew

Seeking the Sources - join Rev. Matthew for this monthly drop-in exploration of the sources of our living tradition. December's session will be on the 19th, 6:45-8:45 p.m. in either Eliot Hall or the Little Chapel. Dress in comfortable clothes and bring any favorite yoga and meditation supplies. Questions? Contact Matthew at 801.582.8687 ext. 205 or clminister@slcuu.org

High School Service Trip Planning Meeting - Calling all 10th-12th graders and their parents! Join Rev. Matthew Cockrum & Jillian O'Karma for continued planning for our summer service trip. Meet in The Haven on Sunday, January 8 at 5:30 p.m. Questions? Contact Matthew at 801.582.8687 ext. 205 or clminister@slcuu.org or Jillian O'Karma at jillianyruuslc@gmail.com.

MLK March/"Marade", Workshops & High School Conference - First Unitarian youth is hosting civil rights/racial justice multigenerational workshops on Sunday, January 15 and a high school conference Saturday, January 14-Monday, January 16. This weekend is a collaborative effort with South Valley UU Society. 10th-12th graders are welcome to attend the entire weekend. All participants are invited to join in the culminating activity, joining in Salt Lake City's MLK Rally and March which begins at East High School on Monday, January 16. Interested in attending, helping out? Contact Rev. Matthew Cockrum at clminister@slcuu.org or 801.582.8687 ext. 205.

Our Whole Lives for High School - First Unitarian Church is offering a two-weekend intensive version of the Unitarian Universalist sexuality education curriculum, Our Whole Lives, for 10th-12th graders. Sessions will run February 3-4 and 17-18, beginning Friday at 6 p.m. and concluding Saturday at 8 p.m. Parents of interested youth must attend one of two orientation sessions or make other arrangements with Rev. Matthew Cockrum at clminister@slcuu.org or 801.582.8687 ext 205. Parent orientation sessions are: Sunday, January 22, 3-5 p.m. and Thursday, January 26, 6:30-8:30

p.m. Interested? Contact Rev. Matthew for more information or reserve your space.

Religious Education Corner

Given the current mood circling 'round the country, I find myself wondering what Abraham Lincoln might have penned for his presidential Christmas message. Then again, I suppose he didn't have a chance for one compelling reason, that being that Christmas did not actually become a national holiday until 1870—five years after his untimely death.

Given his sentiments regarding slavery, Lincoln might have expressed profound sympathy for the hardships faced by those still enslaved during this otherwise joyful and generous season.

Revisiting Lincoln today seems quite reasonable because, like Abe, we need to look beyond backdoor dealmakers and overreaching technocrats and put some hope and faith into a future featuring a bit less upheaval. Visionaries at the national level are in fearfully short supply these days, so I'm venturing out on a limb to imagine what Lincoln's message might have been... abbreviated, of course, in recognition of shorter attention spans since the mid-nineteenth century!

"In a season that would, in better times, resonate with some semblance of peace, goodwill and hope, we must still acknowledge the despair prevalent among so many. We must take solace, however, in recognizing that we live in a nation founded a mere hundred or so years ago [remember, this is Lincoln speaking] on the principles of fairness and equality.

"So today, I ask you to stay steadfast in the knowledge that good still conquers evil, that truth still triumphs over falsehood. Be patient in these dark days and be compassionate toward those less fortunate. It is my fondest hope that these uncertain times are but a momentary wrinkle in the fabric of our nation. May you anticipate peace as we look ahead."

Thank you, Abe, for allowing me to ghost-write your holiday message. Julie Miller, DRE

Just Around the RE Corner...

December 17th, 9:30am - Noon, Pageant Dress Rehearsal, Eliot Hall

December 18th, Childcare only 9 & 11am Services, Room 109. Pageant at the 11am Service. Pageant participants—please arrive between 10-10:15am.

December 21st, Solstice Service at 6pm followed by dinner in Eliot Hall

December 25th, one service only at 11:00 am, no RE classes; **no** childcare available

January 1st, one service only at 11:00 am, no RE classes; childcare **will** be available

LAST WEEK! LGBT youth in the Salt Valley are often at risk, especially those in the foster care system. Our High School youth are collecting books with and about LGBT characters to donate to the Salt Lake County youth group homes this month. Having books about characters like them is very important in affirming these youth. Please grab a flyer at the RE table in Eliot Hall that has a list of the most requested titles. King's English Bookstore will offer a 10% discount for mentioning our church when shopping. Please return books to the box in Eliot Hall before December 18th. See Nancy Moos (ut_moos@yahoo.com) with any questions.

It's not too late! Solstice is upon us! Please join in our annual celebration and fundraising Chili Dinner on December 21st. Service will be at 6, with dinner in Eliot Hall following at 7. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$5 for kids up to 12 years (2 and under free) and a family of 5 price of \$35. Tickets will be on sale beginning this week following service. Don't wait too long, this event always sells out! Proceeds benefit our youth travel budgets for service and heritage trips. Tickets also available online.

Board Bits

Coming Together and Moving Beyond the Election

As we come to the end of 2016, many of us are reflecting on the losses we've experienced within the year of dear family and friends, admirable public figures, and beloved entertainers. This year it seems we are also grieving the loss of the America we want to be. The progress we have made in the direction of a more just and inclusive society and more concern and protection for our earth will surely be interrupted, if not reversed, over the next four to eight years. As the names and biographies of each new advisor or cabinet nominee are announced, our sense of loss becomes ever more real.

