



Connecting In Spirit

Youth Faith Formation

Monthly News

December 2023

In this issue...

TAMALES! Sign up to help in the kitchen! And don't forget to place your order!
December Worship Series: Mystery
Upcoming Holiday Events
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and Much More!



The Mystery of Faith

As a devotee of Masterpiece Mystery and an avid reader of detective novels, I love a good whodunit. The suspicion, the intrigue, the red herrings, the tension....and the big reveal at the end. I am delighted when all the over-the-top characters anxiously gather together and listen to the all-knowing and articulate detective tell everyone what happened, why it happened, and most importantly, who was to blame.

As much as I would like to say that I love mystery, I have come to realize that what I really love is resolution. At the end of a whodunit, either I have figured out who did it (this rarely happens), or some pretentious know it all is going to tell

me. It's all going to come to a definitive, though frequently illogical, end.

For me, the hardest part of a real mystery is that usually there is no real resolution. It's by nature something not to be understood, and Hercules Poirot is not there to explain it. A true mystery challenges us because we are confronted with uncertainty and no clear way to resolve it. That's scary.

Mystery accompanies us throughout our lives, from the miraculous moment it begins at birth, to the moment it ends, punctuated with many ordinary, but nonetheless confusing moments along the way. Our lives are acutely real, yet strangely unknowable.

Fortunately for us, demonstrating courage through fear is a trademark of a detective story and of faith. While we rarely fully grasp the complexity of many of the situations life presents us, faith can guide and sustain us through the search.

Faith is finding meaning in the unknowable, the unsolvable, and the unattainable. It's finding connection and blessing in uncertainty. It's asking us not to solve the mystery, but to learn, grow and embrace the wisdom of the process.

As much as I would love to have it all figured out, know all the answers, and get to tell everyone (and have a really cool accent and sophisticated yet elusive demeanor), I do not. What I do have is a faith that encourages me to look for clues, ask questions, and think intently and deeply about what it all means.

Most importantly, I have a supportive and loving community to share in the search. This December, we have SO MANY opportunities to connect with each other; fortunately, not every aspect of ORUUC life is a mystery, so scroll down to find out what and when they are.

And take time this December to wander in mystery and leave it unresolved.

In Care and Faith,

Christine

Christine Rehder (she/her/hers)

Director of Faith Formation

(Photo taken by Rev. Lisa last year before the Winter Solstice Service.)

December Worship Series

Mystery

December 3: **Love is At the Center**

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

FF Hour and Soup Potluck, followed by Cocoa & Caroling

December 10: **A Point of Repose**

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

Congregational Meeting at 11:15. No Adult FF; all ages Youth Craft Party. Angel Tree gifts due. Pick up tamales!

December 17: **No Rehearse Pageant**

No FF Hour. Pick up tamales!

December 24: **How Come Christmas?**

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz

No FF Hour. Pick up tamales!

December 31: **How Come Christmas?**

UUA streaming service. Online only. Church will be closed. No FF Hour.

**Join us for Sunday Worship at 10 a.m.
in person and on Zoom**

*Youth and Adult Faith Formation classes
are from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.*

Nursery is available during the FF hour.





This **Sunday, Dec. 3**, we'll kick off the month with our new worship series, Mystery, followed by **Soup Potluck at 11:15 a.m.--bring a soup to share!** Bread, salad, and dessert will be provided. Faith Formation classes will also take place from 11:15 to 12:15 as usual. After lunch, stick around for **Cocoa & Caroling beginning at 12 noon**. No need to bring anything for that--there will be a hot cocoa bar set up, so dress up your drink and warm up your voice to sing carols, accompanied by Larry Rosenbaum and Dave Dunkirk on guitar. Join us for this relaxing start to the holiday season!



The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce Presents the
2023 Oak Ridge Christmas Parade

“Sleigh Ride”

Saturday, December 9

Starts at 6:00PM

**Parade Route on
Oak Ridge Turnpike**



**Scan to Join
The Ride!**



Deadline to Register: Monday, December 4

 **AK RIDGE**
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

**For more information, contact events@orcc.org
or visit www.oakridgechamber.org/2023-oak-ridge-christmas-parade**

The Oak Ridge Christmas Parade is just a week away! **Candy donations are appreciated!** **Please leave them in the bin in the church lobby.** If you're interested in helping with ORUUC's parade entry, please contact Multigenerational Coordinator Whitney Cole. Thank you!



