

News from Live Oak – October, 2013

Day of the Dead, Samhain: Valuable Rituals for UUs Today

For most folks, Halloween is now a secular holiday that has lost its religious association with saints and souls of the beloved dead, but many people around the globe celebrate festivals of the dead, many of them at this time of year.

Wiccans around the world regard the feast of Samhain (October 31-November 1) as the most important of their four quarter days. A common ritual is the Dumb Supper, which Anne Lafferty describes in “A Seeker’s Guide to Modern Witchcraft and Paganism.”



The table is laden with potluck dishes. There is a place setting for each person present, as well as one in front of an empty chair. This place is for the Beloved Dead, who are being honored by this meal. The first plate filled is given to them. The living eat in silence, thinking about their ancestors and others they cared about who have passed on. When the meal is over, the leftover food, including the food that was on the plate for the spirits of the dead, is taken outside and placed on the ground.

The dead are remembered in Christian countries in Europe and elsewhere in formal church services on All Souls’ Day.

And the elaborate festival, el Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is observed November 1-2 in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Here the dead are not feared but welcomed. Combining Roman Catholic rituals of All Saints’ and All Souls’ Days with millennia-old Mexican Indian traditions, the holiday includes solemn religious rites such as masses and prayers for the dead in church. But there is also pageantry and feasting in the home, where spirits are invited to enter and partake of their favorite foods.



UUA President Peter Morales notes: If we dismiss the Day of the Dead as pure superstition, we can easily miss the profound spiritual and psychological insight that makes this tradition powerful. Traditional cultures, with their mediums and ghosts and reincarnations, have understood intuitively something we’ve repressed: the dead don’t die; they live on.

For many, the paradox of life and death remains unbearable and inescapable. Thus, we often try to trivialize it. The hags of our Halloween cards and costumes are domesticated reminders of the Wiccan wise women who served as midwives and morticians, who

themselves represented the hallowed and harrowing goddess of womb and tomb, of life and death. The ghosts and goblins and grim reapers who people our parties and parades are fun versions of the very serious destination that we know deep down we cannot escape.

Such trivialization may put the paradox at arm's length, but it does not resolve it. Perhaps it is not too late for us to return to ritual for that resolution. By recognizing and honoring Samhain and Day of the Dead, we can embrace other kinds of rituals that will, whether we believe in a personal afterlife or not, enable us to find comfort in the understanding that life and death are one.

Join us this Sunday, November 3, to honor Samhain, Day of the Dead, and our UU ritual, Tolling of the Bells to remember our beloved dead.

Credit: Modified and shortened from an article by Patricia Montlye (UU World, Oct. 31, 2005). Full text here: http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/2324.shtml?utm_source=n

Games Night Is Back! Fun & Games on November 9

"It's baaack." **FUN & GAMES!** The Membership Team and Children's Religious Exploration (CRE) Team invite you for a simple supper and time to play ... and socialize!

You're invited to bring a favorite game (or two). Apples to Apples and Qwirkle are past favorites. How about Bananagrams? Scrabble? Jenga? Carcassone or Pandemic? Candyland or Spot It! for the younger crowd?

- Bring a game or two to play with others (or not).
- Bring a friend, if you wish. This is a great way to introduce someone to Live Oak friends!
- Bring a snack to share (or not).



If you're not really a game-player, come anyway ... and kibbitz.



Supper at 5:30 p.m. followed by companionship ... and a little healthy competition. You are invited to bring after-dinner snacks (savory, crunchy, and/or sweet).

This is a really fun gathering for little ones, middle-schoolers, young adults and old adults! ☺ Don't miss it!

Because we'll be providing dinner (hearty vegetarian soup, salad, and bread), we need to know how many are coming. RSVP to Lisa (lisafry@gmail.com) if you plan to be there! Thanks! Questions? Just ask ...

2nd Sunday Discussions: Deeper Connection, Spirituality



Live Oak has introduced a smaller, more intimate gathering on the 2nd Sundays of the month (next up: November 10, 4:00 p.m.). Ty (left) facilitates this group, with an opening reading and chalice lighting, followed by an opportunity for each person to respond to a particular question. We meet in the Guild Room (same building as Parish Hall). There is a potluck after and, of course, childcare. If you've not come yet ... do! You'll find this to be very worthwhile. We see this as a growing program for our community.

The Power of Myth: 3rd Fridays Adult Faith Development Program

All are invited to the 3rd Friday DVD series and discussion: the 6-part series, *The Power of Myth*, with scholar Joseph Campbell and journalist Bill Moyers. Together, they dissect the world of mythology as it affects the world's inhabitants, from religions to marriage and pop culture, in this incisive and penetrating documentary. Filmed at George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch and the American Museum of Natural History, their lively conversations touch both the heart and mind, offering myths as the ultimate key to understanding the human experience. RSVP to lisafry@gmail.com. Drop in for one or two sessions – or come for them all.

Next up: Friday, November 15, 7:30 p.m. We will watch Episode 2: *The Message of the Myth*, including creation myths, transcending duality, pairs of opposites, God vs. Nature, morality, participation in sorrow, the Gospel of Thomas, the story of Indra, and more.

Live Oak's Annual Holiday Concert: Sunday, December 15, 3:00 p.m.

Enjoy seasonal music presented by Live Oak UU's choir directed by our fabulous choir director, Mark Daniel.

You will be treated to music celebrating various winter holidays -- from many countries and traditions. The whole choir will entertain us, as well as soloists, duets, ensembles, and maybe some instrumentalists, too. There is no charge for this concert. All are welcome – members, friends, and guests.



There will be a short break after the concert (3:45 p.m.) and then our regular Sunday worship service will begin at 4:00 p.m. Join us for both the concert and the worship service -- or come for one or the other.