Rev's Reflections

If you were at Sunday's service you heard me talk about the challenges of creating something new in Unitarian Universalism, especially a holiday that is specifically ours, to celebrate our history, values and beliefs, in the luminescence of this season.

Even though creating a unique winter festival of light feels so crucial to sharing our faith with our children, it's still fraught with potential pitfalls, some of which we as an association of individual congregations have fallen right into, despite our best efforts.

Just to be clear (again) the Unitarian Universalist Association has *not mandated* that we ditch the idea of a winter holiday, which has been finding its feet for 18 years. The UUA has only said that the WAY congregations have been celebrating has been problematically appropriative. Those practices have, sadly, been associated with the old name, Chalica, which will forever cause pain for many. We need a new name.

Here's the good news: because the practices we've engaged in are rooted in our faith and are different from those of most congregations, we can continue with those practices. This really is an opportunity to create something amazing. Who knows? Our creativity could serve as a model for other congregations.

One thing came up on Sunday I wanted to address here: a few folks said to me that they would have liked to have some advance notice. This holiday just isn't on their radar yet, or in their calendar, even though they like it and intend to celebrate at home. I get that.

Here's my dilemma. Part of the beauty of this weeklong festival of light is that it is different from the mainstream holiday that looms over us this time of year, Christmas, which seems to begin earlier

and earlier each year. Watching decorations go up and sales events begin in October creates so much pressure to have the “perfect” holiday. It’s exactly the kind of pressure we’re seeking to avoid!

The challenge is going to be getting the word out, while still nurturing a sense that this is a *simple* holiday with *simple* practices designed to encourage setting aside a little time each day to nurture reflection on faith and kindness to ourselves and others, through intentional slowness and environmentally sustainable meals. My goal is to find a way to take advantage of the dynamic tension to create a sense of anticipation without stress. I’ll figure out ways to remind you early next year that the holiday is approaching!

Perhaps next November we can do things together, like plant narcissus bulbs, acquire chalices and mirrors, make seven-pointed stars and share recipes so that we’ll all be ready to celebrate at home.

I’d like to encourage you to get it into your calendar for next year: the first full week in December is the time for our luminescent festive of light. December 2-8.

Meanwhile, I hope you all enjoy this special week, however you observe it. And I hope we’ll see you on tonight for our special dinner featuring falafel and chick pea stew.

In Peace,
Rev Denis