

A Winter Solstice Celebration  
Sunday, December 4, 2022  
Tri-County Unitarian Universalists  
Summerfield, FL  
Rev. Cynthia A. Snively

After Thanksgiving I began my annual winter holiday rituals. I turned the car radio from NPR to an all-holiday music station. Here I am in Florida listening to “The weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful, and since we’ve no place to go, let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.” “Just hear those sleigh bells jinglin’ Ring-ting-a-tingaling-too, C’mon, it’s lovely weather for a sleigh ride together with you.” “Sleigh bells ring, are you listening? In the lane, snow is glistening A beautiful sight We’re happy tonight Walking in a winter wonderland.” “The snow is snowing The wind is blowing But I can weather the storm What do I care how much it may storm I’ve got my love to keep me warm.”

What does Winter Solstice mean in Florida? In 2020 Jonathan Kegges said for News 6, “Nothing, right? Not exactly. Winter, of course doesn’t have the same meaning as it does in say Minnesota or New England. Florida is the winter home to those snow birds who flock to the Sunshine State to get away from those cold, icy parts.

“When talking about winter in Florida, it’s not so much about the cold and snow, but the impact it may have on the dry season. The dry season for Florida typically arrives in the middle of October and lasts through about April or May. The dry season begins when cold fronts start arriving, delivering much-needed relief from the sweltering heat of the past several months. The routine summer storms also come to a close,” [Here’s what NOAA’s winter outlook means for Central Florida \(clickorlando.com\)](https://www.clickorlando.com/news/2020/12/04/here-s-what-noaa-s-winter-outlook-means-for-central-florida/).

We are not bundling up in fur-trimmed cloaks. We might need to pull out a sweater. Our gardens, if we have them, are not sitting idle. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extensions Services recommend that “to add color to the winter garden, plant masses of petunia, pansy, and snapdragon.... Plant herbs that thrive in cool weather. Some examples include parsley, thyme, sage, dill, fennel, and cilantro. (and) Reliable cool-season vegetables to plant this month (December) include celery, cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, and carrot,” [ENH1189/EP450: Central Florida Gardening Calendar \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.ufl.edu/ep450/). An ad for a charity that came to my inbox this week asked if people should have to choose between being warm or fed. We are fortunate to have warmth and food all year even if you are camping out and living off the land.

But even if the weather is not cold and snow is not blowing, the sun still moves, even here. The days have become short. It is now dark when the morning alarm goes off and getting dark by dinner time. But, this month at the solstice a change will come. The days will stop growing shorter and slowly begin to lengthen.

In their book [Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Traditions](#) Starhawk, Diane Baker and Ann Hill write in the Yule/Solstice chapter, “At Winter Solstice time, the Goddess appears to us as the Mother, but in a very special way. She is the Dark Mother, Mother Night, Mother Winter. Because death is always followed by rebirth, the Crone Goddess of Samhain becomes the Mother who gives birth to the year.

“The Dark Mother is the giver of gifts and the teacher of lessons. Her love for her children is without limit...The Goddess teaches us to be helpful, kind, generous, and brave. Sometimes her lessons may seem hard, but she always gives us another chance to learn....

They note, “With every new life comes new possibilities. In the realm of the Dark Mother anything is possible. So if you want to change something in your life, or something about yourself, the Winter Solstice is a good time to work on it.”

As a possible winter solstice night ritual the writers suggest a dream incubation. They write, “There are some who say that we should stay up all night on the longest night, and others who say you should sleep all night and go fishing for dreams in the pools of Mother Night. If you are of the latter inclination, a wonderful family observance for the night of Solstice is a dream incubation ritual....(The ritual calls for everyone to sleep in the same room. Before going to sleep a ritual is done with a candle and water.) “Once everyone is ready for bed, light the candle and say the following: *Winter Solstice is the celebration of the birth of the Sun, the divine child of the Goddess. In our own lives, this longest night can be a time of divination, of journeying deep into our inner dream-time, to bring forth a dream that can help us in the year to come.*

*“Speak over the water: Sacred water, you who pass from the womb of the Mother into the rain and rivers and back again, you who nourish us and quench our thirst, you who can slip through cracks and erode even the strongest obstacles, help us now to dive into the depths of the darkest night and ask for a dream. We ask for a dream of healing, a dream to show us where to go in the coming year, a dream to show us what we need to see. So mote it be.*

“Everyone in the circle takes a turn with the water, speaking their questions into the water...asking for a dream.

(In the morning after everyone who has wished to do so has shared their dream) “give thanks to the water: *Blessed water, thank you for easing our journey into the night and back again. Thank you for our dreams and visions, thank you for the light that is born from the womb of darkness....”*

You don’t need to consider yourself a pagan or a follower of a goddess religion to consider paying attention to your dreams, particularly on the longest night of the year. Oscar Wilde wrote, “Yes: I am a dreamer. For a dreamer is one who can only find (one’s) way by moonlight, and (that person’s) punishment is that (they) see the dawn before the rest of the world.”

I end with a meditation from roddy bell-shelton biggs. One that you may remember I have used before.

“Though at times I may forget who I am or who becoming,  
my dreams: they matter. When I make space for all that is;  
When I move away from that which no longer serves me,  
When I make space for the new possibility in the circumstances;  
My dreams do matter.  
They matter; they hold many truths and many turning points;  
they matter; though at times I may convince myself they don't, they do,  
for they call me back in time and forward still.

“My dreams matter. They matter, as they pull me inward and yet simultaneously push me outside of myself;

My dreams matter; they matter as they speak to the breadth of love, of pain, of hope, that rest deep in the fabric of my blood and bones.

“My dreams matter, as they are connected to the dreams of my ancestors;

connected to all who have graced this earth before, who grace it here and now,

and will be connected to all who grace this earth, when I, when we, grace this place no more;

my dreams, they matter; your dreams, they matter; our dreams, they matter.

They matter.” Blessed Be.