In contrast to presidential elections of the past, this one affects people very personally. My family feels directly threatened by the administration that will take office in January. Our value and dignity as women, the legal security of our marriage, and the safety and happiness of our children seem at once in jeopardy. Life in America has become more risky for many people.

In conversations since November 8, Michele and I have wondered where we might have been in the days following the election if we were not a part of First Unitarian Church. Most likely, we would have been commiserating with a few friends and feeling discouraged, frightened, and helpless. Instead, we joined others of our congregation for both the vigil held on the evening of Wednesday, November 9 and the service that following Sunday, and felt renewed gratitude for this church and the community of friends it has given us. We also felt a greater responsibility and urgency to give back to our church.

We all need this church, now more than ever. Let us begin 2017 with a recommitment as a community to keep First Church a vital and enduring home for progressive religion in Salt Lake Valley. A term of office is only four years. We'll be here long beyond this one.

Sue Geary
President, Board of Trustees

Environmental Ministry News

Standing Rock: Update and Taking Action

-submitted by Joan M. Gregory, Co-Coordinator, Environmental Ministry

The water protectors remain in Standing Rock and they are standing strong to watch and witness as the situation on the ground changes daily. However, they are no longer asking folks to head to Standing Rock, right now. Harsh weather – snow and blizzards are making travel and living extremely difficult and dangerous. Survival is a real issue. There are also people there who are injured or in poor health, they are being advised to head home. The Camp of the Sacred Stone and several others are still in place and they are in need of support for shelter, heat and food. Environmental Ministry is continuing to collect and send funds.

This is not over. The water protectors have stated that they “*will not leave until the Dakota Access*

Pipeline (DAPL) is dead, the water is safe, and treaty rights are recognized."

The Last Real Indians #NoDAPL Aid fundraising effort: <https://www.generosity.com/fundraising/last-real-indians-nodapl-aid> is currently the number one way to get monetary support directly to the protectors for yurts, 4WD pickups, snowmobiles, the rebuilding of kitchens, porta potties and any other winterization needs the protectors deem necessary. You may donate directly or stop by the Environmental Ministry table on Sunday to make a donation and find out more.

December is also a Global Month of Action to divest from the banks which fund DAPL, a list of banks and steps are posted here: <http://www.defunddapl.org/>.

Congregational Briefs

Refugee Resettlement Committee A reviewer wrote, "There was a jolt too much couch-inspired hoey" in Bruce Springsteen's memoir. The sentence raises important questions for those of us whose lives are on autopilot. Might years of generating hoey have taken a toll on the couch? Has other furniture sustained collateral damage? Why take a chance? Call Joe Dubray at (904) 527-9773 to schedule a discreet intervention from the Refugee Resettlement Committee. They will haul away compromised furniture and recycle it into apartments for refugees inured to hoey.

Dinner and Dialogue **Dinner and Dialogue** is going strong! There have already been several dinners, and we have many more in the works clear through May. Feel free to sign up in the white binder in Eliot Hall at the Congregational Life Table to host or attend a dinner in order to connect with people in our congregation. If you have any questions, please call Darlene Thayne at 801-455-6553 or send me an email to suppers@slcuu.org.

Mindfulness Group Sundays Following the end of the first service, in the Parlor.

UU Lunch Bunch A family-friendly group for anyone and everyone who would like to get together for lunch and chat with like-minded people. Meet at the Restaurant on Sundays at noon during the summer. For more information contact Sonia Carnell at (801) 262-1151 or lunchbunch@slcuu.org.

- December 18: Current Fish & Oyster (279 East 300 South)
- December 25: No lunch bunch
- January 1: No lunch bunch

"In the Spotlight". . . Carlos and David

-submitted by Jan Crane

Carlos and David met almost 14 years ago in the central park (called a zocalo) of Puebla, Mexico. David was sitting on a park bench when Carlos walked by and caught his eye. Love quickly conquered them both and eight months later Carlos moved to Tijuana, Mexico where he and David lived in a tiny apartment that was only 140 square feet. They stayed there for four and a half years, Carlos working in Tijuana, with David commuting and living in Orange County, California, Mondays through Friday afternoons. In February 2008 Carlos moved to Orange County and then they both made the move to Salt Lake City, David's hometown, "entering the valley" with moving truck and car on Labor Day Weekend 2010. Happily, marriage bells rang on October 4, 2013. Bella, a 4-year-old poodle mix; Oskar, a sweet, but arrogant grey cat and his sister, Tiza, an adorably tiny tortoise shell, also share their home.

Carlos loves photography, nature, gardening, music (he is a real music buff of all genres) and learning something new every day... and if you want to know what is going on in the news, especially politics and international events, just ask Carlos. He can get you caught up in a jiffy with a detailed understanding. David really likes to read, watch movies and cook. He is also in love with nature; the breadth of it...earth, animals, bugs and all. It makes his heart ache to realize he can't live a millennium to explore all of it. David is no connoisseur of art and music, but he really enjoys the beauty and joy that come from the arts, fine and not so fine.

While relatively new to the church, this family signed "the book" this past July. They feel they have found a real home in the UU community at First Church because it is vital and reflects so many of their values. Carlos and David are still exploring where they can best serve in this new community and family they have gladly tied themselves to. Pledging is a part of their commitment, they believe it is important to invest time, talent and treasure, small or great as it may be, in all aspects of life important to their hearts and souls. Please say Hello to these two- they hope to get to know all of you soon!