

First Universalist Church Winter Solstice Ritual and Celebration

PREPARING FOR THE “HOME EDITION” SOLSTICE RITUAL

Prepared by Bob Friedman and Debbie Cash

Our Winter Solstice is an earth-based, “Wheel of the Year” meditative and celebratory ritual. These seasonal rituals are practiced around the world in a variety of ways, adapted to the cultures, beliefs and creativity of those participating. Many of you will be experiencing a Solstice Ritual for the first time. Rituals like this have a rich, diverse, multi-cultural history of practice around the world.

The ritual script you will follow is derived from the 2019 Ritual offered at First Universalist Church, titled “Mending the Web.” With current restrictions on gathering, this ritual is to be enjoyed in the comfort of your home. Think of this as a journey, a slow walk to know the dark, and a slow walk to rejoice in the returning light. Whether you are young or old, living alone, living with family, or have “pod-mates” who will do this ritual with you, we hope you enjoy the gifts that it offers and may it be a nourishing experience for you this season.

Please review the following pages prior to, even days, before doing the ritual. They will prepare you for and enhance your Solstice experience. It is especially important to set aside enough time to gather items and bake cookies! Below, you will find:

- A list of suggested items to be used in the ritual
- Ideas for your ritual setting
- Guidance for navigating our **Winter Solstice Ritual Script**
- Solstice and Labyrinth resources: activity ideas for the whole family
- Opportunities for giving
- A GREAT ginger cookie recipe (*requires overnight refrigeration*)

Suggested Items for Solstice Ritual

- Candles – the more the better – tapers, votives, tealights, pillars, birthday... Mix it up!
 - ≈ 1 center candle or chalice
 - ≈ 4 direction candles (*optional*)
 - ≈ 1 holdable candle per person
 - ≈ 5 similar candles for “Candles of Community” ritual element
- Candle Holders - handheld candles could be inserted into a cardboard disk as a “drip guard”
- Matches or lighter
- Noisemakers - more subtle than loud, like the following:
 - ≈ bells ≈ shakers ≈ chimes ≈ singing bowls

- Timer - for time in the dark
- Hand drum (*if available*) – for heartbeat during darkness
- Treats for celebrating – ginger cookies (recipe below), Clementines, & beverages
- Sparkly clothing or scarves (*optional*) – for setting the mood!

Ideas for Setting Up Your Space

Decide if you want to conduct your ritual in a large or small space. You may want to set up a center “altar” or table arrangement, as shown to the right. You can place 4 direction candles (if used), one in each cardinal direction, around the center candle or chalice. You could use a table covering, flowers and natural objects, if desired.



If using a large space, like a whole room, place a small table in the center with the center candle or chalice on it. The direction candles can then be placed around the room at the four directions. They should be arranged to encircle you or your group inside the ritual space.

You could set up your 5 Candles of Community in a line or other preferred arrangement for easy lighting.



Tips for Navigating the Solstice Script

An ideal time for performing the ritual would be after dark on December 21st, the time when most people celebrate Winter Solstice. However, any day and time within the week will work. Whether alone or with others, read the script silently or out loud at your own pace. Visit the links, share readings, go slowly and reflect on what you see and hear. Plan on doing the ritual in one sitting (40 to 50 minutes). Remember to silence your phones.

You can use any computer device with sound, even a phone, but the larger the screen, the better. You might even try screen sharing to a TV. When using links in the script, enlarge the video window to FULL SCREEN view for the best experience. To return to the ritual, exit FULL SCREEN and close the video window. Some links may start with an ad, depending on your browser or device (select “skip ad”).

Bold text between lines gives direction to participants. *Italic text is for reading or singing aloud.*

RESOURCES FOR ENHANCING YOUR SOLSTICE EXPERIENCE

There is abundant material on the web when you search topics like: Winter Solstice rituals, Stonehenge, solstice music, “Wheel of the Year”, sun in winter photos...etc. You will also find plenty of resources searching YouTube. Try: Solstice stories read aloud for children; Solstice music; ritual; customs; events... to name a few.

This music link <https://youtu.be/uyNe54j25ow> is a most wonderful hour-long Winter Solstice concert. The music is soothing, calming and a good stress reliever. You might listen to the concert if you choose to do the labyrinth activity below.

Walking the Labyrinth



Walking a Labyrinth is a meditative, reflective, and centering practice, often done prior to our Solstice Ritual. With the church's

Social Hall labyrinth not available, an individual or whole family could try doing a finger labyrinth. Locate a design online (search “labyrinth designs”), enlarge it for each person and try “finger walking” slowly into the center and back out. Then try some creative coloring.



You might first visit <https://labyrinthociety.org> to better understand this ancient meditation practice. It is a very informative site worth exploring, including excellent short videos. You might surf the web to learn more of the history, myriad of designs, or meditative music used in labyrinth practices. Also look for “Twin Cities Labyrinth Locations” for public walking. Some are open year-round.

For more things to do, First Unitarian Society offers Winter Solstice family activities which can be found on their website at <https://firstunitarian.org>.

Please consider an offering to our Holiday Giving Campaign at

<https://firstuniversalistchurch.org/holiday-giving/>

Solstice Ginger Cookies

(requires overnight refrigeration of dough)

This is a heavy, thick batter. If you do not have a stand mixer, I recommend doing half of the recipe. Full recipe yield: 80 cookies

In Mixer Bowl:

- 1 cup Crisco or Canola oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup unsulfured FULL flavor Molasses
- 2 eggs

Separate Bowl (sift together):

- 4 cups white flour
- 4 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 2 tsp. Cinnamon
- 1 tsp. salt



Day 1:

- Mix together wet ingredients.
- Slowly mix the dry ingredients into your prepared wet ingredients. The batter will become very stiff.
- Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Day 2:

- Form 1-inch balls.
- Preheat oven to 375°F
- Roll dough balls in sugar and place on a greased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 375 degrees for 8-10 minutes, until you see cracking on the top. **Do not bake more than 10 min even if they seem gooey!**
- Let them cool a few minutes on the cookie sheet or they will fall apart.