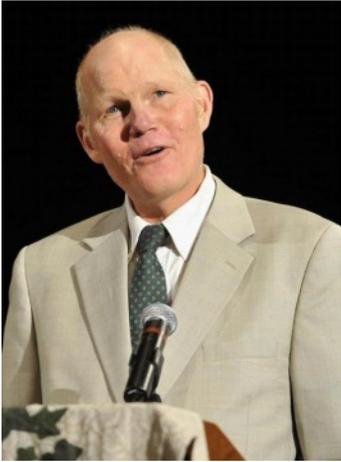


# Expressions

A Publication of the Claremont Center for Spiritual Living  
509 S. College Ave, Claremont, CA 91711 / 909-624-3549



## Christmas Eve Candlelight Meditation by Gary Kowalski

The Rev. Gary Kowalski is a Unitarian Universalist minister and author of many books, including *Revolutionary Spirits*, *Science and the Search for God*, and *The Bible According to Noah*.

Once more the year's turned round.  
We've come full circle on this small planet,  
Spinning down the grooves of change,  
Another revolution completed around the sun.

Another year older ...  
Another set of rings on the tree ...  
As seasons parade in endless procession  
The people's troubles and prayers remain the same:  
The worries don't change.  
Generation after generation making the same  
mistakes,  
So many thousands of circuits in a world filled with  
war and woe,  
Full of sound and fury,  
Bleared, smeared with toil,  
The ebb and flow never-ending,  
The grating sound of pebbles which the waves draw  
back

*(Candlelight Meditation continues on page 2.)*

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## I Used to Think... Things Could Be Completed

Each episode of the podcast "Make Me Smart" asks what they call "the make me smart question": "What is something you thought you knew, but found out you were wrong about?"

Listener McCloud Andrews shared his answer (which is unedited here) in episode #80 of the podcast:

"I used to think that things could be completed. That there was a final state in which they wanted to be. Like, I would tour college campuses with my dad or discovering a city as a kid, I would see construction and I would feel this sense that I wasn't getting the real campus or seeing the real city because it was under construction, it's not done yet, and that would frustrate me.

"I'm still coming to grips with it, that things are not ever complete. Everything we see around us is still in process. And that is actually the truth of what's around us: that there is no perfect."

Edward Graff, Editor

Send your essays, poetry, interesting pictures,  
inspirational/thought-provoking quotations to:  
[eemgraffvz@gmail.com](mailto:eemgraffvz@gmail.com)



*(Candlelight Meditation, continued from page 1.)*

And fling at their return up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin  
With tremulous cadence slow,  
But bringing us always back to Christmas

Back to a place we've always known  
Where we've never been before,  
Back to a time that stands outside of time:  
Not part of the regular orbit, but the axis of the year,  
A still point, a fixity, the center post and ridge pole  
Around which all the rest revolves.

Christmas: Telling us that history isn't just chasing its  
tail,  
Not merely repeating the same old tired story, over  
and over ...  
But assuring us that history has a direction and time  
has a purpose,  
That lines are real, as well as circles  
That the human saga has a goal  
Still to be realized  
Yet mysteriously present, already here among us,  
That the Holy is enacting a new story on the earth.

Christmas is not a creed we have to believe in,  
It's not a feeling that comes and goes...  
Christmas isn't a story we tell  
So much as a drama in which all of us have become  
participants  
Whether we feel like it or not,  
Whether we believe in it or not,  
Whether we like it or not.  
Christmas is a reality, here-and-now  
Just as love is a reality  
And compassion a possibility hidden inside every  
interaction  
Of how we choose to be with one another.

For whether we feel like or not, we are all brothers,  
And whether or not we believe it, we are sisters, born  
of a single womb.  
Whether we like it or not  
We are all one tribe and share one fate.

Separateness is the illusion,  
While interdependence is the plainest fact.

We know it in our heads  
And when we know it in our hearts,  
Then the center will be everywhere  
And the circumference will have no boundaries  
And the sun will rise on a new and different kind of  
dawn.

**We join now in meditation:**

In this moment of half light, half shadow,  
The glow of candlelight and starlight,  
We are able to look out upon the world  
Not with the eyes of day  
But with another kind of vision,  
The illumination of faith, not sight,  
A twilight where edges soften,  
Harsh outlines begin to gentle  
And the colors start to fade:  
No more white or black, red or yellow,  
But one common race of humankind,  
And peace descends on all.



Claremont CSL Candlelight Service  
December 20, 2017

## Thoughts on the Lessons of Kwanzaa

You cannot contribute anything to the ideal condition of mind and heart known as Brotherhood, however much you preach, posture, or agree, unless you live it. – *Faith Baldwin*

We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. – *Langston Hughes*

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color. – *Maya Angelou*

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth. – *Muhammad Ali*



## You Can Read Past Issues of 'Expressions'!

For past issues of *Expressions*, go to:

<http://www.claremontcsl.org/expressions/expressions.html>

**And if you have something you would like to contribute** - a poem, prayer, article, photo, meditation, book or Web site recommendation - please email it to: [eemgraffvz@gmail.com](mailto:eemgraffvz@gmail.com)

**Thanks!**

## Approaching Christmas by Brad Wethern

There is one mind and there is one Christmas. One holiday season.

