

U.U.&you

newsletter of the universalist unitarian church of halifax

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December 2016

Universalist Unitarian
Church of Halifax
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Rev. Norm Horofker
Minister
Office Hours
Tues, Wed, Fri 10-3
Cell 902-229-9239

Sandra Jamieson
Office Administrator
Office hours
Mon 11-3, Wed, Fri 9:30-3

Deborah Wiggins
Music Director

RE Director-Vacant

Kim Turner
President

Newsletter
Etta Hamm
Sylvia Mattinson
Sandra Jamieson

Sunday service
10:30 am

All are welcome

Children & Youth Education
Child care available



Theme for December – Expectations

December 4

Presenter: Rev. Norm Horofker; Service Assistant: Mia Huh

Bending Reality – Part 1

We live in an amazing universe, where what we expect to happen, what is in our hearts, has a powerful influence on what we experience. This topic is so rich that Norm has decided to do a two-sermon mini-series to do it justice. This first sermon will deal with the connection between our expectations and our reality.

December 11

Presenter: Norm Horofker; Service Assistant: Anne Knight-Gorman

Bending Reality – Part 2

Continuing the theme of how our expectations affect our reality, Norm will explore how our spiritual practices (and we all have them whether we realize it or not) can shape our experience of life.

December 18 - 10:30 am

Presenter: Deborah Wiggins; Service Leader: Marilyn Shinyei

Music of the Season

This service will be filled with seasonal music, and lots of opportunity to sing along. Come out and enjoy the spirit!

(Also) December 18 – 6:30 pm at Bearly’s House of Blues and Ribs

Presenter: Rev. Norm Horofker, Service Assistants... many!

Our 5th annual Blue Christmas service in a blues bar begins with music by Morgan Davis at 4:30 pm. The service begins at 6:30 pm and will feature music by the multi-award-winning Erika Kulnys (granddaughter of Barbara Harsanyi) and our Afterchoir, poetry by Genevieve Lehr, other readings—and a candle lighting ceremony of celebration. Come out to celebrate the return of the light, following the longest night of winter—and **bring a friend**. The service will be followed by a blues jam. The bar and kitchen are open during the entire evening. There is no admission charge.

More services, next page ...



Our mission is to provide a community that nurtures personal and spiritual growth, practices inclusiveness, celebrates diversity and affirms individual and collective commitment to community service and social justice.

December 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Receiving donations for Christmas Hampers to 18th inclusive			1 9:30-11:30 am Parents & Tots	2	3 10 am-2 pm 4R Bazaar including Soup Lunch 
4 9:30 am Music 10:30 Connecting with Fredericton congregation 12 pm Worship Committee	5	6	7 4:45-6:15 pm Afterchoir	8 9:30-11:30 am Parents & Tots	9	10 10 – noon UU Brunch
11 No music 12 pm Soc.Resp. meeting	12	13	14 4:45-6:15 pm Afterchoir	15 9:30-11:30 am Parents & Tots 6:30 Board Meeting	16	17 10 – noon UU Brunch
18 9:30 am Music 6:30 pm Blue Christmas at Bearly's House of Blues	19 Newsletter submissions accepted <u>any time</u> during month until 28 th	20	21 4:45-6:15 pm Afterchoir	22	23	24 10 – noon UU Brunch 4:30 pm Candlelight Service
25 No music rehearsal  10:30 am Service as usual!	26	27	28 10 am Extended Newsletter <u>Deadline</u>	29 e-Newsletter <u>release</u> via UUinfo	30	31 10 – noon UU Brunch  Annual Pancake Brunch tomorrow at noon

Saturday December 24 - 4:30 pm at the church

Presenter: Rev. Norm Horofker, Service Assistant: Marilyn Shinyei

Candlelight Service

Our annual Candlelight Service, this year on Christmas Eve, will be a multi-generational celebration of the season with song and dance, hot cider and Moravian buns. You are invited to bring Festive Potluck Finger Food for the social gathering after the service. This is a “not to be missed tradition” at the Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax that will feed your body and your soul.



December 25 – 10:30 am

Presenter: Rev. Norm Horofker, Service Assistant: Martha Wilson

Christmas Morning Service

This special service will be relaxed, musical and informal... a chance to share the joy of the season and reflect on your hopes and expectations for the New Year.

Minister's Notes



***“There are only two ways to live your life.
One is as though nothing is a miracle.
The other is as though everything is.”***
Albert Einstein 1879-1955

I love being a UU Minister and this month I got notice that I have received my “Final Fellowship.” This marks the last step in a ten-year process of qualification. It has been a wonderful process for me and I feel that I am only beginning the journey as a UU minister.

