



The Flaming Chalice

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN A THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church | December 2019 Newsletter



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

**Tuesday, Wednesday,
and Thursday**

9:30am – 2:30pm

To meet with the minister
for pastoral care or to discuss
congregation life, please call the
church office for an appointment.

22577 Bayview Avenue
Hayward, CA 94541
510-581-2060

starrking.org

facebook.com/StarrKingChurch

Parish Minister

Rev. María Cristina
Vlassidis Burgoa

minister@starrking.org

Office Administrator

Kelli Abatangelo

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Church President

Jennifer Koney

president@starrking.org

Director of Religious Exploration

Allison Prout

dre@starrking.org

DRE Office Hours:

Tuesday–Thursday,

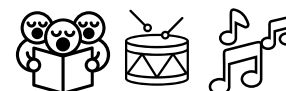
11:30am–2:30pm

Newsletter

newsletter@starrking.org

Sunday Worship, 10:30am

December is Music Month at Starr King!



DECEMBER 1

Rhythmic Innovation

We begin with the healing and joyful sounds of the drums, led by our friends Phil Didlake and Jenny Madrigal, founders of Rhythmic Innovation: *"We believe that music should not only be reserved for performance, competition, or passive entertainment. Our mission is to expand the possibilities of music to enrich personal wellness, to better understand the people around us, and to build community through drumming and in-the-moment music making."* Join us for an interactive and lively service!

DECEMBER 8

Heart, Time, and Music

Reflections on changing perspectives and how music has been a companion on the journey.

– Jim Lewis

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 5PM

Las Posadas

Annual *Las Posadas* candle light caroling in the neighborhood followed by community dinner. Fun for the entire family!
All welcome!

DECEMBER 15

Making Room

Inspired by the Latin American tradition of *Las Posadas*, we reflect upon the meaning and practice of radical hospitality. Christmas carols sing-along in both English and Spanish.

– Rev. María Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 7PM

Winter Solstice Gathering

Lorie Miller leads

DECEMBER 22

Annual Christmas Pageant

A delightful service featuring the story of the nativity and our favorite Christmas carols.

– Terri Owen and Rev. María Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 7PM

Christmas Eve Service

Join us for a traditional candlelight service of readings and carols. This family friendly service is open to all.

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 25, 2PM

Christmas Dinner

See page 10 for details.

DECEMBER 29

Time to Reflect

This is the time of year we review our lives and decide what we leave behind and what we take with us into the new year. Past Intentions from previous years are worth reviewing. Join us as we reflect and seek out what is important.

– Lorie Miller

WHAT'S INSIDE

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November Highlights



November 9th: Castro Valley Light Parade



November 20th: Transgender Day of Remembrance



Thanksgiving Dinner



Claudia McDonagh's dog "Ambrosia" gave birth to seven puppies!



Zelma and Chuzo



Mama Lily and Walter

Bits from the Board

Vision Statement Development

The Envisioning Team presented a draft Vision Statement to the Board for feedback at our most recent Board meeting. We are trying on for size what the UU Congregation of Phoenix did to see how it fits us:

To be a spiritual community for our time:

Theologically Diverse

Radically Inclusive

Justice Centered

as a reflection of our key values (radical hospitality and creating a more multicultural community as we care for each other as we care for the world) and to possibly create a branding and marketing tool. There was robust discussion and we're testing the waters with the six words above for our next publicity postcard, and we're not done yet. Look for further updates to come!



Shared Ministry

At the November 3 service, I spoke representing the Board and Beth Ogilvie spoke representing the Committee on Ministry (COM) as to our impressions of "Shared Ministry" and how we minister to each other. We do a lot! And it became very visible to me as to the many ways we make church together. It was uplifting to be reminded of how many gifts we have to share.

