



# The Messenger

Unity Church in Albany • 21 King Avenue • Albany NY 12206 • 518-453-3603



By Rev. Jim Fuller

## The Call of Christmas

CHRISTMAS IS THE TIME OF YEAR when we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ. It's also the perfect time to attend to the call of the Christ waiting to be born in us. Our Bible offers us two accounts of Jesus' birth, one in Matthew's gospel, another in Luke's. These stories speak of the

activity of God (Holy Spirit) working in and through the minds and lives of Joseph and Mary to bring about the birth of Jesus. Historically the stories tell about events in the lives of Jesus and his family. Metaphysically they describe an inner process of first conceiving of and then giving birth to our Christ nature. And of course the birth of Jesus or any other child of God is a beginning, not an ending. It took ongoing love and care for the infant Jesus to grow and mature and it will take attention and love for you and I to express our full Christ potential.

In Matthew's story Joseph figures prominently. It is Joseph, not Mary, who receives the vision telling of Jesus' sacred nature. Joseph receives guidance to leave Bethlehem and take refuge in Egypt. And it is Joseph who with Divine guidance brings Jesus out of Egypt and back in into Israel. In Matthew we see Joseph demonstrating spiritual wisdom and discernment, spiritual strength and steadfastness. In Luke's story Joseph is scarcely mentioned and Mary is the predominant figure. According to Luke it is she who receives the angel's message about Jesus' sacred nature. She is "overshadowed" by the Holy Spirit and says yes to God's inspired idea. Her response of, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" emphasizes this point. Mary demonstrates receptivity, willingness and a deep love for God as well as for her child.

From a metaphysical perspective Joseph, Mary and Jesus each represent aspects of our True Self. These aspects are parts of the totality of God and are constantly being inspired and empowered by the Mind of God. Jesus symbolizes our Christ nature, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is the undying Truth of our being which at the mo-

ment has not yet been born into our awareness. Mary represents the feminine or receptive part of our being, the part that is willing to say yes to God's inspired idea in us. The Mary in you is already aware of your Christ nature and like a good mother is willing to love and nurture it as it grows and develops. The Mary within embodies love and devotion, not a weak or helpless love but a strong and deep commitment to the divine within. This embodiment of Mary is present in all people.

Joseph represents the masculine or active part of us. It is the part that not only listens for God's ideas but also takes the necessary action. It may call us to travel to a distant place, adopt a new way of life or change our line of work. The Joseph in us displays wisdom as it pays attention to dreams and other forms of inspiration. It is discerning as it differentiates between the whims of our personality and the deeper call of Spirit. And it is strong and steadfast in its commitment to bring forth the highest within us, the Christ. It too is present in all men and women.

Christmas is our annual celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ, our teacher and way shower. It is also an annual reminder of the Christ in us waiting to be born. We can help bring forth the Christ in us by affirming our Mary nature, receptive and willing. Our willingness and receptivity are channels for God to work through. We can affirm the powerful and empowering love that is also present in us. We can call forth our Joseph nature, affirming the spiritual strength and discerning wisdom within. We each have the capacity to discern between our ego's whims and what is True. And we have been given inner strength to keep us on course and to help us move beyond obstacles. This Christmas let us affirm and accept these important and powerful gifts of Spirit. Let us remember that the activity of God (Holy Spirit) is present within us, just as it was present with Jesus and his family. And let us invite that Spirit to inspire and guide us as we answer the call of the Christ within this Christmas.

*May we hear and honor the call of the Christ within this Christmas. May we give welcome to this greatest gift of all.*

# The President's Corner

By Heather Diddel

## Grateful, grateful.....

ARE YOU AS SURPRISED as I am these days to discover the darkness of night slipping in much earlier in the afternoon, and lingering longer in the morning? We seem to have taken a deep dive into the dark cold waters of winter over the last week or so, haven't we? What happened to early morning light, I wonder, and how much longer until we hit the magical Winter Solstice when the sun begins its glorious reclaiming of center stage, bit by bit? Truthfully, my questions are tinged with impatience and yearning for more light.