But in many ways, it is not an easy journey. A UU minister has a much more difficult role to play than ministers in other religious faith traditions, if I may say so. Here, I am speaking of the need to minister to people with very different belief systems. There is no UU creed or dogma. I cannot claim to have the answers for everyone in my congregation to “life’s most persistent questions.” I have my own answers and they may change over time, but everyone of you is on your own journey in a miraculous universe, and will decide for yourself what that journey means.

When I know that we are advancing a contentious hypothesis, I find it to be a good strategy to quote a notable thinker... and so I have invoked Albert Einstein.

I think the opening quotation provides an answer that transcends many religious experiences and contains one important secret to happiness... seeing everything in life as a miracle. I don’t mean miracle in the sense of a violation of the laws of physics by a direct intervention in the working of the universe by an omnipotent God. The laws of physics are themselves the miracle! There is no objective reason why any of this thing we call the experience of life, the universe should exist. The more scientists peel back the laws of physics and advance theories to explain the universe on a grand scale, the more miraculous our world appears... and there is no self-evident reason why any of this should exist.

Another quote from a Canadian Humanist: “That a fragment of the materials of the earth should grow into forms of beauty, feel love and joy and sorrow, become a temple of ideas and dreams, send thought messages out through all the reaches of space and time, mold meanings and patterns of beauty into the lives of others, and gather the threads of friendship, devotion, admiration and loyalty from the hundreds of hearts, to weave for itself a garment of happiness – this is the marvelous mystery, the supreme poetic achievement of time and nature.”

Our December services will explore the theme of expectation. When we stop taking everything around us for granted, and start to see the miracle of it all, our expectations change. If everything is a miracle, including you yourself, then you may expect that your life has the potential for meaning. A potential that you alone can realize.

It has been said that we live the story that we tell ourselves and others. What story do you tell yourself? Will you set your story in a miraculous and improbable universe? What effect does that decision have on your expectation and your life?

Rev. Norm Horofker

Board Buzz

from Shripad

The UUCH Board held its monthly meeting on Thursday, November 17th. (Meetings are generally at 6:30 pm on the third Thursday of the month and are open to UUCH members and friends).

As many of you know, Bunny Turner, a devoted member who served UU Halifax and in various other cities in Canada, died in September. A celebration of her life was held on October 22nd.

There was discussion about the annual canvass—the key point was that it is going well. A particularly gratifying aspect is that many of the new members and friends of the Church have been very generous in their pledges. More than half of the goal has been reached so far. If you have not been canvassed yet, please contact Molly Hurd. The canvass has two important elements: a financial pledge that you consider to be appropriate for you, and a discussion with the canvasser about any feedback you have for the Church.

The Church has received significant bequests from the estates of Cynthia Davis and Nancy Meinertzhagen, both of whom were members over many years. Nancy's bequest is earmarked for the Endowment Fund. The Board will be carefully considering what to do with Cynthia's bequest and how best to invest this wonderful gift in the meantime.

Verses and Vittles, a program to celebrate music and food in the 179 years of the Universalist Church in Halifax was held on November 12th. It was organized by Deborah Wiggins and Kathy Spencer, with the help of many volunteers. It was very successful and enjoyable, raising about \$1,200 for the Church. Thanks, Deborah and Kathy.

Other good news reported at the meeting was that Rev. Norm has been granted full and final

UUCH Board of Management June 2016 - May 2017

Officers

President	Kim Turner
Vice-President	Molly Hurd
Past President	Allyn Clarke
Secretary	Pam Berman
Treasurer	Marilyn Shinyei

Members at Large

Andy Blair	Mia Huh
Margaret Galbraith	Shripad Pendse

fellowship as a UU minister. This will be acknowledged at the annual meeting of the CUC in May, and at the June meeting of UUA in New Orleans.

Rev. Norm noted that he sends out welcome messages to visitors who sign the guest book. Many people sign the book, but others seem not to be aware of it. It was suggested that an item about this be included in the announcement section of the Order of Service, and this is now being implemented.

One of the items on the agenda was membership communication and outreach. Martha Wilson has been doing a very good job of looking after membership communication. It was decided that outreach to potential members is such an important topic that the board's December meeting should be largely devoted to it. If you have some ideas on membership outreach, you are urged to send them to the Board ahead of the meeting. The CUC is currently offering a series of webinars on how to welcome, serve and engage young adults, and it was suggested that Board members and others be encouraged to attend the webinars.



