

Solstice celebration



Photos by **KAREN PIKE**, Free Press

Participants walk the Community Labyrinth as part of the winter solstice celebration Friday at All Saints Episcopal Church in South Burlington. The winter solstice, a celebration of renewal, marks the shortest day of sunlight and the emergence of longer days.

Event marks winter's start

By **Sally Pollak**
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SOUTH BURLINGTON — At a celebration of the winter solstice Friday, the star of the show — the sun — was a no-show.

The 30 people who gathered at noon at the Odyssey of Light, a mirrored sculpture designed to capture the reflection of the sun's rays as they converge in a cross, could only imagine the light.

The winter solstice is when the sun rises and sets as far south on the horizon as it ever gets. The sun, low in the sky, appears this way for several days before and after the solstice. During this time, it seems to stand still in the sky.

Winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere.

"If we relate the year to a breath, we're at the point of stillness at the bottom of the breath, at the end of an exhale," said Patrick MacManaway of Charlotte. He is a holistic therapist with an interest in "spirit of place."

"When Christmas comes, we will begin to breathe in," he said.

The solstice is a time of reflection and hope, said people who attended Friday's ceremony at the labyrinth behind All Saints Episcopal



Kate Pond (from left), **Barbara Baraw**, **Pam MacPherson**, **Sharon Mongin** and **Fred Stetson** gather around a fire during Friday's solstice celebration, where people burned pieces of paper with their personal prayers.

Church. Days of lengthening sunlight will emerge slowly, bringing a sense of renewal.

Standing at a burning bowl made by Burlington sculptor Kate Pond, participants silently reflected on the year past and the one coming. They placed written messages into the fire, and watched the paper burn.

Many messages, in the form of prayer, were too personal to share.

Margaret Gundersen of South Burlington was tearful as she spoke of the words she wrote and burned. They were about her family's move to Vermont from Connecticut last summer.

"I was giving thanks for this transition," she said. "We really feel connected."

Susan Miller-Coulter of Burlington wrote of regeneration. "It was a message about things which have been cast

down are being raised," she said. "And things which have grown old are being made new."

Jackie Arbuttle, a deacon of the church where the celebration took place, called the solstice the most hopeful time of year.

"I like that we're following an ancient tradition," she said, "and that the light is coming back."

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