



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication

Burning Bowl Ceremony

Sunday, January 4

10:45 am -12:15 pm

During the regular Sunday service.

This is an opportunity to release the past and make space for new beginnings.



A Letter to the Universe

By Marian Orihel

Today I opened an envelope I received from Annie on Sunday. In my mind, I thought it was a holiday greeting from her. However, I was very

surprised to see that it was a full-page letter that started, 'Dear God/Universe'. I wondered why Annie started it that way, and then I saw the closing: 'With gratitude, Marian'. More wondering. Why had Annie written a letter to me as if I had written it myself?? I was very confused and then I read the letter. The letter contained five paragraphs, each one asking for a requested gift from God/The Universe. As I read it, I found the requests to be modest, sincere, and thoughtfully written. No requests were made for money, an easy life, good health, or material items. But I was still confused as to why this particular letter was written and given to me. It was baffling. I texted three Interfaith friends for information and to ask if they all received similar letters.

Craig texted me back. "That's the letter YOU wrote to yourself a year ago during the burning bowl service." What?!? Seriously?! I wrote that?!? I read the complete letter again and vaguely remembered completing this activity. The words DID sound like something I might have said, but I neither remembered what I had written, nor did I even recognize my own handwriting!!! I was quite astonished!

What I did notice in the writing was the fervent hope, concerned expression, and humility in the requests for gifts from God/The Universe. I was fairly new to Interfaith when I wrote this letter. These are the things I wanted and wrote in the letter. I asked for relationships of depth and breadth that would fill my world with belonging, kindness, compassion, and joy. I asked that relationships with others allow those people to feel that I was a mirror for their own needs for love and belonging. Quite significantly for me, I requested that my heart and soul be tenderly held when the darkness of loss and suffering landed on my doorstep, or those that I loved. I sought guidance on my best role in supporting the frightened and marginalized people I knew and cared about as the new administration began. And perhaps most importantly to me, I asked that my heart be kept open to magic, hope, and possibility for whoever crossed my path that might actually be looking and hoping for me.

Twelve months ago, I sent the deepest wishes in my heart out into the world. Even though each hope did not come true exactly the way I expected, in every way that matters, I know that God and The Universe answered all my prayers.

In This Issue:

- p. 1 - A Letter to the Universe by Marian Orihel
- p. 2 - Earnestly Speaking by Janet Somalinog
- p. 3 - Ministerial Miscellany by Annie Kopko
- p. 4 - Green Burial
- p. 5 - Volunteer Corner by Annemarie Howse
- p. 6 - A Conversation With Polaris by Peggy Lubahn
- p. 7 - Holiday Highlights
- p. 10 - January Special Events



Earnestly Speaking

by Janet Somalinog

Editor's Note: This piece offers an exposé on the *Science of Mind Magazine* byline, "Change your Thinking, Change your Life", through the perspective of Janet Somalinog, RSp.

With the new year upon us, this obviously is a great time to be thinking about change, but who is not thinking about 'change' every day of their lives? Whenever a child is born, especially those born into trauma, or any person facing tough challenges in daily living circumstances, or health conditions that are bearing down on a person, these are oftentimes perfect opportunities to request 'change', right? I am one of those people who has always wanted a life that had greener grass, an unfortunate consequence of living next door to the 'Joneses' and the fact that I live in an extremely capitalistic, market-manipulated society. Still, luckily, I saw the Light many decades ago when I was 'divinely guided' to the *Science of Mind* premise that I could actually change my life. Well, I jumped on that and immediately found parking spaces in crowded streets. I still know of a secret hiding place tucked behind small shops on Alii Drive in Kona. There is always a spot waiting for me when I make my occasional trip to the Big Island. Thank you, God!

I can rightfully say that my life conditions are all a result of the 'new way of thinking' that I embraced during my training to become a Religious Science practitioner. It used to be about parking spaces, finding the confidence to leave the Island, and locating the perfect home, job, and/or partner. Eventually, I graduated to more esoteric things, like declaring enough confidence to express my authenticity which opened my life to express an artsy, creative side grounded in earth-based principles, sustainability, and wholistic living.