As I listen to myself grumble about darkness, an inner voice reminds me of a well-worn truth: while I may not be able to change the weather, I can change the way I choose to see it. And of course, when I am willing to play with different ways of seeing darkness, my whole experience of darkness changes and I begin, remarkably enough, to see the light.

Only when night falls can we see the endless points of light glistening and glowing across the heavens, weaving in and through the cloudy spill of the Milky Way. The night sky is our window on a beauty-filled, vast universe that is always there but not visible until our sun sets. What a wondrous thing to see the light of the larger universe. I am filled with a quiet awe and sweet swell of gratitude.

Gratitude. This is hardly a New Concept. Sometimes, though, we forget that we can choose an attitude of gratitude, and when that happens, we lose the light it brings. That's like choosing not to see the stars at night because I am focused on the absence of the sun. It doesn't make the

sun reappear any sooner, and I totally miss out on the beauty that is literally right before my eyes. Where's the joy in that choice?!

In contrast, those moments when we do choose to take the time to remember, to savor "what is, exactly as it is," and to allow ourselves to feel a gentle surge of gratitude, our lives are changed. Have you ever had that experience? It can be wondrous.

Indeed, according to Neale Donald Walsh in *Friendship with God*, God highlighted the beauty and importance of feeling gratitude in the following message:

*Gratitude is the attitude that changes everything. To be grateful for something is to stop resisting it, to see it and acknowledge it as a gift, even when the gift is not immediately apparent.*

*In addition, as you have already been taught, gratitude for an experience, condition or outcome in advance is a powerful tool in the creation of your reality...*

What a beautiful reminder as we enter into this season of thanks-giving that we can choose to live each day with an attitude of gratitude. No big deal, but possibly a big difference in our experience of the moment.

What would it be like to step into a simple daily practice of gratitude? To mindfully take a few moments each day and celebrate the gifts that exist in each moment? The gifts are everywhere. The gift of a heart that can hold love, a mind that can think a whiff of hot chocolate, a sip of clear water. The gift of a moment of stillness, or the joy of laughter. The gift of reaching out to one another in small ways, with gratitude. Who knows, maybe in those quiet moments of gratitude we will find the light in the darkness that has been shining down on us and in us from the beginning of time...Endless possibilities. How delicious!

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## You Have Something To Give

DID YOU EVER WONDER what you could do to get involved in your church community? Did you ever think that your skills might be utilized in some meaningful way? Did you ever have the desire to "give back" to the community? Did you ever feel "at home" at Unity but wonder how to fit in?



Our 'small' church operates in a 'big' way with many activities, classes, and events. All of these are successful because of the love, energy, and devotion of our minister, board of trustees, and many wonderful volunteers. Service opportunities are available in several ways within each of the following ministries: Sunday Worship, Spiritual Education, Inreach/Outreach, Special Events, Finance, and Build-

ing & Grounds. This service is spirituality at work. What a blessed feeling it is to be part of the pulse of the church!

Whatever gift(s) you have, the gift you give will be the gift you receive. When being of service, you are giving, forgiving. Many blessings come your way via our small church community and it is difficult to know how to help, how to give back, how to know what's available and what to do. Because it is natural to want to give back what you receive, there are many opportunities that you can pick and choose from, opportunities that may match your skills and desires. See the list of volunteer opportunities on the bulletin boards and/or contact Bonnie Kriss or Pamela Coles are for further information.

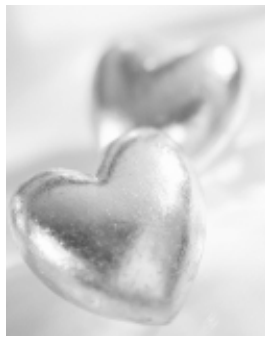
"Only what you have not given can be lacking in any situation." *A Course In Miracles, Text 368*

**Bonnie: 373-2135, tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com**

**Pam: 764-3783, pjcoles61@live.com**

## Adopt-A-Family

THE UNITY FAMILY will participate in the Albany County Adopt-A-Family this year as we have in the past few years. We have been matched with a family of five: Mom, three boys and one girl.



