



Hello, friends:

This newsletter has been in existence for almost 3 years now, and more people have joined than left, which is nearly always a healthy sign, I think. When someone does ask to have their name removed from the list, I have mixed reactions, just as when someone decides to leave a congregation. This month, I had such a request, and I wrote back:

*I was glad you made contact, and if you ever have a moment to let me know why you decided to leave the list, I would of course be interested -- not that you owe me any explanation .....*

*All good wishes, and I hope you feel you know a little more about UUs now.*

If any of you want or need to leave the list, please know that I will have this same ambivalent reaction, which perhaps you share: sorry to say goodbye; glad that we had the pleasure of your company for a while, and trusting that the experience has been worthwhile all round!

Now to this month's contributions:

from **Kim Rogers**

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Well it's officially winter now. Cold and dark. Time to hunker down with a pile of 'must read' books, stock up on hot drinks, and buy a couple of pairs of new pyjamas (my clothing of choice for about 14 of the 24hrs on any given day.)

As time rolls quickly toward Yuletide now, and all of the commercialized pressures start up, I once again find myself contemplating how to make the season as simplified and stress-free as possible.

One idea I have this year is to ask our relatives and friends back east to consider donating a gift in our daughter's name to Plan Canada, instead of everyone sending us a boxful of gifts as they do every year. (I mean really, how much 'stuff' does one kid need anyway?) I would love to see that money go instead towards an education for a few girls who otherwise wouldn't have that luxury.

I envision ONE nice gift for my daughter from her dad and I, one nice thing from Santa, and sitting down to a special family meal.... to me that would be an ideal Yule celebration! (But how to convince the relatives?! ) Any ideas from the readership on this subject would certainly be welcome.

Even living this far away from family, it's hard not to be swept away by all the materialism. But every year I think I get a little closer to the way I really want this time of year to be, closer to manifesting what it means to me.

The Returning of the Light that Winter Solstice brings, really appeals to me. Putting closure to some things, and making new beginnings for others, also makes sense. Simply taking a rest, nesting, and going inwards for awhile really feels natural in the week or two that follows Christmas day itself....So taking extra vacation time at that time of year is a tradition I started a few years ago, and I hope to continue it.

But maybe this is jumping ahead just a bit for November!?! So I'll leave you with that, and write more on Solstice and Yule next month!

Cheers for now,

.~k~.

Whitehorse, Yukon

*In anticipation of Kim's reflections on Solstice and Yule next month, here's part of a Solstice service for your pondering – and your participation in the suggested “work” if you wish – and perhaps the creation of a service/ ceremony for yourself, alone or with others:*

*We meet here at the still point of the turning year,  
In a space between the worlds,  
In this place of sacred quietness,  
To celebrate the Solstice mysteries.  
Let the darkness of this season enfold and embrace you.  
Let it rock you gently.  
Be still, be still.*

Only in darkness can stars shine across the vastness of space.  
Only in darkness is the moon's dance so clear.  
There is mystery in the darkness, born in the quiet hours.  
There is magic in the darkness.

*Do not be afraid: we are born of this magic.  
It fills our dreams that root, and unravel, and reweave themselves  
Only in the shelter of darkness.  
Darkness fills our soul, not with despair, but with promise.  
It is the cave in which we rest and renew our soul  
We are born of darkness, and each night we return  
To the darkness of our beginnings.*

Take a moment to ponder this imagery of darkness and to search for any resonance the image has for you. Ask yourself,

*What are the dreams that are rooting and unravelling and reweaving in the darkness of your inner life?*

What, and where, for you, is the cave in which you rest and renew your soul?

*Can you return, even if only for a little while, to your beginnings, when everything was fresh and unknown, so that there is the possibility of a new birth?*

Also in the Winter Solstice celebration, there is an honouring of the Goddess. She is seen as the cold of space, the lightless womb of existence, the deepest abyss. She is called the Virgin of Light, the Crone of Darkness, the Mother of Time. Take a moment to ponder the imagery of the Goddess, and to search for any resonance the image has for you. Ask yourself,

*What is your Goddess, your generative and nurturing Power -- how would you describe her?*

Where is your Goddess in this season of the year – where do you find her?