Wholistic for me means having my being in the Wholeness of God. What does that mean? Well, God is Infinite, right? So, I AM Infinite. God is everything and everywhere, right? So that means I AM everything, and everywhere, all the time, all at once. *How powerful is that?* (I think I am going to have to watch that 2022 movie, *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once.*)

Now to the good part. How can you augment change in your life? By mentally joining, identifying, and aligning with the Creative

Principle of Spirit that states: that which you think about, comes about. Sounds easy peasy, right? The hard part may be the deeper examination of your beliefs and how thoughts and habits are very much influenced by culture. For me, I needed to reject the dominant paradigms and societal restrictions placed on women, ageing, finances, etc. What is it you need to release in order to make room for the impulse of Infinite Mind to enter into your life trajectory?

Now to the better part. In light of our current national and planetary crisis, I'd like to invite us all to take some time to entertain how this Creative Principle works through 'us', the collective energies, the WE.

- We align with the Wholeness of God
- We are Infinite
- We are Everything and Everywhere
- We are Powerful and Creative
- Whatever God is, We are
- We are _____

Fill in the blank with whatever you think we are. Examine any blocks you might have to the Infinite Flow and Perfect outpicturing of God's Greatest Good.

Now, to the best part: When in your meditative, contemplative state of a *free and present moment*, access the Infinite realms of the Whole, Perfect, and Complete Essence of God that resides everywhere, at all times, in all forms, and flows through *all* expressions of *itself*. Declare the words above with a bold inner voice and conviction that cannot be denied. You can even use your real, bold vocal voice, your song and dance, if you want—the bolder and more confident, the better. Allow no personal doubt. Fully entrust these words to the Law of Cause and Effect. End your meditation with an abundance of Gratitude! In fact, do *not* end your meditation on these thoughts. Keep the contemplations going 24/7. A rising tide lifts *all* boats! And that is how we initiate change!

I invite you all to listen, watch, and share wildly and widely this beautiful peace anthem by Carsie Blanton, [Little Flame](#) (To view on YouTube, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH38VSfZbnU>). The video is interesting in that it is a 1971 Russian animation. What a perfect statement of our Unity with our Earth-bound brothers and sisters across the miles and decades. Peace is our Divine Nature!

We are Peace . . . And so it is!



Ministerial Miscellany

Practice, Practice, Practice

by Rev. Annie Kopko

Most of us use various techniques for our daily spiritual practice and I wanted to share

one with you all. I think this technique came from Dr. Joe Dispenza a few months ago; however, I used it in the eighties, initially learning it from Walter Russell, who, in 1921, entered a 39-day trance and returned with radical ideas about quantum physics and the light energy of our universe that were ahead of their time. He wrote many books; *The Universal One* explores concepts of light energy and our mind's role in shaping our reality.

Yes, we create our own perception of reality. What we think is what we get. What we see is what we get. What we conceive is what we achieve. I wake up in peace most of the time. I go to sleep in peace, most of the time. Not all the time, however, and spiritual practice is necessary. The world itself and an ordinary life offer so much potential for emotional and physical stress that peace can only come from deep within, with a willingness to see the bigger picture and to accept what is.

One practice goes somewhat like this: I read some notes that I have written to myself before I go to bed. Then I read some notes when I wake up in the morning. These are just a series of affirmations (and I haven't decided on the morning ones yet). Find words that speak to your heart—they are some of the ones I read to myself at night. Reading out loud is a good way to do this. And I often change my words too. I like the words of Buddhist wisdom that I found:

"My day is complete. I release all of this past day. I am so grateful for the gifts of this perfect day. I forgive myself and others for all intended and unintended judgments. I choose peace over suffering. Everything changes in my world; all is impermanent. My joy will fade and so will my pain. I will cling to as little as possible. May all beings be safe, may all beings be free. This is loving kindness."

May we continue to bless each other with peace and love.