On Sunday, November 28th, the family wish lists will be posted at church for those who are interested and able to help the family in these hard economic times.

All gifts should be wrapped and at Unity by December 19th with a gift tag denoting who the gift is for. Thank you for being overwhelmingly generous in the past.

If you have any questions, see or call Sue Herlands at 783-0443.

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## Your donation is always welcomed at the Food Pantry

### Infant Care:

- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Bathroom Items:

- Toilet paper
- Tissues
- Bar Soap
- Razors
- Shaving Cream
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes
- Shampoo
- Band-aids
- First aid antiseptics
- Feminine products
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Kitchen:

- Dish soap
- Sponges
- Paper Towels
- Window cleaner
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Laundry:

- Detergent
- Fabric Softener
- Bleach
- Dryer Sheets
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Other:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Please remember that the Food Pantry needs go on around the calendar. Especially needed are diapers, baby products, paper products, bathroom and toiletry items, laundry soap, and household cleaners. Your donation is always appreciated.

## 4T Prosperity Program to start in January



### Tithing Time, Talent and Treasure for Prosperity and the Fullness of Life

By John Frederick

UNITY CHURCH IN ALBANY is offering the 4T Prosperity Program starting January 13. This powerful program is guaranteed to increase your level of abundance, power and prosperity and put you in the flow of God's mighty stream of substance.

4T is a 12-week, church-facilitated, spiritual program about living an abundant life free of fear and insecurity, free of thoughts of lack and limitation and centered in God's abundance.

With that connection, wondrous events occur. People experience deeper spiritual awareness, enhanced relationships, job satisfaction, financial security, self-esteem, and better health.

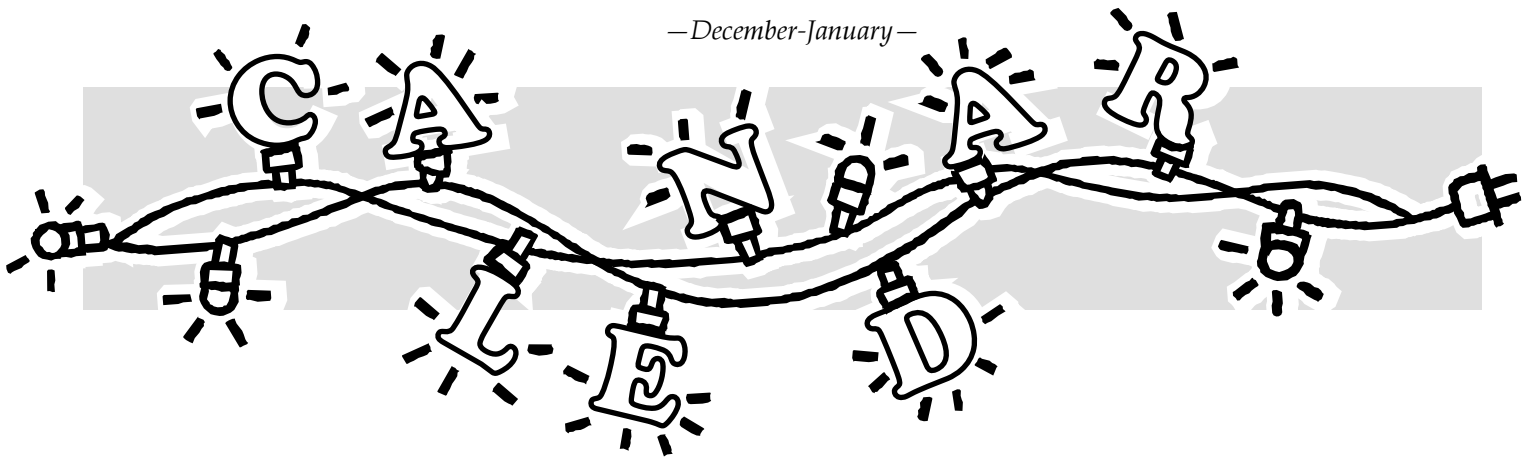
Each student realizes a shift in perspective. They realize there is plenty of time, talent and treasure to give and receive. They develop a sense of trust; they can manifest all they long for. Each student commits to:

1. Attend weekly services and 4T classes.
2. Meditate daily on prosperity ideas.
3. Volunteer with his/her church or some other non-profit organization.
4. Tithe 10% of his/her income.