*In what aspects of yourself and your life can your Goddess be seen?*

Winter Solstice celebrations keep coming back to imagery of the Mother and of birth. Here's another picture for pondering:

*In the beginning we came from the darkness of the womb.  
There we were created, nourished and prepared for our birth into the light.  
Within us, we still carry that fertile darkness.  
There we hold the seeds of hopes and dreams to come.  
There we nourish our hopes for love, joy and peace for all.  
We shield these tender roots until they are strong enough  
To come forth and flourish in the light.  
As the sun strengthens above, so will our new ways grow and bloom.  
Dark is the rich fertile earth that cradles the seed, nourishing growth.*

Take a moment to ponder this image of the fertile seeds and the seedlings coming forth, and to search for any resonance the image has for you. Ask yourself,

*What are you called to birth in your life?*

*What are you called to make new, to bring forward into the light?*

*How can you tend and nurture these seedlings, so that they will grow with you in the coming year?*

*Solstice is celebrated not only in Wicca and other pagan or earth-centred traditions, but in Shinto, one of the religions of Japan. My Multi-Faith Calendar tells me that on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, there is a Grand Ceremony of the Winter Solstice in Japan, with symbolism very much like the observances we think of as pagan. In the east as well as the west, the earth Mother gives birth to the Sun on this day, but for many weeks the Sun is small and weak. Just as we light our chalice candle each week as a sign that we encourage the light of truth and the warmth of love, so it is traditional at Winter Solstice to encourage the small, weak Sun by the lighting of flames and fires.*

*We light this candle for the infant Solstice Sun:  
A ray of hope,  
A symbol of the Light within us all,  
That will grow and strengthen,  
Despite the cold to come;  
Light that dispels despair and resignation.  
Behold the light that can never die,  
Reborn once more in the Solstice Sky!*



from **Noreen Smith**

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Hi Friends:

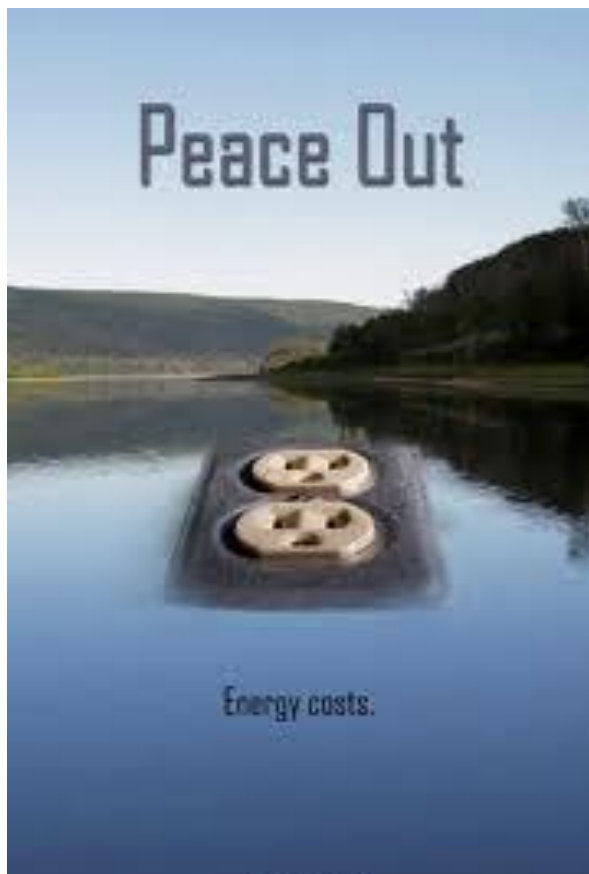
Winter has come to the Peace River area. We had a small snowfall and temperatures in the minus 10 range this week. I guess I'll have to get my carrots out of the garden now! I am busy working away at my early childhood courses as usual. Finishing off my third practicum and the 14th of 21 courses - I'm getting there!

*I have a film review for the group:*

I attended a premier one night showing of a documentary that was filmed in the Peace Region about this beautiful area and the destruction that is currently happening and proposed to happen with the implementation of a new dam - The Site C Hydro Dam. The movie is called *Peace Out* and was shown at the Vancouver International Film Festival and won many awards including **'Best Canadian Documentary'**. Additionally a large Toronto film company has signed a contract with the film maker, so it will be in independent theaters soon. A short trailer of the movie can be found at:

<http://www.imdb.com/video/wab/vi3641351193/>

Now it may seem that my northern issue is far removed from those living in other areas of the province or country but an extremely large portion of the power that is produced by our current WAC Bennett dam is for the lights, computers, etc. in Vancouver and southern BC with the remainder of the power being shipped to the US. If you have a chance to view the film at any time you will see that the land that will be buried by the flood waters is known as the highest quality (type 1) agricultural land not just for BC, but for North America.