Shripad Pendse
UUCH Board Member
at Large

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR & BOOKSALE

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE & REGIFT

Saturday, December 3rd, 10am - 2 pm

Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax

5500 Inglis Street

Free admission

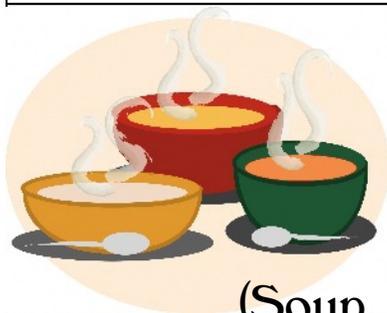


Quality Items
for Regifting

Priced at
\$5 to \$20



Hardcover & paperback books
Hardcover \$2; Paperback \$1



Lunch - \$5

(Soup, bread & sweet)

Or coffee & sweet - \$3

Crafts, jams
and jellies,
baking and
assorted other
stuff!



Door Prize Draw
For Gift Basket
Tickets \$1



Looking
forward to
seeing you
on Dec 3rd!

Christmas Hamper Drive



In December we will once again be collecting funds and food for our annual Christmas Hamper Drive which the congregation has supported so enthusiastically and warmly for a number of years. We will again be supporting three initiatives:

- **The Building Bridges Program** of the Canadian Mental Health Association. The Halifax residents who receive our gift bags have limited contact with others; nearly all of them are entirely housebound. Many of them have said how much our gifts meant to them over the Christmas period.
- **Save Elephant Foundation.** (Despite their odd name, this is a reputable organization—they rescue Asian elephants from tourism.) You may have seen this fall, on Facebook, one of their baby elephants in Thailand "rescuing" trainer Darrick Thomson from a river; charmingly, Thomson was swimming and didn't need saving. Google the baby elephant, Kham Lha, to watch the interaction.
- **Child Haven International.** Founded by Unitarians Bonnie and Fred Cappuccino, Child Haven supports women and children in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Tibet.

After we've purchased appropriate amounts for the Christmas hampers, the remainder will be divided between the Save Elephant Foundation and Child Haven.

If you make a donation and you prefer that your contribution go to one initiative or another, just let us know at the time. (We realize many people in the congregation already support Child Haven monthly.)

Cheques should be made out to UUCH, and clearly marked "Hamper Drive." If you donate cash, put it in the collection plate with "Hamper Drive" on the envelope. **We will be collecting through December 18.** As always, thanks so much for your support.

Martha Wilson and Avard Woolaver

The Caring Column

Louise Malloch, longtime member of our church, was recently diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She will have surgery soon, and when she has recovered, in a few months, she will start a course of chemotherapy. Our thoughts and prayers are with Louise as we wish her fast healing and a full recovery.



It was nice to see **Jim Morrison** back at church this past Sunday. Welcome back, Jim! He and Sheila encourage all adults over 50 years of age to talk to their doctor about getting the shingles vaccine. Jim recently had shingles and was quite miserable. Unfortunately, the cost of the vaccine is not covered by most insurances but it is still important to get it. Perhaps we should all petition the government to change the policy. In the meantime, if you notice a rash, go immediately to your MD as you can receive a prescription to make the attack less severe, but it must be given soon after onset.

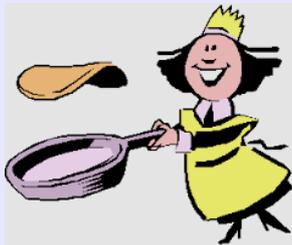
Mary Ellen Onno

Some Other Things We Do

Are you a visitor or newcomer to the UU Church, just starting to learn a few things about us? The following facts are from a recently published UUCH brochure:

- From 10 am to noon each Saturday, we welcome neighbours and friends who drop in for coffee, conversation, doughnuts and sometimes even pancakes. Most Saturdays our minister Rev. Norm can be found either dishing up pancakes, playing his ukulele or engaging in conversation.
- On Thursday mornings our Ballroom space is alive with the sound of children's voices as the Halifax Parents and Tots Coffee House and Playgroup meets from 9:30 to 11:30. The children play while the parents chat and new relationships are formed.
- Our beautiful building is one of our greatest resources, and lately we have been sharing it with more outside groups. A Girl Guide group meets here every Thursday, and groups such as Dances for Universal Peace and the Spiritual Science Fellowship meet here regularly.
- Many volunteers provide rides to church, meals for those who are ill, cards and phone calls to those going through difficult times.