The church commits by guaranteeing *complete satisfaction*; the student's life is guaranteed to be more abundant at the end of 12 weeks, or the entire tithe will be refunded, upon request.

I personally find 4T to be powerfully motivating. It changes my way of thinking – at an inner core level – and gives me tools and ideas to move away from lack, limitation, victimhood and fear to abundance, freedom, courage and to accept responsibility for my life – as it is today and as I envision it tomorrow.

I have completed this program 5 times – twice as a participant and three times as the program facilitator. We are offering it again because it really moves mountains, and teaches you to move them, too.



## Unity Church Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM**

Join your Unity friends for an evening of fellowship, songs and fun. Light refreshments will be provided.

## Christmas Kirtan

**Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM**

**“There is a reason why Krishna sounds so much like Christ.”**

Krish Cringle has loaded his chariot with songs and love, and will deliver them to Unity on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Please join us for this special Christmas kirtan (call and response devotional chanting); a celebration of Life and God led by Krish Cringle (aka Shubalananda, renown kirtan leader, musician and Sanskrit scholar). We'll sing in Sanskrit and in English; and along with Shubal's great stories it will be an event that will bring holiday cheer to children and adults. Love offerings greatly appreciated.

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

**Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM**

Rekindle the Christ light in your heart this Christmas. Join Reverend Jim and our Unity musicians as we sing and celebrate the birth of Christ Consciousness into our world. We have scheduled our service at 5:30 so that you can participate and still have the evening free for family and friends. Join us as we listen to the Christmas story, share prayers, songs, and light our Christmas candles together. What a wonderful gift to give the Christ child in you!



## Christmas Day Luncheon

**December 25<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 5:00 PM**

Reverend Jim and Kay invite you to join them for a pot luck lunch and time of fellowship on Christmas Day. Come early and enjoy lunch or just drop by to say hello. We will sing carols, share stories and perhaps even enjoy a short film. As always family, friends and last minute drop-ins are welcome. Christmas is a wonderful time to gather and celebrate, won't you join us?

## New Year's Eve Burning Bowl Service

**Friday, December 31<sup>st</sup> at  
5:30 PM**

Clear out the closets of your mind and make room for the life your soul desires. Open your imagination and heart to the blessings that God is offering you. This is our traditional ritual of releasing to the burning bowl those things that no longer serve us and creating our letter to God claiming our vision of good for the coming year. We will sing, pray and step forward into a New Year filled with wonderful possibilities for all.



## Unity Book Club

**November-December selection:** *“One Love, One Heart, One Soul”* by John Welshons. Discussion on this book is scheduled for December 19<sup>th</sup>

**January-February selection:** *“Radical Acceptance”* by Tara Brach. Discussion on this book is scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>



## Two Winter Classes with Reverend Jim



- **“The Twelve Powers” (8 weeks)**  
Wednesdays at 7:15 starting January 12<sup>th</sup>
- **“Discover the Power Within You”**  
(8 weeks) Wednesdays at 7:15 starting March 16<sup>th</sup>

The Twelve Powers is based on Charles Fillmore’s classic book of the same title. It offers insights into the spiritual “powers” or faculties that we all possess, yet rarely utilize. Discover the Power Within You is based on Eric Butterworth’s classic book. It is a spiritual and Biblical exploration of our true and timeless nature. Both classes are part of Unity’s “Spiritual Education and Enrichment” program. SEE classes are designed to help you deepen your understanding of core Unity teachings and integrate them into your daily life. SEE classes are appropriate for new and experienced Unity students. They are also prerequisites for advanced Unity training including the Licensed Unity Teacher and ministerial programs.

## New Quest Study Group starting in January

If you are looking for a way to better understand and integrate Unity’s New Thought Teachings, this study group is for you! The Quest is a 48-week series of lessons that explore Unity teachings and your own spiritual beliefs. Each lesson includes a brief reading and questions/exercises to reflect on. The weekly study group is your opportunity to discuss the readings and share your discoveries with others studying the Quest.

