

**Gong Meditation Honors the Winter Solstice, the Mayan calendar, and the Age of
Aquarius on December 21, 2012
by Karen Hunter**

This is not easy, to write a short article about December 21, 2012, the date scientists, anthropologists, researchers, historians, and religious and spiritual leaders have studied for decades, as it signifies the end of the Mayan Long Count calendar, a cycle representing approximately 5,125 years. At stake, many agree, is no less than the fate of humanity and the future of our planet; topics that have generated increasingly heated debate over the last several generations.

December 21st is the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere and the summer solstice in the southern hemisphere. This year's solstice will bring about an alignment of the Earth and the Sun with the center of the Milky Way, an occurrence which happens only once every 26,000 years, yet was predicted to the day by Mayans over two thousand years ago. At the same time, astrologically, we are leaving the Age of Pisces and entering the Age of Aquarius. Scholars agree that the "doomsday" predictions in relation to this date have no merit and were not intended by the ancient Mayans. Rather, December 21, 2012 is generally understood to herald the potential for a powerful new era based on a shift in human consciousness; a time for change, harmony, and rebirth. This new era could well be based more on hope than on despair, more on abundance than on lack, more on peace and love than on violence and war, and gratitude rather than yearning. People all over the world are paying attention.

"This is a profound time to be alive," says Arlene Myers, a well known local acupuncturist and a senior teacher of the Acutonics Sound Healing System. "It's not an easy time; but it is a profound time," she says, explaining that we have a responsibility, should we care to take it, to embrace the "opening" made available by this cosmic alignment. "We must ask ourselves," Ms. Myers says, "how we want our culture to be so that we support one another, support other countries, and support the earth." She points out that the economic, political, social, climactic, and spiritual shifts we are experiencing in the world today were all predicted. "If we don't come together to envision what we want for the future," she emphasizes, "then we are just victims of the shifts that are taking place. As the people on this planet, we have a choice about our future. I do believe that it's this kind of alignment that could open the way for true world peace."

One of the shifts Ms. Myers and many others foresee is a movement from individuality to community. "We want to be socially responsible people," she says. "We want to be aware of our place in the local community and in the world community. We want to use our community resources much differently than we have before. That's a huge shift from believing that we operate on our own. In order to succeed, we have to band together and consciously work out how we're going to do this." Ms. Myers explains that gong meditation is one place to start.

Gongs are musical instruments that are having a world-wide resurgence in popularity for the purpose of bringing people together in community, for healing the earth and healing each other. Not all gongs are alike. The three gongs used in the meditation programs Ms. Myers has facilitated since 2005 are high-quality symphonic instruments made in Switzerland by the Paiste company, one of the world's three leading gong manufacturers. Each is tuned to the frequency of a planet chosen for its influence on the earth's energy. Gongmaster Don Conreux of New York City, with whom Ms. Myers has studied, states, "The way of the gong is the way of Truth. Its purpose is to remove violence and allow the heart power to come forth."

"Gongs are ancient instruments that have the power to help us understand our place in the whole," says Ms. Myers. She explains that high quality gongs are made of a combination of metals, each of which vibrates at a particular frequency. Although a gong is tuned to a specific note, what we hear when it is played is a rich chorus of overtones. The more varied and precious the metals, the sweeter the overtones when the gong is played.

"It's sort of like a person singing in a choir; you have your part, but your part is meaningless without everyone else. So, when we hear the sound of the gongs we are (unconsciously) reminded of our place in the world community," says Myers. "When we meditate with the gongs and envision what we want for our future, each person's meditation is enhanced by the group and doubly enhanced by the gongs.

Peace2012 is a movement calling for a global moment of prayer, meditation and intention - a globally synchronized peace event - at the exact point of Solstice, which is at 11:11 Universal Time, or 6:11 am in our region, on December 21, 2012. Astrologers believe that the Age of Aquarius will usher in an age of freedom, an age of humanitarianism without prejudice or preference; above all, a spiritual age. Guatemalan Maya Elders believe we are entering a time of wisdom, harmony, peace, love, consciousness, and the return of natural order.

Here in Falmouth, we can honor and celebrate this powerful date by participating in a gong meditation program that is, as Arlene Myers describes it, a timeless hour of immersion into the sounds and vibrations that quiet the mind and unite us with our universe. "The gongs change the chemistry of the cells in our bodies to be more in harmony with our environment. It's a literal tune-up. Those who come to a gong meditation leave feeling differently than when they walked in; it's a very special group of people who attend," she says. Most people lie on the floor (participants planning on doing so are encouraged to bring whatever is most comfortable). Chairs are also provided or you can bring your own.

There is no need to have a conscious notion of what you are looking for or what you want to happen, Ms. Myers emphasizes. "All you have to do is show up," she says. "By being in the presence of the gongs in a group, you're doing the work." Three musicians, Ms. Myers, Anne Balzarini, and Vernon Parris, play gongs, Tibetan bowls, a gong drum, bells, and other sound instruments in the acoustically sound vaulted sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth on Sandwich Road. "We play for an

hour." says Ms. Myers, "and time disappears. You ride on the waves of sound which go into your body and into your cells and deeply into your spirit."

Because this program is expected to sell out, advance registration is required. To register for this gong mediation from 7:00-8:00 p.m. on December 21st at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Falmouth, please call the office of Acupuncture and Associated Therapies at: 508-539-0299. The cost is \$20 per person.