NEW YEAR'S DAY PANCAKE BRUNCH
Sunday, January 1, 12 noon



Once again, one of our favourite annual events—a Pay-What-You-Can fundraiser (not a potluck).

Feast on pancakes plain, buttermilk, blueberry, banana, or gluten-free—served with butter, vegan spread, maple syrup or low-sugar syrup—also ham, fruit, juice, tea and coffee. Best deal in town.

After breakfast: let the games begin! Bring a board game you enjoy playing and would enjoy playing with others.

Let's eat and socialize in the grand old UU tradition. Bring a friend—enjoy!

Marilyn Shinyei

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The submission deadline for the January newsletter will be extended by one week to **Wednesday December 28th**—although submissions are welcome, and indeed helpful before this date.

The electronic issue will be released the next day, Thursday the 29th, leaving no window for even the tiniest late submission (*none, nein, nada, zero*). Paper copies will be available on Sunday, January 1st.

Please send your submissions to both:
Etta Hamm braeside@eastlink.ca
Sandra Jamieson uchurch@eastlink.ca

Thank you to Sandra from all of us for coming in on the 29th during her Christmas break to get the newsletter out to us! ☺

Notes for your church directory

(Print page, cut out column, insert in directory.)

Recent and/or formerly unpublished changes and/or additions:

BALLUM-HAFTKA, David
(email change only):
davidballumhaftka@gmail.com

BATEMAN, Peter 782-234-2971
5520 Black Street
Halifax, NS B3K 1P6
pfb8@outlook.com

COULOMBE, Bonnie 902-423-7754
401-1055 Lucknow Street
Halifax, NS B3H 2T3

COX, Iretia 902-452-8157
102-7 Parker Street
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4A5

MOONSHADOW, Amy 902-492-2366
4-5522 Cunard Street
Halifax, NS B3K 1C2

SAULNIER, Troy & Danielle
(Kyla, Tristan, Destiny, Abigail, Jason)
154 Ingram Drive
Fall River, NS B2T 1A4

Troy: 902-221-7338
troy.saulnier@gmail.com

Danielle: 902-233-1973
danielle.t.saulnier@gmail.com

To have new or changed contact information published in the newsletter and/or the 2017 church directory, see me after church—or contact me at 902-443-8779 or braeside@eastlink.ca.

Etta Hamm

Music Montage

*“Let this song our greatest hopes contain:
laughter of a well-fed child its tune,
roofs over every heartbeat its refrain,
its harmony from peaceful cities hewn.”*
~ Elizabeth Alexander



December's 'Singing As We Gather'

The Gathering Hymn for December is #338 *I Seek the Spirit of a Child*. In this month, when our theme is *Expectation*, why not recapture the spirit of a child in wonder, delight and renewal. It's a season that invites us to feel joy, excitement, warm camaraderie, and the spirit of giving and receiving. And it's the month in which we experience the longest day, and the turning of that into hope and expectation, as the days begin to get longer, and longer again. The music is the uplifting *Sussex Carol*. We will sing this while the children are with us. So, let's connect with them each Sunday morning, while we sing;

*I seek the spirit of a child, the child who meets life naturally,
The child who sings the world alive, and greets the morning sun with glee.
Children are real beyond all art. May I see: Joy's a gift to our heart.*

Themed Music Projects

This month's Music Project is on Sunday, December 4th. The rehearsal that morning will be at 9:30 am.

The next Music Project will be on Sunday, January 8th. Rehearsals for this will be as follows:

Sunday, December 18 at 9:30 am

Sunday, January 8 at 9:30 am

Thank You

Thank you to the many who helped to make the *Verses and Vittles Through the Years*, on November 12th, a great 179th birthday celebration for UUCH. An especially large thank you to Kathy Spencer. And thank you to all who attended. There was much good singing, eating and merriment, which is as it should be!

More Music News

I will be doing a special *Seasonal Music Service* on Sunday, December 18th. I hope you will come out and sing, sing, sing! There is nothing like singing to put me into a wonderful spirit.

I will be taking a week's holiday, from Wednesday, December 7th to Tuesday, December 13th, inclusive. So our trusty substitute, Allison Bolton, will be at the piano on Sunday, December 11th. Do give her a warm welcome. Thank you, Allison!

Sunday, January 1st will be a hymn singing service. So if you feel like singing in the new year with your favourite hymns on New Year's Day, I look forward to seeing you there.