Annie

Happy Birthday

- January 5 Peggy Lubahn
- January 13 Sheila Orlowski
- January 14 Jeanne Adwani
- January 15 Alaura Massaro
- January 16 Vicki Davinich
- January 19 Vivian Sanders
- January 20 Lucie Nisson
- January 23 Annemarie Howse
- January 24 Janet Somalinog
- January 25 Brett Koon
- January 26 Jennifer Lenders
- January 29 Lisa Salisbury
- January 29 Marice Clark



Haiku from Dexter
**by Barb Fisher, Sandy Hill,
 and Cooper Holland**

***Stillness—no need to do
 Grounded in the moment
 Just be***

Natural Burial and Conservation Burial Grounds

Presented by Tony Mayotte

Thursday, January 29 at 7:00pm

Whether you are new to the topic or already familiar with natural burial and conservation burial grounds, you are invited to join Tony Mayotte for a presentation and discussion of their ecological, communal, and spiritual benefits.

Tony has been trained and certified by instructors with [Redesigning the End](#) and is the founder of Jeremiah Commons, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and an early conservation cemetery and land commons initiative in southern Michigan. The vision of Jeremiah Commons is to ensure all people of southern Michigan have access to a natural, welcoming space—one where they can grieve loss, grow and share food, and find joy and renewal in the beauty of nature. For more information about Jeremiah Commons, visit jeremiahcommons.org.

Pre-registration is not required for this free event offered at the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth.

Shown below is Foxfield Preserve in Wilmot, Ohio, a Conservation Burial Ground certified by the Green Burial Council, closely aligning with Jeremiah Commons' vision for southern Michigan.



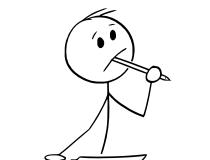
Driveway to Foxfield Burial Preserve



Headstone at Foxfield Burial Preserve



New grave at Foxfield Burial Preserve



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Please consider contributing to our monthly newsletter, *The Interfaith Inspirer*. Whether you come every week or twice a year, we want to hear your thoughts. We have general themes for each month if you want help getting started, but we'd love to hear about anything that inspires you or that you think will inspire others. February reminds us of love: love for our partner, our children, our pets, our friends, the world... the writing possibilities are endless.

Do you enjoy getting to know new people and have a knack for connecting them with others? The newsletter team is seeking a volunteer to interview community members and write a short profile for *The Inspirer*. This is a flexible opportunity that does not require a monthly commitment. Please let us know if you are interested!

Articles and content for the February newsletter are due by January 10 to newsletter@interfaithspirit.org.

Questions? Speak to Annemarie Howse, Bethany King, or Lyriel Claire, or email newsletter@interfaithspirit.org.

Volunteer Corner

By Anemarie Howse

Highlighting Diane Gledhill, Greeter Coordinator



Since September 2025, Diane Gledhill has been serving as our interim Greeter Coordinator and has now agreed to take on the position permanently. Thank you, Diane!

Diane has been a greeter since 2009, has a strong understanding of the role's responsibilities, and is already implementing some changes. She has also been a sound technician volunteer since 2010.

As the greeter coordinator, Diane's first challenge was recruiting new volunteers to fill both vacant and newly created greeter positions, aiming to have three people assigned to the role each Sunday. Thanks to everyone listed below, Diane has nearly filled all the positions but still needs greeters for months with five Sundays, specifically for the fifth Sunday.

- 1st – Dick Durham, Andy Walker, Diane Gledhill
- 2nd – Carol Bardenstein, Connie Snow, Rob Fagerlund
- 3rd – Lindsay Passmore, Dan Ramsey, Norah Reilly
- 4th – Ryan & Liam O Reilly & Curtis Glatter
- 5th – Bob Hopkins + you ?

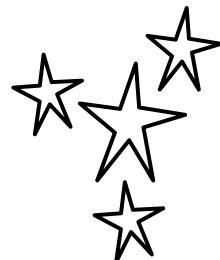
The greeter position is highly visible and often responsible for a visitor's first impression. Greeters also help set the tone for the day.

Who can be a greeter? Anyone! If you're new to Interfaith, serving as a greeter is a wonderful way to meet members of the congregation. If you've been a member for a while, it's a great chance to meet potential new members and possibly answer some questions they may have about Interfaith. Please consider signing up as a greeter for the upcoming "5th Sundays": March 29, May 31, August 30, and November 29, 2026. If you're interested, talk to Diane before or after the Sunday service or email her at diane82103@yahoo.com.

Recipe For A Beautiful Life

Dick Durham presented this reading during the Sunday service on November 23, 2025.