But there are millions and millions of individual holiday memories throughout your family, throughout our country and the world. Your memories are precious to you. They are hand-picked. No one in the world has the same holiday impressions that you have. Yours have been collected over the years, modified by personal sifting and editing. When this time of year comes, you once again shine *your* light on *your* favorites.

There was a time when you waited for Santa Claus, there was a time when you became Santa Claus, and if you lived long enough there was a time when you started to look like Santa Claus.

This holiday season is a time that we illuminate to clearly give and receive. Both are important. Both celebrate the universal law of circulation with the light and focus that only this season can bring.

It is also a time to joyfully recognize our love and respect for others. Others may not have the same wonderful experiences we have had through the years during this holiday season.

There are those who will give more than we do, and those that will receive more. And those that will give and receive less. There is nothing great or small, but that perception makes it so.

Our job is to maintain a loving spirit of high resolve for the rest of the year, by answering the voice inside us to help us discover the ways we can create. To have the very best holiday season possible, both for us and for everyone around us.

*Brad read this at the Sunday morning service Dec. 24, 2017.*



# Calendar of Events for December, 2018

## Claremont CSL Events

### **Ongoing:**

Sundays -

- AA Meetings, 8 AM; Chapel
- Meditation, 10 AM; Chapel
- Sunday Service, 10:30 AM; Sanctuary
- Fellowship Hour, 11:30 AM; Holmes Hall
- Apostolic Church, 2:00 PM; Chapel
- Living Proof Meeting, 4:30 PM; Chapel

Mondays -

- ManKind Project, 7 PM; Chapel

Wednesdays -

- Meditation, 6:15 PM; Practitioner Room
- Wednesday GATEway Service, 7 PM; Chapel

Thursdays -

- Kindly Conversations, 10 AM; Chapel

Saturdays -

- Yoga classes are canceled until further notice...

### **For December:**

- 1, 8, 15, 22 Foundations Class, 9:30 AM; Chapel.
- 2 Call to Prayer Sunday, Sanctuary Christmas Decorating during the morning service.
- 2 Potluck Sunday, 11:30; Holmes Hall.
- 13 Brown Bag Lunch with Rev. Tracy, 11:30 AM; Library.
- 14 Sacred Frequencies Sound Meditation, 7-8:30 PM, Chapel.
- 27 Brown Bag Lunch with Rev. Tracy, 11:30 AM; Library.
- 31 Word Peace Meditation, **4 AM**; Chapel.



## Sacred and Cultural Events

- 2 Advent (Western Christian); Begins preparations for the coming of the Christ. Advent always commences on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Christmas, or the closest Sunday to St. Andrew's Day, (Nov. 30).
- 2 First night of Hanukkah (Jewish); Starts at sundown on Dec. 2, and ends at sundown on Dec. 10. Commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the miracle that a single day's worth of lamp oil lasted 8 days.
- 6 St. Nicholas Day (Christian); Celebrated on Dec. 6 each year in Western churches, and Dec. 19 in Eastern Orthodox churches. Saint Nicholas of Myra, known for gift giving, evolved into the figures of Santa Claus and Father Christmas.
- 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (American observance)
- 10 Last night of Hanukkah (Jewish)
- 17 Wright Brothers Day (American observance); commemorates the first successful powered flight on this date in 1903.
- 21 Winter Solstice; the longest night and shortest day of the year in 2018.
- 24 Christmas Eve (Western Christian)
- 25 Christmas Day (Western Christian. Eastern Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on Jan. 7, 2019 as they follow the old Julian calendar.)
- 26 First night of Kwanzaa; Begun as an African American observance in 1966-67, but evolving into an international celebration of African culture, heritage and values.



## Licensed Practitioners

You can email prayer requests to:

[prayer@claremontcsl.org](mailto:prayer@claremontcsl.org)

You may also call Practitioners directly at the following numbers:

Neysa Burrous, RScP

909-948-6929

Diane Clements, RScP

909-947-5197

Marianne Breen, RScP

909-392-3934

Ima Lee Moore, RScP

909-987-8886

Patty Powers, RScP

909-636-7690

Sarah Redmond, RScP

909-392-9343

Brad Wethern, RScP

909-994-7440

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Practitioner Core, 909-624-3549

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Stacey Jones, 909-624-3549

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Patty Powers, 909-636-7690

Librarian, Historian, Sound Ministry -

Ed Graff, 909-938-9676

## Thoughts on the Lessons of Hanukkah

We have focused on the miracle-thing and I think we often overlook the message of Hanukkah. To me, the core of the holiday is the cleaning of the temple.... The accomplishment was in restoring the temple to the purpose for which it was built. Now think of the temple as a symbol. Perhaps it represents my life. The world has tried to use me for its own (perhaps good, but none-the-less extrinsic) purposes. But now I can rededicate myself to my own original purpose.

- *Ralph Levy*

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame,  
Blessed is the flame that burns  
in the secret fastness of the heart.

- *Hannah Szenes*

