

Interreligious New Year Celebration

1 February 2013

Midwest Buddhist Temple

Rev. Rudra Dundzila, Community Minister, Second Unitarian Church, Chicago, IL

It's been about a quarter-century since I stepped foot in my first Unitarian Universalist church. It was the one built by Frank Lloyd Wright in Madison, WI, not far his birthplace.

I was an ex-Catholic. A few years earlier, I had been kicked out of seminary for coming out. On top of that, I had been recently diagnosed as HIV+. I was looking for a religious home that I would accept me as I was, and also challenge me to grow both spiritually and as a person.

I found that home in Unitarian Universalism. With their help, we created the first AIDS Interfaith Ministries of Madison. We helped people in need, and connected them with support from their religious traditions.

We Unitarian Universalists draw our faith from many sources. We believe that all religions teach the truth in their unique ways. About a sixth of us profess the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, with an emphasis on loving-kindness. Like you, we believe in universal salvation. We are the one who help bring salvation to all, bar none.

At the start of each year, we bless our churches and our homes with the following poem-prayer-hymn (words by Louis Untermeyer, 1885-1977). Please join me in a spirit of reverence.

May nothing evil cross this door,
and may ill fortune never pry
about these windows; may the roar
and rain go by.

By faith made strong, the rafters will
withstand the battering of the storm.
This hearth, though all the world grow chill,
will keep you warm.

Peace shall walk softly through these rooms,
touching our lips with holy wine,
till every casual corner blooms
into a shrine.

With laughter drown the raucous shout,
and, though these sheltering walls are thin,
may they be strong to keep hate out
and hold love in.