

## Church celebrating solstice with music, poetry and dance

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by Mary Childress, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- You can wear your Christmas finery or your tacky rhinestone baubles for this event.

Any way you dress, you'll fit right in at the Winter Solstice Ball on Saturday night at the Universalist Unitarian Church at 520 Kanawha Blvd. The event is free and open to the public.

"This is a change for people to dress up and go crazy and celebrate the winter solstice," said David Miller, a member of the congregation.

The event begins at 6:30 p.m. with meditation.

"We have a really small ceremony to commemorate the spirit of the solstice," Miller said. "It's meditation on the darkest night of the year and to get your spirit ready for spring."

Those attending are also asked to bring whatever food or drink they want to share.

Activities during the evening include a spiral dance, in which one person goes inside the circle bringing in others and continues around and around.

"The circle turns into a circle, and that celebrates community," said Miller. "As it spirals in and out, you'll be able to look into everyone's eyes. We're all one family in that circle, and you feel connected to everyone."

There will also be a bonfire. Everyone is invited to throw items that they want to get rid of into the fire.

"We'll have prayer paper that individuals can use to write down their fears or troubles or anxieties," he said. "If you want to get rid of them, you throw them into the fire and they're gone. By tossing them into the fire, you have the power over them."

Rose Edington, co-pastor of the church, said people who attend are encouraged to bring a drum with them for the drumming circle.

"We hope people that like to write poetry will come and read from their works, and musicians that love to jam will also come and have fun at the open mike," she said.

"This is our second year for the Winter Solstice Ball, and you never know how it will turn out. It can be unpredictable, but it's always interesting."

At last year's ball, some colorfully dressed characters showed up.

"We had jugglers, people reading their poetry, and we had a wonderful open mike session going," Edington said. "People can dress in their tuxedos or in their PJs. You can wear anything as long as it's family appropriate."

The event is only as good as the guests make it, Miller said.

"There's a whole community spirit about the celebration," he said. "If you don't play music, bring a friend that does or bring your favorite poem and read it aloud."

"Come and celebrate the longest day of the year and contribute to the fun of the evening," Edington said.