Congregational Meeting

Sunday, Dec. 10 at 11:15 a.m.

In the Sanctuary and on Zoom

No Adult Faith Formation.

Holiday Craft Hour for youth of all ages.



The Congregational Meeting is coming up Sunday, Dec. 10 after worship. Please make plans to be part of this important meeting. There are several proposed bylaws changes that will be up for a vote at that time. Printed copies of the proposed changes are available on the Welcome table in the church lobby, and in *The Exponent*. A representative from the Board and Bylaws committee will be on hand after service this Sunday if anyone in the congregation has questions or comments.

ORUUC Fall Congregational Meeting

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Opening Words
- III. Present June Congregational Meeting Minutes
- IV. President's Report
- V. Treasurer's Report
- VI. Minister's Report
- VII. Bylaws Committee Report
- VIII. Endowment Committee Report
- IX. Ministerial Search Committee Report
- X. Closing Words
- XI. Adjournment

5th/6th Grade OWL Parent Orientation Sunday, Dec. 10 3-4:30 p.m.

For those interested in enrolling their child(ren) in the Grades 5/6th Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education class next semester, we will be having a Parent Orientation meeting on Sunday, Dec. 10th from 3 to 4:30 p.m. in the ORUUC Sanctuary. There is room in the class for others, so please invite people you feel may be interested and available to take the class.



This meeting is mandatory if you have not previously attended OWL. If you have already attended a previous OWL orientation with another child, you are not required to be at orientation, but we will be discussing meeting times and taking care of permission forms and fees, in addition to the program overview. The cost of the class is \$50 for members and \$75 for nonmembers. If you need assistance with the fee, please see me; we have financial assistance available. Also, reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns about your child.

As Unitarian Universalists, our 1st Principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of every human. Healthy intimate relationships and identities are the ultimate affirmation of this foundational value, and unhealthy and exploitive ones are it's ultimate violation. I thank you for giving your Youth the tools and skills to build loving relationships for themselves and the world around them.

In Care and Faith,
Christine Rehder

Middle and High School Youth Hike
Sunday, Dec. 10
Delaware Trail Loop

Trailhead location:
Outer Drive near Delaware



Meet at Church at 2 p.m. to carpool Parents are always welcome to come along!

Don't Forget

- ✓ Water
- ✓ Pick up at church at 4 p.m.
- ✓ Questions? Call Jim Nutaro 865-255-8578

Monthly Hikes For Middle and High School Youth This Fall at ORUUC!

Middle and high school youth are invited to hike together each month. The December 10

hike will be along the Delaware Loop off Outer Drive near the intersection with Delaware Avenue. It is a nice section of trail. Parking is on the street between Delaware and Ogontz. The trail is about 1.5 miles depending on how we do it. There are lots of alternate trails. The trailhead is about 5-10 minutes drive from the church. We can carpool up to save space. Do not park in the driveway to the pump station. **Parents: Please make sure that you fill out and turn in a release form before the hike. Forms will be available at drop off.** Parents are welcome to join the hike! Thanks to Jim Nutaro, Aubrey Wick Sebastian, Jimmy Groton, and Whitney Cole for organizing these monthly hikes!

Angel Tree/Mitten Tree Updates



Thanks to all who adopted children from this year's ORUUC Angel Tree! All of the tags have been taken. A reminder that **all wrapped gifts are due back at church by Sunday, Dec. 10.** Please attach the ornament tag(s) you removed from the tree to the gifts. *****If you chose #2, 13, 16, or 17, please let Susan Rosenbaum or the church office know.** Thank you!

The tree has been converted to the **Mitten Tree to benefit children at the Blossom Center!** Please **bring new winter hats and mittens—socks, too—toddler and school-age size, and add them to the tree.** Jason Fishel will take the donations to the childcare center before Christmas.

Winter Solstice Service

at

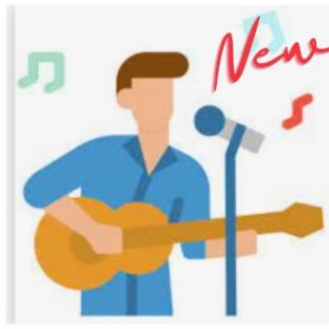


Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023
7 p.m.

Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church
809 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, TN 37830



ALL ARE WELCOME!