Sending wonderful wishes for the very best of the season to you all!

Deborah Wiggins

A Twenty-first Century Circuit Riding Minister

One hundred and fifty years ago, the minister of the Universalist Church of Halifax was expected to get on his horse (or in his horse-drawn buggy) and ride around the Maritimes preaching Universalism to smaller congregations. This was called circuit riding.



On December 4th I will be trying out a different form of “circuit riding”... electronic circuit riding. On that day our Halifax congregation will link live with the Fredericton NB congregation for a shared Sunday service.

This is made possible through support from the West Trust Foundation and the CUC—and the persistent technical assistance of John Piccolo. David Ballum-Haftka and Nick Baros-Johnson will be manning the cameras and computer.

When you come into the sanctuary on the 4th you will be able to see and talk to members of the Fredericton congregation and vice versa. For this inaugural experiment, Fredericton will be observing our service and adding their comments during the time of reflection that follows the service.

In the future we will expand the links so that the service can be shared between two or more congregations. We may do a reading in one congregation, lead a hymn in another and have the sermon delivered from yet another. We hope and expect to be able to link with congregations in PEI and elsewhere. Individuals will also be able to join the service from home.

This is an experiment only at this time. Any long-term commitment to the process will depend on the support of our congregation and Board. This “circuit riding” offers the potential to grow Unitarian Universalism in smaller communities throughout the Maritimes where a few people could meet in a home to participate in a service.

The theme for December is Expectations! We have high expectations for this 21st century “circuit riding” although we know it will be hard to get it all “right” on the first try.

So, come out on December 4th and be a part of history in the making!

Rev. Norm

From UUA and CUC sources

The Surprises of UU History: Christmas was outlawed by the Puritans, and Universalists and Unitarians revived It

By Rev. Julie Stoneberg

Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

Universalists and Unitarians played a surprising role in Christmas: they revived the celebration of the holiday in North America after it was outlawed by the Puritans.

The end of the year has been marked by celebrations from time immemorial. In agrarian cultures, it meant that people could finally relax; crops were harvested, the days were short, and food and wine were stocked in the cellars.

Celtic peoples commemorated winter solstice with rituals and revelry. Worshippers of Mithras in ancient Rome held a big festival at this time of year to ensure the conquest of winter and darkness. We know that Jesus' birth began to be celebrated on December 25 in the 4th century as a Christian counterpart to these pagan festivals.

In his book *The Battle for Christmas*, historian Stephen Nissenbaum writes that from the beginning, the church had a very tenuous hold on Christmas. Even on this continent, annual celebrations at the end

of December were carnivals of partying, drunkenness and debauchery. The excesses were so disturbing to the Puritans that they simply outlawed the holiday.

After the Puritans outlawed the celebration of Christmas in the mid 18th century, Christmas was found only on almanac calendars, and hymnals did not contain Christmas songs. It wasn't

until around 1800 that church services began to be held on December 25th.

The earliest churches to do so were Universalist churches, and the Unitarians were close behind.

Nissenbaum states that they did so not because it was biblically sanctioned, but because they themselves wished to! They hoped that their celebrations would help to purge the holiday of its excess and disorder. However, this religious effort failed to transform Christmas from a season of misrule into an occasion of quieter pleasure.

It was Santa Claus, not Jesus, who would come to transform Christmas. According to Nissenbaum, it was Clement Moore's poem, *A Visit from St. Nicolas*, that succeeded in creating a new kind of Christmas. Published repeatedly and widely in almanacs and gift books, this one poem moved Christmas into the home and out of the streets in a way that religious observances had failed to do.

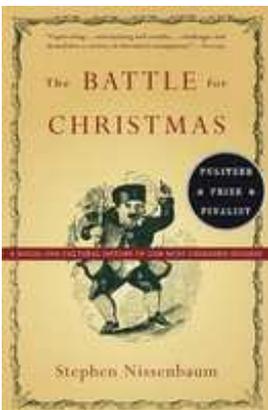
Nissenbaum uses the personal correspondence of a well-read and written family to trace the further evolution of Christmas. ***The Sedgwicks were a leading family in Massachusetts, a family who had rejected Calvinist orthodoxy and become committed Unitarians.*** It was Catherine M. Sedgwick who wrote the first fictional account of an American Christmas tree, published in 1835. The tree in Sedgwick's story was laden with fruit and handmade gifts, for she believed that the true essence of Christmas must be forged outside of the increasingly consumerist culture.