This is prime food producing land that will be lost forever; resulting in more imports from other countries, imports that travel great distances by transportation methods that emit toxins in the air that we all breathe and that contribute to our global warming.

This film is an eye opener: development in one seemingly insignificant region of Northern Canada can have a profound effect on the planet as a whole. It is a well balanced film showing the issue from both the supporters and the protesters, that will leave you shaking your head at our arrogance and ignorance regarding our planet and our part in keeping it sustainable.

Thanks for listening,

*Noreen*

from **Lloyd Ryan**

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Greetings from Beijing!

Even though I have not been in contact recently, I have not forgotten you.

My life has been bit rough for the past couple of years. I would not have believed just how difficult it would be to claw one's way back to normalcy after being a caregiver of a sick family member and then to try to recover after the death.

I am pleased to tell you that I believe that I have now recovered to my former self. I have even begun to dream again. I mean "dream." My trauma was so severe that I hadn't had a dream for about eight months.

I have met a wonderful woman, a lawyer at Beijing. Just how strange does life become? Shao Ping and I are learning to build a life together. She is hoping to visit Canada with me, maybe in December.

My best wishes to the members of our little Unitarian family.

*Lloyd Ryan*

from **Janet Vickers**

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Yesterday we held the P. K. Page Trust Fund Benefit reading here on Gabriola. This was organized through The League of Canadian Poets. I am currently the BC/Yukon Rep. Two League member poets were the featured speakers: Sandy Shreve and Heidi Greco. They came from Vancouver and White Rock for the day.

The reading began with local writer and poet, Naomi Beth Wakan, reading "Planet Earth". In 2000, according to the League website, "PK, as she was known to her friends, was granted a special honour when the United Nations chose her glosa "*Planet Earth*" for its Dialogue Among Civilizations Through Poetry reading series. The poem — which was the one for which she wanted to be remembered — was read at locations around the globe considered 'international ground,' including the United Nations Headquarters, Mount Everest and Antarctica."

Right now I am suffering from a swollen eye. Seems like a cold, but it is very uncomfortable and difficult to read. Weather on Gabriola has been lovely right into this month. Today it is cold and wet, but water is good for our wells.

Best,

*Janet*

and from me, **Anne Treadwell**

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For almost three weeks in October I was away from Nova Scotia, visiting family and friends in Ontario and Alberta. Unfortunately, I was not well for much of that time and had reason to be grateful for “portable” health care coverage and excellent out-of-province facilities – plus the fact that it’s great to see children, grandchildren, and other dear people, even when not at one’s best!

And I did, as I’d hoped, attend two Unitarian Sunday services – at the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton (my UU “church of origin”) and at the Unitarian Church of Calgary – where the service theme, “*Wrestling with the Holy*” was full of resonance for me, and it was wonderful to connect with Minister Deborah Faulk and some other members I knew from years ago. We individual UUs can benefit so much from attending a service whenever we have the opportunity of visiting a place with a UU congregation – I think of such occasions as a “fix” which helps carry me through times of feeling isolated from spiritual community.

Back in Nova Scotia, my health is being well monitored, and it was all cheered by ten days of wonderful weather at the beginning of this month. We’ve had some storms in the past few days, but the sunshine “fix” is a big help in getting through them! I’m also looking forward enormously to seeing my husband John again – he returns on November 26<sup>th</sup> from his 3 months of volunteer work in Georgetown, Guyana. As I’ve mentioned before, you can find out what he’s been doing if you check out his blog at <http://revjoc.blogspot.com/>

My garden has been much neglected recently, and is more field than cultivated place, but there are still delights there which are quite independent of any effort from me, and I’ll end with a couple of photos of those, plus one of two local men preparing their traps for the six-months lobster fishing season which starts here on November 28<sup>th</sup>. That’s the lifeblood of the south-west Nova Scotia economy, but this year market conditions are leading to a less than optimistic outlook.



Warm wishes, as always,

in faith and love,

*Anne*