

A Time of Magic

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Once upon a time,
**when the world was younger than it now is,
long before people began
to take things apart
in order to learn how they work
the whole world was full of magic.
In those days
when the world was younger
and so were we
magic was not some special birthday thing
like pulling a rabbit out of a hat
or a string of silk scarves from your ear
or even making someone disappear.**

In those days
when everything was young,
magic was just the way the world worked;
magic was the art of looking at the world
and seeing something special
every single day
in everything that happened.

When the world was young
and so were we
every season was a magic time:
**when the dead limbs of trees
suddenly burst forth in soft, green leaves
and flowers pushed through the barren earth,
that was magic;**
and when the flowers faded and fell away
revealing fruits and vegetables
growing in the sun
and when grain ripened in the fields,
that was magic;
**and when children were born
and lambs and kittens
that was magic;**
and when the leaves turned

and fell to the earth like glowing ashes
and all the world was touched with color
and with a sense of endings
and of something forever gone
and of something never to come again,
that was magic.

**But when the world was young
and so were we,
no season had greater magic
than this season of the year.
All the long autumn people watched
as the days grew short
and the nights grew long
and shadows spread across the world
and chill winds blew across the land
and the birds fled south.
All the long autumn people watched;
all the long autumn people waited.
They lighted fires to warm them
and to nourish their hopes;
they decorated their homes with evergreen,
twisted green branches into wreaths
to strengthen the magic of life;
they gathered close their families and friends
to nourish their hopes and to strengthen the magic in them.
And they watched and waited.**

And then, one morning it happened:
the sun, which had retreated slowly down the sky,
growing weaker and weaker
day by autumn day,
the sun stood still
and the next day it had moved a little toward the north
and the next day, a little more toward the north
and then they knew that the magic had happened.
The sun was returning.
Though there would be months of cold and darkness,
the magic had not died.
The sun was coming back
and the earth would warm
and new leaves and flowers would appear
and new crops would grow
and new babies would come
and the earth would live again.
The magic,

the everyday magic
was still alive!

And they sang and rejoiced
and lived in the magic
that was the way of life
when the world was young
and so were we.

* HYMN: "Lady of the Seasons Laughter"
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**In our world,
it often seems,
there is no real magic anymore.
When we learned to take things apart
to see how they work
some invisible thing got lost and forgotten,
and we could never put things back the way they were.**

We know that the seasons are not magic;
they come and go because of the way the earth is slanted
on its annual journey around the sun.

We know that the winter trees are not really dead
and that the leaves and flowers always appear in the spring
because that is the way flowers and trees are;
we know how lambs and kittens and babies are born.

We know why the leaves change color and fall from the trees
and why the days grow shorter and the nights longer.

Why, we can even calculate the exact moment,
the precise second
when winter begins and ends.

It is not magic;
it is just the way things are,
now that the world is older
and so are we.

**But at this season of the year,
this very special season of the year,
a little of the magic seems to return.
At this season of the year,
the old world seems a little younger,
and so do we
and we almost hear a voice whispering in our inner ear
a voice saying
"Abracadabra,
Hocus Pocus,**

The magic lives
Things are not always
As they seem,
Hocus Pocus,
Abracadabra"

**And something inside us changes ever so slightly
and we begin to see the world in a new way,
and we begin to do things we don't do at other seasons.
We bring fresh green branches into our homes and churches;
We hang green wreaths on our doors;
we begin to remember people
we don't think of at other times.
We think of family and friends who are distant.
We gather friends and neighbors
for parties and celebrations.
We send greetings to people we once knew,
and we feel a growing willingness to help
those who may need our help.**

* Hymn: "Deck the Halls"
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We light candles and lights in the darkness.
And the greens and the memories and the greetings
strengthen the magic growing quietly,
deep inside us.
This morning, I would like to light a candle
for people we do not know,
who live half a world away,
and struggle every day to keep some magic alive
in a world grown grim and ordinary.
Taking the flame from the chalice
which represents our church community,
we light a candle to honor
our partner church in Transylvania,
an ancient land where people first were given the name, Unitarians,
an ancient land where Unitarians have struggled
for over four hundred years
to keep alive the magic
of freedom and reason and tolerance.

**In this season,
as we feel the magic stirring in us,
we encourage it by telling stories of miraculous things
that happened at this time of the year,**

stories about how the animals all can talk
on Christmas Eve,
stories about lamps that never run out of oil,
stories about how reindeer can fly
on Christmas Eve,
stories about all kinds of impossible things.
One such story is the tale called "The Cobweb Christmas."

STORY: THE COBWEB CHRISTMAS

**Tante knew that magic sometimes happens
but it happens even more often if we help it along.
This morning, to help the magic grow in us,
we are going to make a small miracle of our own.
Some of you, this morning, have brought
hats and scarves and gloves to decorate this tree.
Bring them forward now
and see if we can make some magic.**

DECORATE THE TREE

Now there are two kinds of magic here.
Together, we have decorated a tree.
Anything people do together
to make the world brighter
is a kind of magic.
But even more,
when these hats and scarves and mittens have been taken down,
they will find their way to children who need them,
who will be warmed by them in the cold of winter
and that, too, is a kind of magic--
that in this world we have the power to make life better
for people we do not even know.
**To help the magic grow strong, lets light a candle.
From this chalice,
the symbol of our church community,
we will light a candle for all those people in the world
who are homeless, or in need
whose lives might be brightened
by gifts we can give.**

And there, we have told you the real secret of magic;
magic happens because we make it happen,
because we believe that something we do,

however small,
will make the world brighter for someone else,
and then do it.

Here is a story about that kind of magic,
the true magic of the season:
It is entitled,
WHAT THE THREE KINGS BROUGHT

STORY: WHAT THE THREE KINGS BROUGHT

Isn't that a marvelous tale of magic;
people giving what they have so that someone else,
someone they do not know
will find life brighter and richer and fuller.
That is the kind of magic
the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
tries to work all year long.
All around the earth they find people in need,
who are hungry, or sick, or in distress,
and tell their story to other people
who give what they can to help.
**This season, we have a chance to help make that magic.
Since Thanksgiving,
these Little Boxes have been sitting on tables
in various homes, gathering up money
at meal times or other times.
Today we bring them here
so that the small gifts we give
may make magic in the lives of people we do not know
but who are part of our human family.**

BRING FORWARD THE GUEST AT YOUR TABLE BOXES

**And now, to make the magic strong,
we take the flame from this chalice,
the symbol of our church community,
and light a candle
for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
and all those unknown to us who will be touched
by the magic we have helped to make.**

When the world was younger than it now is
and we were younger, too,
everything was magic
because everything was part of everything else

and everything was miraculous.
Now that the world is older,
and we are too,
the magic that is left in the world
is the magic of love,
love for ourselves,
love for our families,
love for the entire human community,
love for the world which is our home.
In this season,
let us light candles,
and sing songs
and tell old tales
and make room for the magic to grow
in us and in our world.

* HYMN: WE BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS
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