Additionally, we were honored to have Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong on November 10 to co-lead worship and to facilitate a thought-provoking workshop on "Shared Ministry". Part of the workshop included a case study regarding the "Nominating Committee of Anytown" with small group responses to questions about the scenario. Many great insights and suggestions were generated and I've captured notes from the workshop. Email me if you'd like them and I'll be glad to pass them along.

Fiscal Sustainability

On November 17, we held a congregational discussion about our long term financial stability. Because of the stellar efforts of our finance committee (Keith Lewis) and our Board treasurer (Marilyn Mosher), we now have an effective tool to project out the state of our finances up to 10 years or more. Based on conservative assumptions and the current balance of working capital, if we change nothing, we will use up our reserves

and run out of money by 2025. A second scenario was presented and supported by the Board that takes the difficult step of reducing the hours for the Director of Religious Education (DRE) from half time to quarter time starting next July thereby significantly changing our approach regarding youth religious education to a model more geared toward family ministry. By taking this step, our reserves may last for an estimated 10 years – until 2029 – if there are no changes. This gives us a stronger chance and enough time to successfully build additional revenue sources and our long term sustainability. This long term, multi-year effort will involve the formation of a task force to research and develop strategies with ongoing opportunities for the congregation to provide input and ideas. While this is a significant challenge for our congregation, it also offers us an opportunity – especially if we have time on our side. Many in attendance expressed gratitude to be able to see the forecast early so that we can take steps now to develop solutions. Deep thanks to Marilyn and Keith and to those who attended the congregational discussion.

**Those are the bits from your board this month –
In gratitude for our beloved community**

– Jennifer Koney



STARR KING
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Theologically Diverse
Radically Inclusive
Justice Centered



From the Minister

Garden Blessing

I am amazed and so grateful for the miracle that is this flower that dares to bloom and rise towards the sun after four years of being a seed caught inside the corner of my pocket...for all that remains hidden and maybe even forgotten...may we take heart in the potential for transformation when we shake ourselves up, turn ourselves upside down and inside out, who knows what seeds might be loosened from the corners of our deepest longings...and find fertile ground in new places inviting us to rise towards the light.

– *Rev. María Cristina Vlassidis Burgoa*



My Credo

by Lorie Miller

The weakening stance knows the forth coming truth,
“dying without pain is not so.”

It's unsettling tears silences the space between God and Soul,
though in this moment of time, joy lives in the goodness of Light.
Side by side we stand, our shoulders draped with the rising sun.
Embracing hugs, hearts aligned.

The rhythm entices my breath to join the spiral dance.

A choir singing in my Soul grows the human spirit.

Gifted Guides, beyond closed eyes, beyond the speckled darkness,
circulates the connecting.

Peace fills my inter most core.

My spirit does not walk alone when walking with the universe.

The path filled with not only the heart beats of others, but of leaf, rock and
soil.

As the moon softens and drifts into the dawn's layered skies,
I am stripped of self importance.

Gravity slips away.

The cosmos blanket my dreams.