This generation of upper middle class Unitarians used culture rather than politics as an instrument to influence the social order. Sedgwick, along with other Unitarians, saw the introduction of the Christmas tree as possible antidote to selfishness and greedy consumerism.

And so, like Santa Claus, the Christmas tree was an 'invented tradition'. It is useful, writes Nissenbaum, to think of traditions not as static entities but as dynamic forces that are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated; all have at some time been invented to forge meaning or to serve a social/cultural purpose.

And if we long for ways to construct meaning at this time of year, to give form to our values and bring light in dark days, ***just like Unitarians and Universalists of yesteryear, we are free to create our own traditions.*** New rituals, and old ones too, can help us to understand our place in the dance of light and dark, to celebrate how our resilient spirits are able to spring forth from depression or drudgery, to recognize that each birth is a holy one and to choose to see the divine spark in each other, and to give out of gratitude for one another and the abundance of life.

We can follow the example set by earlier Universalists and Unitarians who moved to transform systems and cultural practices in order to bring more meaning to their lives.



UU Roots of *Jingle Bells* James Lord Pierpont and the mystery of 'Jingle Bells'

By Kris Willcox, a UU writer and fundraising consultant in Arlington, Massachusetts

For many people, the song “Jingle Bells” is so deeply etched in memory it’s hard to recall when we learned it. Written by Unitarian James Lord Pierpont (1822-1893), “Jingle Bells” is among the most popular [North] American songs of all time, and although it is strongly associated with Christmas, this story of a wintertime sleigh ride contains not a single holiday reference.



*What fun it is to ride and sing
a sleighing song tonight!*

Puzzling out the origins of “Jingle Bells” is something of a holiday tradition itself, with one predominant question: Did Pierpont compose the song in Medford, Massachusetts, or Savannah, Georgia?

Pierpont was a Massachusetts native whose father, noted writer and abolitionist the Rev. John Pierpont, served several Unitarian congregations, including what is now the Unitarian Universalist Church of Medford. His brother, the Rev. John Pierpont, Jr., also an abolitionist, was minister to the Unitarian Church of Savannah. James Pierpont provided music to both churches, first Medford and later Savannah, where he remained after his brother returned north and the Civil War began.

Plaques in both cities claim birthright to the song. On its website, the UU Church of Savannah proclaims itself “the Jingle Bells Church,” noting that Pierpont copyrighted the song in 1857 in Savannah, while a plaque at the site of Medford’s Simpson Tavern asserts that the song was written there in 1850.

Other accounts have it that “Jingle Bells” was written for Thanksgiving, and performed by the Sunday school (Medford’s or Savannah’s, depending on your allegiance). A Savannah historian begs to differ: no mid-1800s Sunday school would have permitted such racy lyrics as “Go it while you’re young.”

The details of his life show Pierpont to have been, in the words of one scholar, “a rebellious musician with a bad reputation.” He left his wife and children in Massachusetts not once but twice: first for the gold rush (his song “The Returned Californian” recounts that failure) and later for Savannah. Soon after his wife Millicent died, Pierpont remarried, this time to the daughter of Savannah’s mayor. In sharp contrast to his abolitionist family, Pierpont served in the Confederate army and composed songs like “Strike for the South” and “Our Battle Flag.”

While most debate between the Savannah and Medford camps is cordial, reporter Russ Bynum recounts this rather puffed-up exchange in 1989: “We unequivocally state,” wrote Medford Mayor Michael McGlynn to Savannah Mayor John Rousakis, “that ‘Jingle Bells’ was composed ... in the town of Medford.” Rousakis wrote back to “finally and formally proclaim Savannah, Georgia, as the birthplace of ‘Jingle Bells.’”

At least we may be reasonably sure which place inspired the song. In the nineteenth century, popular races took place between Medford and nearby Malden in (you guessed it) one-horse open sleighs, and taking a corner at speed could certainly get you “upsot” in a “drifted bank.” So, did Pierpont write the song just after watching a race, or later, in Savannah? As reporter Sean Bowditch put it, “there’s no holiday throwdown” to settle it. It’s just a great song, with a curious history. The final word goes to those who’ve recorded “Jingle Bells”—from Bing Crosby to Ella Fitzgerald, Luciano Pavarotti to the astronauts aboard NASA’s Gemini 6—and to those who still sing it at caroling parties or even (a lucky few) in sleighs decked out with bells.



This article appeared in the winter 2014 issue of *UU World*. Illustration by printmakers Nathaniel Currier (1813-1888), a Unitarian—and J.M. Ives (1824-1895).

