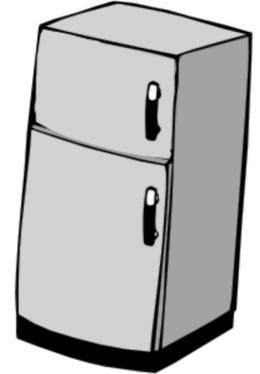




RE-Frigrerator Page



We Celebrate...

Our theme for December is Giving and Receiving. With Chanukah and Christmas right around the corner, you might well be making lists of presents you'd love to receive, or planning out gifts that you want to make or buy for family and friends.

Both giving and receiving can be a whole lot of fun. It's a wonderful feeling to see someone light up when they open a gift you cre-



ated especially for them. And, of course, who doesn't love a season of receiving gifts that you've been longing for—or better still, never even knew you were missing!

But there's a whole lot more to think about with Giving and Receiving than just a list of stuff we want to get. Whatever the season, we live in a constant cycle of receiving gifts from the world like sunshine and food, and giving our gifts of kindness and work and gratitude for the countless wonderful things that we are given.

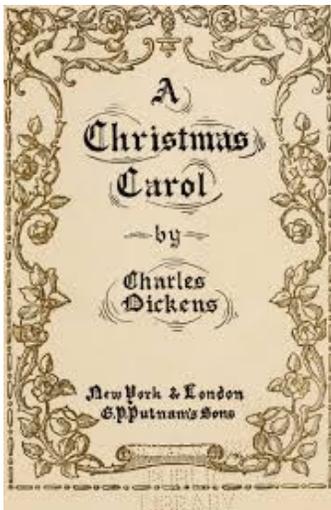
Family Quest
of the Church of
the Larger
Fellowship

Dec. 2017



We Honor...

Charles Dickens, British Unitarian, and author of *A Christmas Carol*. When Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, many



Christmas traditions had almost died out, and the holiday was hardly celebrated. England was becoming more and more industrial, and people leaving farms to work in factories had left their old customs behind. But the story, which was wildly popular, brought enthusiasm back to the cities for practices like singing Christmas carols and feasting on special foods. But more than anything else his story of the change of heart which comes to greedy Ebenezer Scrooge reminded people that Christmas was a time of giving, and that there was joy to be found

in giving, not just hoarding what we have.

Even more than that, it pointed out that Christmas was traditionally a time when the wealthy folk shared with the poorer people. In fact, Dickens was very concerned with the conditions for poor people in England at a time when the gap between the rich and the poor was getting wider and wider. Many of his books deal with this theme, and he became a Unitarian because, as he said, they "would do something for human improvement if they could; and practice charity and toleration."

Talk About It!

- ☺ What is one thing you hope to receive this holiday season?
- ☺ What is one thing you hope to receive that can't be wrapped or put in a box?
- ☺ What is one thing you want to give this holiday season?
- ☺ What is one thing you want to give that can't be wrapped or put in a box?
- ☺ What's the best gift you've ever gotten that wasn't a present?

Act...

Here's a riddle: How is it possible to make receiving and giving the same thing? Well, actually that's not a very good riddle because there are lots of right answers. For instance, giving and receiving a hug are really the same thing. But here's another answer to the riddle: you could ask that gifts to you be given to someone else.

Maybe you have a lot of aunts and uncles and grandparents who give you presents, which might be fun to open at the time, but then you don't much notice after the unwrapping is



done. You could ask instead that they make a gift in your name to something that you care about. That could be as immediate as the

sports team you play on or your local animal shelter, or it could be an organization like the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee or the International Rescue Committee that helps people around the world.

Who would you like to help? How do you wish the world were different? Maybe you can invite people who care about you to express that caring through supporting those causes.

Nurturing the Spirit

One of the gifts of the season—that we tend not to think of as a gift—is darkness. If you're in the Northern Hemisphere, it gets dark pretty early, and stays dark for a long time. That's not much fun if you're missing playing outside in the evening, but darkness has its own beauty.

It's just that the beauty of darkness tends to go with being quiet, not being rowdy and running around. Many animals hibernate during the winter, and there might just be something deep in our bones that

wants to slow down during the dark and the cold and go inside our own hearts and minds, as well inside where we live.

You might find, in this busy time of the year, that your spirit would really be nurtured by spending some quiet time in the dark. You might want to listen to music, or have twinkling lights or Chanukah candles to watch. Or you might want to just sit for a moment in the dark and let your mind and your body be very quiet and still.

Draw a picture of a favorite gift you have received.

Going to the Sources

The fourth of the list of Sources of Our Living Tradition talks about:

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Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbor as ourselves.  
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In fact, whether or not you believe in God, it turns out that treating the people around us with the love and respect that we want to receive

is a great way to live.

The greatest joy of giving and receiving comes when we feel like the people who give to us have truly seen who we are, what we like and what matters to us. In the same way, the joy of giving comes in showing someone you care about that you really see them.

Loving our neighbor as ourselves is not about assuming that we are all

alike, or all want the same things. It's about really seeing the other person in their full humanity, the way we see ourselves. Whether what we are giving is a present or a smile or a conversation or a helping hand, the more we really see the person we interact with for who they are, the more we can genuinely give to them and receive from them.

Read more about Charles Dickens and *A Christmas Carol*: <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/scrooges-conversion>

If you are choosing a charity to ask someone to contribute to, you might want to check that charity with an organization that evaluates how efficiently that charity uses donations, such as: www.charitywatch.org