I am you

You are me

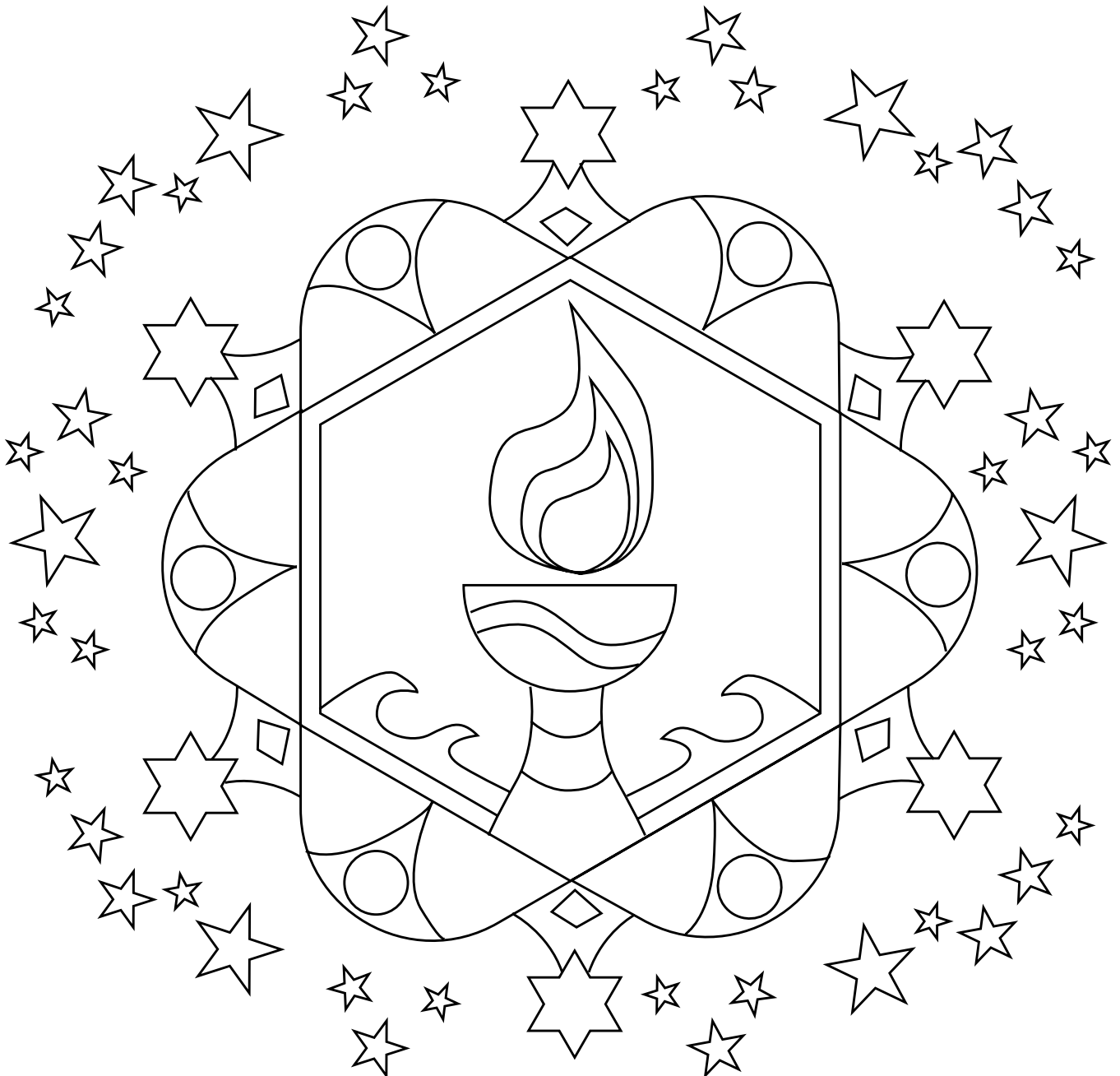
We are one.

RE Reflections

In case you were wondering, Unitarian Universalists do have their own winter holiday, Chalice!

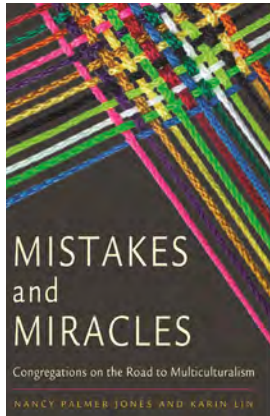
Chalice is a week-long celebration of the Unitarian Universalist Principles. The holiday first emerged in 2005 out of a wish to have a holiday that highlights the UU 7 Principles. The light symbol of this celebration is a chalice, which is a cup with a foot and stem.

Chalice begins on the first Monday in December and lasts seven days. To celebrate Chalice, Unitarians light the chalice one candle each day. Each day is spent reflecting on the meaning of the day's principle and a good deed that honors that principle.



