



Whelp, it's been another month, but at least there's a holiday! I don't know about you, but I am ready for some fun. What kind of things do you do during the holidays? Do you have any fun family traditions or stories that you tell? We have a story from when I was little that my dad tells just about every year. It was the Christmas of 1990 and we had our ENTIRE family over – I mean, everyone was sleeping at our house – kids on the floor of every bedroom and it was EPIC. Unfortunately, the pipes in our house (did I mention we had just moved there?) froze and burst and then flooded the floor with ice-cold water. For us kids - it was quite the adventure! Does your family have any stories they like to tell? Stories can be so powerful - they can make someone have ALL the feels which in turn gives us a way to connect with one another. Why do you think stories are and have been important to humans throughout history?

This month, the UUCE's topic for services is sacredness. **Sacred** can mean "something other than the ordinary", "extraordinary" or "holy". Our western traditions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) tell many different sacred stories of a God "in the heavens," or somewhere beyond. They pray out or up to God in order to connect with "him" and use sacred stories to help guide their lives. Eastern traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen) view the most important parts of life as being *within* us and all things. This is why meditation is such a big part of these religions. It is a way to focus inward and connect with the inner-self. The stories that are told in all of these religions provide a way to not only answer questions about life and why we are here, but also as a way to give guidance on how to grow and live in a way that represents the type of person they would like to be.

Can you think of any sacred stories that are told during this time of year? Many Christians tell the sacred story of the birth of Jesus, which is their reason for celebrating Christmas. What a powerful story – just think of the amount of people that have heard or use this story to celebrate a man they believe was born to save them. His story inspires many to live a spiritual life. Hanukkah is also inspired by a sacred story. It is said that a tribe of Jewish people around 160 BCE faced off against a much larger army. After they were able to make the other army retreat, they lit a candle with only one jar of oil and by a miracle, the oil lasted 8 nights. Hence, this is why the menorah is lit each night for 8 nights (the 9<sup>th</sup> candle lights all the other ones). Diwali is another tradition that uses sacred stories to inspire its celebrations, however not everyone uses the same story. UU's use sacred stories to help shape our 7 Principles, or traits and values that we use to help guide our lives and connect spiritually with one another. Can you think of any stories that may have inspired you in your daily life?

I hope you have a great Christmas and I want to let you know we will be having a little Zoom get-together, December 20 at 2 pm. Tella will be leading us in making salt-dough ornaments! They are super easy to make and only require some salt, flour (gluten-free also works) and water. You can keep them simple or get as creative as you like. It should be a great way for all of us to see each other and connect – maybe we can all tell our favorite family stories!