- Live with the 3 Es – Energy, Enthusiasm, and Empathy. And the 3 Fs – Faith, Family, and Friends.
- Take a 10 to 30-minute walk every day and while you walk, smile.
- Sit in silence for at least 10 minutes each day.
- Spend more time with people over the age of 70 and under the age of 6.
- Dream more while you are awake.
- Try to make at least three people smile every day.
- Smile and laugh more; it will keep the energy vampires away.
- Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
- Don't take yourself too seriously; no one else does.
- You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagreements.
- Make peace with the past, so it won't mess up the present.
- Don't compare your life with others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
- No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
- Forgive everyone for everything.
- What other people think of you is none of your business.
- Time heals almost everything; give time, time.
- However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
- Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful, or joyful.
- No matter how you feel, get up, dress up, and show up.
- Remember that you are too blessed to be stressed.
- Enjoy the ride. Remember, this is not Disney World, and you certainly don't want a fast pass. Make the most of it and enjoy the ride.



Stars shine
brightest in
the deepest
darkness



A Conversation With Polaris, the “North Star”

by Peggy River Singer

“Polaris is a second-magnitude star situated close to the north pole of the heavens, in the constellation Ursa Minor: it’s at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. Because it’s aligned with Earth’s rotational axis, it appears to be stationary above the North Pole, making it crucial for navigation in the Northern Hemisphere.” (Michigan Starwatch).

Note: I’m going to call Creator “he” for simplification.

Polaris: It is a pleasure to speak with a human who has loved the night sky so much all her life!

[I feel a sweetly warm and gentle tingle moving through my body.]

Polaris: I understand from your other writings that you usually ask each being you interview what their “role” or “assignment” is in the greater scheme of things. You might smile to hear that Creator did indeed plan from the beginning for a guiding star in the perfect position to assist human travelers over millions of years. Yes, millions – not just the last few thousand years that are familiar to your historians. Earth’s axial wobble (precession) allows many stars the unique experience of being the Pole Star. Kochab of Ursa Minor held the post before I took over a thousand years ago. In about 75 years, a star in Cepheus will take over and I will “retire”.

Peggy: The Southern Hemisphere has a Pole Star but it’s very faint, so it’s not useful for navigation. Why did Creator make that decision?

Polaris: Earth was created as a laboratory for human development. People of the Southern Hemisphere have coped with their situation very successfully.

Peggy: Has Creator closely controlled the activities of humans who have relied on the Pole Star to travel great distances to other lands?

Polaris: Creator sees all possibilities in all timelines and realities very easily, so planning ahead is a simple matter of mixing and matching. He doesn’t

usually get involved with details, but you might say he “nudges” people toward the goals he has chosen for them, such as crossing the great Bering Land Bridge from Asia to North America 35,000 years ago.

Peggy: Do any living beings occupy your physical form?

Polaris: Yes indeed, that is true for many stars. Currently, most of the population belongs to travelers from another star system.

Peggy: Do those travelers have any interest in Earth?

Polaris: No, remember that we are approximately 400 light-years apart. I doubt that they are aware of humans at all.

Peggy: Can you tell me whether Earth-based humans travelled in space in the far past?

Polaris: Absolutely! Humans have been around far longer than your scientists can currently prove.

Peggy: Did you request to be our North Star, or did Creator assign you that position?

Polaris: Creator asked me to consider the assignment and explained that, as the North Star, I would have an important presence in human history. I found the idea intriguing and agreed. Prior to that conversation, I was unaware of humans and this world.

Peggy: How will you spend your time once you retire?

Polaris: I will continue to spend a great deal of time in neutral observation of everything going on around me.

Peggy: Do you exchange your observations with other stars?

Polaris: Yes, of course. There’s an infinite web of interconnections among us stars. Even we do not know how far it extends physically or in how many timelines. We simply accept, you see; we do not wonder about such things.

Peggy: What else would you like to say today?

Polaris: I hope your readers will look into the night sky and see living beings, not just points of light! This conversation is complete.

AUTHOR BIO: Peggy River Singer is a Pleiadian Starseed, Lightworker, all-beings communicator, faerie ally, and lifelong writer. More of her articles and channelings are posted on angelsfairiesandlife.wordpress.com. To request a session, please call 734-548-0194.