Mistakes and Miracles

Congregational Read



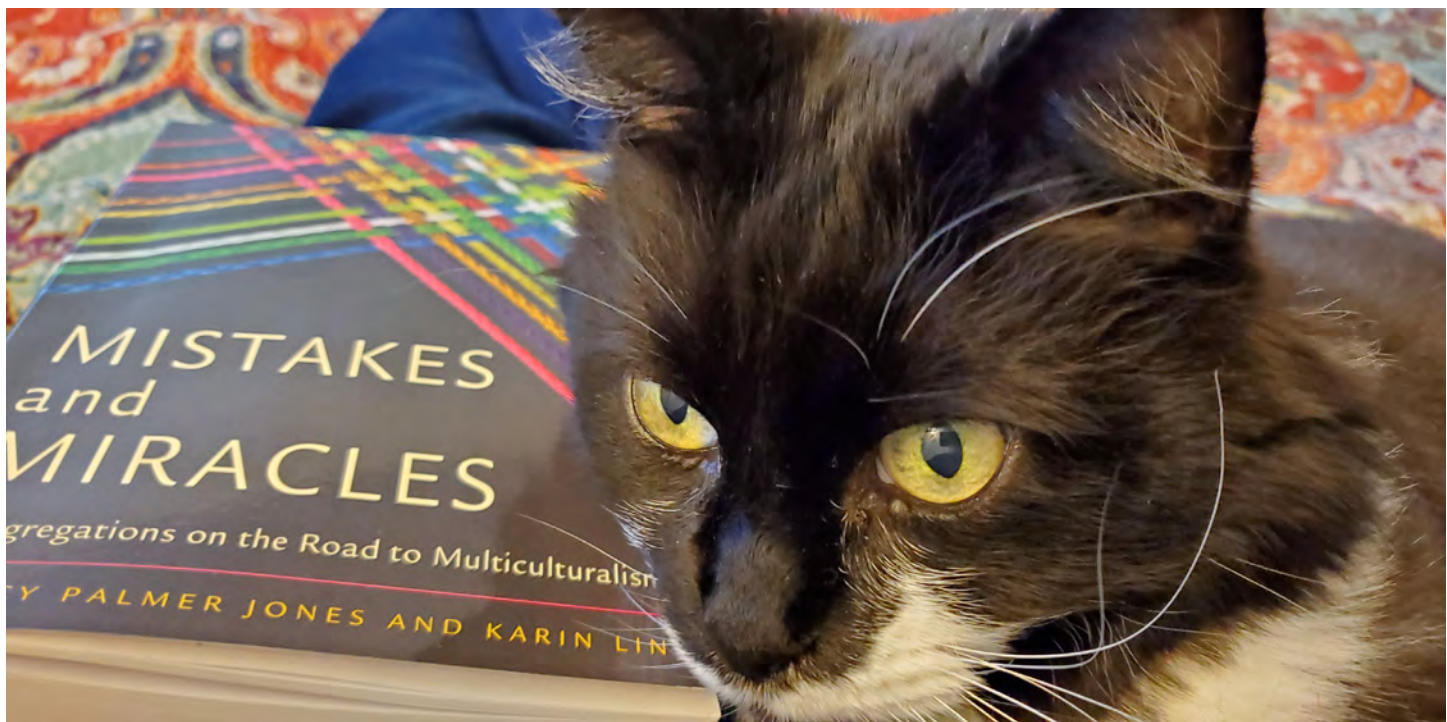
I've joined others in reading *Mistakes and Miracles: Congregations on the Road to Multiculturalism* by Nancy Palmer Jones and Karin Lin. Described as a “powerful and necessary book,” I find it to be engaging and a sneak peak into how congregations committed to multiculturalism are walking on this journey.