COFFEHOUSE TALENT SHOW

SUNDAY, DEC. 31
6:30 P.M. SUPPER AND SOCIAL
7 P.M. PROGRAM

AT 

Start getting your act together! Any kind of rehearsed, presentational act is possible, from the silly to the sublime. All ages and all kinds of talent are encouraged. Past shows have included one-act plays, singer-songwriters, vocal and instrumental solos or ensembles, joke telling, dancers, and novelty acts. This is your chance to live out a performance fantasy, to ham it up, to build some experience performing in front of people, or to blow people's minds by unveiling a unique talent you've been keeping to yourself. Advance sign-up is required for all performers. **The signup deadline is Tuesday, Dec. 26. Contact Nancy Starr at starroakridge@gmail.com, (865)742-9993 (mobile)**



*After the Coffeehouse,
stay for the* **New Year's Eve
Party**

Sunday, Dec. 31
8 p.m. to Midnight
In the Social Hall

Bring games, finger food, and drinks to share.
We'll have our token bubbly at midnight
while we watch the ball drop!

Our Whole Lives



**Adult OWL
Classes
Sundays at
11:15 a.m.**

at



Lifespan Sexuality Education

Adult OWL classes meet each Sunday during Faith Formation Hour through December 3--attend one, or a few, or all of them--it's up to you!

- 10/23 Language and Anatomy
- 10/29 Sexuality and Gender Identity (SEIO Model)
- 11/5 Cultural Attitudes about Sexuality
- 11/12 Cultural Communication (Mass Media, Social Media, Pornography)
- 11/19 Body Image
- 11/26 Sexual Consent and Boundaries
- 12/3 Healthy Relationships
- 12/10 Aging, Change, and Sexuality (Meet at 12:15 following the Congregational Meeting and includes possible celebration.)

For more information on these classes, contact Christine Rehder at crehder@oruuc.org.



Tamales!

\$25 per dozen

Chicken or Vegetarian

**Order yours today! Pick up in December.
Proceeds go to the HIGH SCHOOL
YOUTH TRIP FUND. Thank you!**



Tamales are on sale now! Order yours [HERE](#) and pay online or in person. This is one of our

biggest youth fundraisers, and the van wheels won't roll unless the corn husks do! Youth who wish to travel with the group need to help make tamales! Parents and others who want to help are welcome to join in the fun and camaraderie. Taste- testers are appreciated.

Important dates:

Saturday, Dec. 2 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tamale Making

Sunday, Dec. 17 1 to 6 p.m. Tamale Making

We look forward to seeing you in the kitchen!

Tamales may be picked up on Sunday, Dec. 10, 17 and 24 after worship, or from the church office beginning Monday, Dec. 11.



The Tamale Making Crew, Sunday, Nov. 19. Brandon White photo.

Gratitude Corner



THANK YOU to all of the Adult Advisors who made it possible for our youth to visit **The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in North Carolina this fall.** Nine ORUUC youth attended these wonderful weekend youth CONferences where they were able to unplug, be creative, and meet other UU's from around the South. To learn more about The Mountain and its

program for all ages, visit <https://www.themountainrlc.org/>.



**All are welcome to the PFLAG Holiday Gathering
Monday, Dec. 11 6:45 p.m. at ORUUC!**

Oak Ridge has an active PFLAG group which meets monthly, rotating the venue among faith communities including the First Presbyterian, First United Methodist, and Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist churches, United Church Chapel on the Hill, and the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge. PFLAG (formerly known as an acronym for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is the United States' largest organization uniting families and allies with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Its mission is to provide opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation, gender identities, and to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity. For additional information, contact PFLAG President Anne Backus at backusanne@comcast.net.



Join us with your baby, toddler and/or preschooler for bouncing, tickling, touching, clapping and action rhymes, musical circle games, simple songs, and play.

Looking for an interactive program designed to stimulate learning, introduce group activities, and encourage play? Mother Goose is the answer! Led by ORUUC's own Michael Raymond, the Mother Goose Program is a group experience for parents and their babies and young children. The program introduces adults and children to the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs, and stories together.

Mother Goose meets December 7 and 21 --the First and Third Thursdays of the month-- **at 10:30 a.m. in the Oak Ridge Public Library Auditorium. It's free and open to the community.**

View and sign up for the Oak Ridge Public Library's newsletter here:
<https://mailchi.mp/oakridgetn/orplnov23>.