This study group will meet on either Monday or Thursday evenings. (Participants will select the actual day and time.) The first meeting will be an introduction and orientation to the Quest. If you are interested in participating, please sign up in our Bradford Street Lobby. Quest books (a two book set) are available in our bookstore. For further information please speak with Rev. Jim.



## One year to live!

**Introductory Exploratory Meeting:**

**Sunday, Dec. 5 and Sunday, Dec. 12, 2010**

**Monthly classes will begin in January 2011**

**Place:** Unity Church after service and coffee hour by 1pm

**Cost and Requirement:** Love offering, Primary Book “One year to Live” by Steven Levine

**What’s involved:** Group sharing (confidential), reading, meditation and exercises

**Facilitators:** Sandesh Naik or Paul Bernard

Most people in our culture usually avoid talking about death and Dying. However those who did it say they improved the quality of their living. By facing the fear they instilled more joy and peace in their life. So it’s not about so much focusing on dying but living fully here and now. It is an awakening from grief and finding the way back to joy.



## Coming this February! Unity Used Book Sale

**Clean out your bookshelves and donate  
your gently used books to  
The Unity Bookstore  
Date of sale to be announced!**

### Future Dates:

**Michael Mirdad  
February 20-21, 2011**

**Reiki Healing Service  
Coming In February**

**Dr. Jon Mundy  
March 27, 2011**

**Unity Church Fall Retreat  
October 28-29, 2011**

# Spotlight on Service

By John Daubney

## Deb Foss

*Each of us has personal gifts; we are made that way. Deb Foss' gifts for photography, yoga, and her penchant for helping people feel comfortable and cared about, have made her a sweet presence in our community. When she uses her special gifts in service to others, it becomes a win-win transaction: service given = joy received.*

"AT A RECENT OUTPATIENT PROCEDURE at St. Peter's Hospital, I was asked my religion by an intake nurse. This was not a simple question. I was raised Jewish, spent ten years in a yoga community, practice Buddhist meditation techniques and adore Sufi Dances of Universal Peace. I'm also, and especially, a very proud member of the Unity Church in Albany. One of the things I love about our church is that it does not require me to renounce anything. Rev. Jim quotes Thich Nhat Hanh, The Course in Miracles, Louise Hay and wise women and men from many traditions. Unity's metaphysical perspective is also a welcome relief from my early upbringing. (I told Rev. Jim that I was raised to understand the Bible as "gory", not "allegory.") According to Unity, sin is about "missing the mark," not incurring the wrath of God, and heaven and hell are about states of consciousness.



My first visits to the church felt a little like blasphemy for me. Having survived WWII and Hitler, my parents warned me about the Gentiles. But all I heard at Unity were messages of love, understanding and inclusion. My heart was at home here and I kept coming back.

Grateful for the warm welcoming I received, I decided to reciprocate by becoming an usher. This continues to be an honor and a pleasure. I'm terrible with names but I now feel a heart connection to so many people.

When a request was made for more tellers, I volunteered for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday. I treasure my time connecting with friends right after service, so a four-times-a-year commitment didn't seem onerous. Because we teller in pairs, it's been a very nice way to connect with one other person and schmooze a bit while we work. Now, I fill in whenever there's a need. I also serve on the Unity Church Cares committee to help folks out during difficult times. I often jump in when I'm available to help out other teams.

Another way I serve is to photograph church events (along with several others) to help us remember some of the great times we share at retreats, picnics, concerts and holidays. It's great to have so many people smiling back at me. J

I encourage you to dip your toes into service. Sometimes it's a fit, sometimes it's not. I volunteered for awhile in Youth Education but found myself missing the quiet and peace, the music and the message during Church. I give in ways that work for me. What might work for you?

## Small Business Fair - February 6<sup>th</sup>

WHAT FUN WAS HAD at this past January's Small Business Fair! In addition, it was a successful event!

If you have a small business or enterprise that you would like to share with our church community, an opportunity will be available after services on Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. This is a wonderful way to support and be supported by friends at Unity Church in Albany!