“This book does something no other book before it has done: it lays bare the challenges of creating communities that are truly multicultural and inclusive.”
– Aisha Hauser

While I've only read about half of the book so far, I truly appreciate the thoughtful and pragmatic definitions of critical terms and how the authors so honestly present their viewpoints in such a humble and authentic way. They took great care to listen deeply. It was also so very important to them to have what they are presenting reviewed by each of the sources as a way of modeling accountability and cultural humility. I particularly like the calling out and naming the twelve “Common Threads” that are involved with doing this work. These can become tools in our tool box as we also join the journey towards multiculturalism.

Reading this book in a group setting, and having great conversations around what we read, has been a great experience in learning together and I highly recommend it. Please consider joining us even if you've only read some of the book. I'm sure you'll find the discussions rewarding!

– Jennifer Koney



Save Taxes by Donating if You're Over 70

If you are over 70 1/2 and taking mandatory minimum distributions from an ordinary IRA, you can donate to the church with pre-tax dollars by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). This is better than a deduction because it reduces your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), and that not only reduces your taxes, it helps with those percentages used to calculate thresholds for various other deductions. **The secret is to have the company that holds your IRA make the check out to the church.** They can mail it to you (so you can check it and make a copy before passing it on to the church) or they can mail it to the church directly. You can give up to \$100,000 per year this way. Please check with your tax specialist to see if you are eligible, and which is better for you, QCD or itemized deduction.

Details

As Kathleen Pender's 12/16/18 "Net Worth" column in the SF Chronicle said, "Donating from an IRA gives you a tax benefit equal to – and in almost all cases better than – what you would have gotten had you taken the donation as an itemized deduction.

"This type of transfer, called a qualified charitable distribution or QCD, reduces your adjusted gross income (AGI). 'Lots of other tax benefits, credits and deductions are based on AGI,' said financial expert Ed Slott, a CPA and author of several books on retirement. 'Reducing your AGI may reduce your Medicare premium surcharge, the amount of Social Security that's taxable, and it could increase your medical deduction.' Itemized deductions reduce your taxable income, but not your adjusted gross income, so they don't have those same benefits.

"This type of donation, also called an IRA charitable rollover, counts toward the required minimum distribution that people older than 70 1/2 must take from their regular (not Roth) IRAs each year, as long as they make the donation by year end. But it's not limited to your required distribution. Each person older than 70 1/2 can donate a total of \$100,000 per year to one or more charities this way."

"Robert Peterson, a retired Santa Clara University law professor, says 'That's probably the way I'm going to do my giving going forward because I can't think of any reason not to. Most people are slightly annoyed about having to take a required distribution because it's taxable. When you make a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, it's almost like the government is giving you a matching gift.'"

Tax time hint: The 1099-R from your IRA holder will not separate QCDs from taxable withdrawals, so your total withdrawal amount will appear in box 2a. To calculate the taxable amount, take the figure in box 2a and subtract the total of your QCDs from that account for the calendar year.

Adult RE Announces Spring Program

The Congregation Spoke – We Listened

Based on the Congregations responses to our most recent survey, The Adult Religious Exploration Committee is pleased to announce the Winter/Spring Adult RE series. Details for each of these sessions will be released in The Chalice, the month prior to the session.



Sunday, January 19, 2020: 12:15pm–2pm

Sunday, February 9, 2020: 12:15pm–2pm

These two sessions will take a Deeper Dive into Unitarian Universalism – Our History and Adults growing in faith



Sunday, March 16, 2020

Spirituality: A Personal Journey

What is it? How is it lived out?



Saturday, April 18, 2020: 10am–12 noon

End-of-Life Care Planning

April 16th each year is designated as “National Healthcare Decision Day (NHDD).” For a deeper understanding of NHDD, you may wish to visit their website:

<https://www.nhdd.org/about>.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Adult RE Committee: Karen Bonner-Benson; Kathryn LaMar; Sheila McClellan; Diane Meyerson; Ethel-May Shaw and Mileva Saulo Lewis. The Committee meets each 2nd Tuesday of the month at 11 am to 12 noon. All are invited to join us.