"A Jazzy Little Christmas" at the December Cafe 704



The evening entertainers—jazz musicians, vocalists and leaders of the community sing-along.



Marlena Studer and Steve Ragsdale

Before the Interfaith Center's Holiday Party, Solstice Sing-Along, and Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service, there was "A Jazzy Little Christmas" produced by Marlena Studer and presented on December 13th at Cafe 704. Vocalist Marlena Studer, musicians Steve Ragsdale, Will Bennet, Pete Siers, Paul Vornhagen, and many others gave us an extraordinary performance to put us in the holiday spirit. The second half of the evening was a sing-along led by Eleni Kelakos, Christina Morales Hemenway and others. "Silent Night" was sung in many different languages, including those led by foreign exchange students from Denmark, Germany, and Thailand, singing in their native language. Thea Sundergard, from Denmark, arrived on stage with candles on her head, singing the traditional Saint Lucia song.



Thea Sundergard

What a spectacular way to end the year of Cafe 704 concerts!

Blessing Bags

The Michigan Daily reports that homelessness in Washtenaw County rose 20% from 2020 to April 7, 2025. The causes are varied but the bottom line is that it is a result of poverty and lack of affordable housing. The Caring Committee at Interfaith Center will, once again, provide "blessing bags" to assist those in need. Marilyn Alf, chair of the Caring Committee, will assemble blessing bags for the congregation to give to people in need that we see standing on street corners or in parking lots. Items requested for this purpose are:

- Travel size toiletries
- Toothbrushes
- NEW thick socks and mittens/gloves
- Small canned or pouches of tuna, fruit, etc.
(Include a plastic spoon or fork.)
- Lunch sized pretzels, chips
- Individually wrapped candy or candy bars
- Tissues
- Chapstick
- Band-aids



Choose items that are light and portable. Bottled water is not a good idea since it may freeze in your car. Our goal is to have 30 blessing bags available to distribute during the cold winter months.

January Special Events

Cafe 704 presents ... Nutshell

Saturday, January 10 7:00-9:00 pm



Featuring:

- Josh Burdick on fiddle
- John Lloyd on guitar, bouzouki, and drums
- Susie Lorand on fiddle and vocals
- Glenn Simon on guitar and vocals
- Linda Teaman on vocals, bodhran and other percussion, and banjo ukulele
- Tom Voiles on flute, whistle, sitar, and vocals

Nutshell is an Ann Arbor ensemble that takes Celtic music as its starting point and creates its own rhythm and joy genre. Their repertoire ranges from high energy jigs and reels to expressive airs and songs with four part harmonies. Sitar and drums add new dimensions along with the mainstay instruments including fiddle, flute, whistle, guitar, and bodhran. Original tunes and contemporary songs complement traditional numbers. With a warmth and cohesiveness evolved over decades of friendship and playing together, their concert will provide just the uplift we all need in the cold dark of winter.

Tickets: \$10.00-\$20.00 (sliding scale).

If attending in person - pay at the door (cash or check only). Doors open at 6:30.
If attending on Zoom-please purchase tickets at <https://interfaithspirit.org/cafe-704-coffeeshouse/>

Community Sing with Matt Watroba

Wednesday, January 14 7:00-8:30 pm

"Many know Matt as the voice of folk music in Michigan for his work with WDET Detroit Public Radio... he is committed to inspiring the world to sing... one town at a time."

Your donations make this event possible.



Drummunity Drum Circle with Lori Fithian

Saturday, January 17 7:00-8:30 pm

Lori brings her collection of hand drums and percussion toys so everyone attending has something to choose from. Children of all ages, including those well into their 90's, enjoy the energy that is produced when they join the Drummunity experience.

Donations to the Center are appreciated.



Imbolc

**PAGAN CHANT SING-ALONG
with Nora Farley**

Friday, January 30

7:30-9:00 pm

Scan for a song sheet
with the lyrics and
links to recordings.



Donations to Interfaith are appreciated.

Come celebrate the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox with music from Earth-based spiritual traditions. Feel free to bring your own instrument if you have one! All ages, spiritualities, and musical abilities welcome!