**Youth Faith Formation
Save the Dates**

December 1-3 - Senior High Fall Mountain CON, Highlands, NC

March 1-3 - Spring Intermediate CON, Rummage Sale

March 9-25 - OR Spring Break (Special Programming)

March 15-17 - Senior High Mountain

December 2 - Tamale Making
December 3 - Soup Potluck and Cocoa & Caroling
December 10 - 5th/6th OWL Parent Orientation
December 17 - Tamale Making
January 7 - 5th/6th OWL Begins
February 11 - Hugs and Quiches
February 23-25 - Spring Elementary CON

CON
March 31 - Easter Egg Hunt
April TBD - Ministerial Visits
April TCAP Test Break TBD
May 12 - Last Day of Youth Faith Formation
May 19 - Bridging/Reception
June 24-28 -Rainbow Camp



Save your plastic lids and drop them off in the bin the church lobby! Local friends of

Aimee Dixon are hosting a drive to collect enough plastic lids to create three memorial benches at Linden Elementary in honor of Aimee, who was a teacher at the school. Lids may also be dropped off at Calamity's Coffee in Jackson Square. According to the organizers, any plastic lids are welcome—volunteers will sort them. Thank you!



**Need
Childcare**
FOR A CHURCH MEETING OR EVENT?

SCAN THIS QR CODE!



Need Childcare for a Church Meeting or Event?

If you or your group need childcare for a church meeting or event, please complete this form **TWO WEEKS** in advance: [ORUUC Childcare Request Form \(jotform.com\)](https://jotform.com) Childcare is provided for children ages 10 and under only. Once you click "Submit," the form will go directly to ORUUC's Multigenerational Coordinator Whitney Cole, who will work with Childcare Coordinator Laura Scott to arrange childcare for your church function. Thank you!



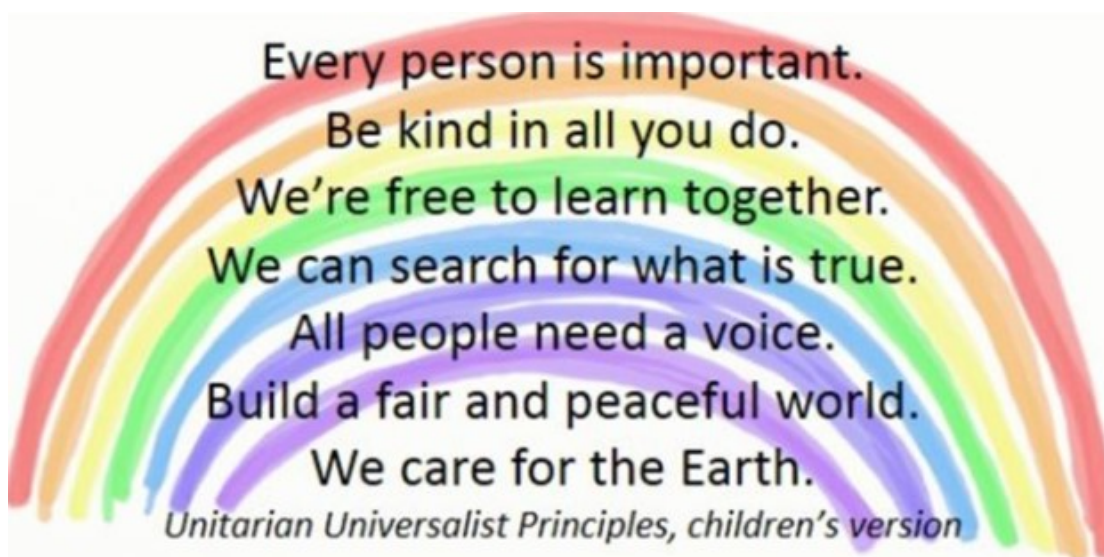
Happy Holidays!

The Church Office
will be closed Monday,
Dec. 25 until Tuesday,
Jan. 2.

We wish you and yours
a memorable time shared
with friends and family.
See you in 2024!

Rev. Lisa Romantum Schwartz, Interim Minister

Rev. Lisa can be reached by email at Rev.Lisa@oruuc.org or by phone at 865-483-6761 ext. 102.



*Connecting in Spirit: Youth Faith Formation Monthly News is a digital publication designed to serve ORUUC families with children from birth through high school. **If you have ideas or suggestions for content, or would like to add someone to the mailing list, please email Rachel at communications@oruuc.org or Christine at crehder@oruuc.org.** To take a look at past issues of Connecting in Spirit, visit <http://www.oruuc.org/connectinginspirit>.*

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