

**Closing /
Extinguishing the
Chalice**

- Fra Giovanni,
Fourteenth
Century

Link arms in a circle surrounding the flames. One member reads the words in regular type and everyone responds with the words followed by "All":

I salute you! There is nothing I can give you which you have not; but there is much, that, while I cannot give, you can take.

No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today.

All: Take Heaven!

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present instant.

All: Take peace!

The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach, is joy.

All: Take Joy!

And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you, with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

All: Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again!

Acknowledgements

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SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE

Welcome the Return of the Light

With mounds of greenery, the brightest ornaments, we bring high summer to our rooms, as if to spite the somberness of winter come.

*In time of want, when life is boarding up
against the next uncertain spring, we
celebrate and give of what we have away.*

All creatures bend to rules, even the stars
constrained.

*There is blessed madness in the human
need to go against the grain of cold and
scarcity.*

We make a holiday, the rituals varied as the
hopes of humanity.

*The reason as obscure as ancient solar
festivals, as clear as joy on one small face.*

- Hymnal #663, Margaret Starkey

Preliminaries

Church announcements, candles and holder(s), opening and closing readings, length of sharing.

Opening / Chalice (or Yule Candle) Lighting

- Mickey
Goldberg,
Cedarhurst
Unitarian
Universalists,
Finksburg, MD

This is the eve of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. Now darkness triumphs; and yet, gives way and changes into light. As we celebrate the solstice we join across time and space all the festivals of light emerging from the dark. May all the Yule fires, all the Hanukkah candles, all the Christmas lights the world over—and the lights we are about to kindle here today—not only brighten the darkness of winter but also brighten the darkness of our hearts.

Check-in

Take a minute or two to briefly share the high point or the low point of your life since we last met.

Solstice Ritual

- adapted from
material by
Phaedra Oorbeck,
in [The CUUPS
Newsletter](#)
Winter 1996

Each member reads one paragraph, going around the circle. The words to be read are in regular type. The ritual directions are in **boldface type**. The leader will read where it says “**Leader reads.**”

“O Holy Night”—so goes the song. And rightly so. This night is holy and holy it has been for 2000 times 2000 years.

Christians talk of remembering the true meaning of Christmas but most do not remember why the Christ, who was called the Light of the World, was said to be born at Winter Solstice.

Tonight, we move beyond religion or creed, and acknowledge the promise that is renewed, every year at this time, to every creature that lives on this Earth:

The promise that no matter how dark, no matter how long the night, the light shall come again.

O Holy Night, longest night, cold and dark and ancient night, we sit here as the old ones did, as others stand in circles all around this world, this night, to seek the promise of light to come.

What dark of your own awaits the day?

The dark of pain, the dark of grief, the dark of being lost along the way?

It is still night. So we cover ourselves with darkness, and hold our candles, not yet lit, waiting for the sunrise yet to come.

(Members pick up their unlit candles. The leader will extinguish the room lights.)

Leader reads: O Holy Night, Winter Solstice night, night that will lead into bright shining day, we are ready for your mysteries. Now as we sit in semi-darkness, let us meditate on what was our own personal “longest night” of the past year and what good events we wish to find when our sun rises again.

(Sit in silence for 3-5 minutes.)

Leader reads: Would anyone care to speak their longest night and warmest wish? If so, we ask that you keep your sharing very brief, no more than two sentences.

(Members may share very briefly if they wish, in any order. After each has shared, all say “May it be so.”)

Leader reads after all who want to have shared: Now after the longest night of the year, we welcome the return of the Sun and the promise of greater light, warmth, and energy in our lives. Going in a circle, light your candle from the central flame and place it in the holder.

(In silence, members light their candles in turn.)

Leader reads: As we gaze at these small, though bright flames, we remind ourselves that no matter how dark, no matter how long the night, the light shall come again. Now is the time for celebrating!

(If desired, turn the room lights on again.)

Singing

- Hymnal #235,
“Deck the Halls”

(Use the traditional verses.)

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(Use the responsive reading on the back cover.)