– *Mileva Saulo Lewis*



Christmas Dinner at Starr King

**Wednesday, December 25
2pm**

**Everyone is invited!
All are welcome! Bring a friend!
No RSVP needed**

**Please join us for Christmas dinner at
Starr King on Wednesday, December 25.**

**We'll gather at 2pm for appetizers
and conversation, dinner to follow.**

**A sign-up sheet will be provided in Fellowship
Hall for those that wish to bring a dish.**

**Any questions or suggestions, feel free
to email Colleen and Dirk Dino at
colleendino@yahoo.com**

More Holiday Services and Events

Saturday December 14
5pm

Las Posadas

Christmas caroling and community dinner.
All welcome. Join us!



Saturday December 21
7 PM

Winter Solstice Vespers

Come and celebrate in a Pagan based ritual welcoming
the return of the light on the Winter Solstice.



Tuesday December 24
7pm

Christmas Eve

Singing carols and joining together to celebrate.
Come join the fun!



Ongoing Activities

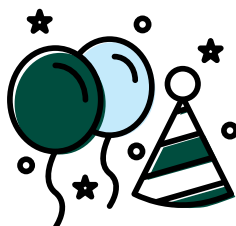
Book Group+: Mistakes and Miracles	Meets every 1st and 3rd Monday at 7:15pm in the sanctuary.
Choir Practice	Meets every Sunday from 9–10:15am in the Fellowship Hall
Church Bookstore	Open on the third Sunday of the month, after the service
Drum Circle	First Friday of the month, 7–9pm, in the Sanctuary. For adults and mature kids.
Evening Meditation	Every Wednesday, 7:30–8:45pm. Open to all.
Elderberries	Third Wednesday of the month, at noon. For self-identified elders. Bring your lunch.
Small Group Ministry	Contact sgm@starrking.org for more information.
Board Meeting	First Thursday of the month, 7–9pm in Fellowship Hall. Open to all.
Adult RE	Second Tuesday of the Month from 11–12 noon in Conference Room.



Starr King Church Calendar

December 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 * 10:30 am Worship Service	2 * 6:30 pm Rainbow Group LGBT NA * 7:15 pm BookGroup+: Mistakes&Miracles	3	4	5 * 10:00 am RE Council * 7:00 pm Board of Trustees	6 * 7:00 pm Drumming Circle	7
8 * 10:30 am Worship Service * 12:15 pm Peace and Justice	9 * 6:30 pm Rainbow Group LGBT NA	10 * 11:00 am Adult RE	11 * 12:00 pm SGM afternoons * 3:00 pm Pastoral Care Committee * 7:15 pm SGM Evenings	12	13	14 * 5:00 pm Los Posadas
15 * 10:30 am Worship Service * 12:00 pm Church Bookstore Open	16 * 6:30 pm Rainbow Group LGBT NA * 7:15 pm BookGroup+: Mistakes&Miracles	17	18 * 12:00 pm Staff Meeting	19	20	21 * 7:00 pm Winter Solstice
22 * 10:30 am Worship Service * 12:15 pm H & M Meeting	23 * 6:30 pm Rainbow Group LGBT NA	24 * 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service	25 * 2:00 pm Christmas Dinner * 7:15 pm SGM Evenings	26	27	28
29 * 10:30 am Worship Service	30 * 6:30 pm Rainbow Group LGBT NA	31				

Calendar developed and supported by Kieran O'Shea



December Birthdays

DECEMBER 2

Nancy Bonner-Benson

DECEMBER 7

Mary Lou Schuler

DECEMBER 13

Zelma Nuñez-Borja
Stuart Fink

DECEMBER 16

Henry Sprague

DECEMBER 24

Chris Selig

DECEMBER 29

Glen Jacob

DECEMBER 31

Karen Swain