If you are interested in participating, contact Bonnie Kriss at 373-2135 or tedandbonkriss@hotmail.com.



## Bring Your Holiday Shopping List to the Unity Bookstore

Let us help you find the perfect gift for family and friends

- Meditation Candles, fragrance free and long burning
- Variety of Meditation/Music CD
- Books by your favorite authors: Edwene Gaines, Jim Rosemergy, Eric Butterworth, Thich Nhat Hanh., Wayne Dyer, Robert Moss, Louise Hay, and many, many more.
- Calendars
- Inspirational Wall Banners
- Affirmation Cards

## Unity Church Cares

THANK YOU to everyone that has signed up to volunteer for our new UnityChurchCares ministry. Many of you have stepped in to help, and your generosity of spirit is so appreciated! Fliers are located in the Bradford Street lobby, explaining the purpose and mission of this new ministry. If you feel called to volunteer in some way, there is a yellow folder with a sign up sheet for your contact information. We will add you to the growing list, and call if and when the need arises. As our list of helpers expands, so will our capacity to help others in need.

Have you noticed our new, pink mailbox mounted on the wall? This is for our “heartfelt” request cards that may be filled out and placed in confidence in our mailbox. A committee member will check the mailbox regularly, and help link volunteers to those in need of a card, a phone call, or a visit. Email requests may be entered into our account at [unitychurchcares@yahoo.com](mailto:unitychurchcares@yahoo.com). We now have a phone request line as well; listen for the voice mail option to press 14 to leave a confidential request.

Any questions or concerns regarding UnityChurchCares may be directed to Diane T. at 280-4311.

If anyone is informed of a reason to send a card or make a call for support or congratulations, remember Unity Church Cares.

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## Unity Church Fall Retreat September 17-18, 2010



*Happy campers at the third annual Unity retreat.*

## Grateful

*Words and music by John Bucchino*

I've got a roof over my head  
I've got a warm place to sleep  
Some nights I lie awake counting gifts  
Instead of counting sheep

I've got a heart that can hold love  
I've got a mind that can think  
There may be times when I lose the light  
And let my spirits sink  
But I can't stay depressed  
When I remember how I'm blessed

Grateful, grateful  
Truly grateful I am  
Grateful, grateful  
Truly blessed  
And duly grateful

In a city of strangers  
I've got a family of friends  
No matter what rocks and brambles fill the way  
I know that they will stay in the end

I feel a hand holding my hand  
It's not a hand you can see  
But on the road to the promised land  
This hand will shepherd me  
Through delight and despair  
Holding tight and always there

Grateful, grateful  
Truly grateful I am  
Grateful, grateful  
Truly blessed  
And duly grateful

It's not that I don't want a lot  
Or hope for more, or dream of more  
But giving thanks for what I've got  
Makes me so much happier than keeping score

In a world that can bring pain  
I will still take each chance  
For I believe that whatever the terrain  
Our feet can learn to dance  
Whatever stone life may sling  
We can moan or we can sing

Grateful, grateful  
Truly grateful I am  
Grateful, grateful  
Truly blessed  
And duly grateful



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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



## Finding your Spiritual Home

— a place to worship, grow spiritually, feel loved and accepted — is no small matter. In our spiritual family, we know there are many paths that lead to God. We believe that Spirit led you here. Our desire is to share Christ's love with genuine heartfelt warmth. We are a gathering of all kinds of people with various backgrounds, life-styles, and life-stories. Growing together we worship, we serve, we laugh, we cry, we learn, and we reach out to our world with life-transforming truth. We aspire to live as Christ and be receptive to Spirit as it calls us to Life. Our name says it all; we are a Unity of believers celebrating and participating in inclusive worship. If you've been praying, searching and hoping for a place to belong, we say again — *Welcome Home!*

### Board of Trustees

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### Hear ye, hear ye!

Articles for the February/March edition of the newsletter can be submitted to Denise Klein at [katzr3@nycap.rr.com](mailto:katzr3@nycap.rr.com) by Sunday, January 17th. Your news articles, spiritual thoughts, poetry, photos, humor or suggestions are always welcomed.

