commUNITY

Unity Church-Unitarian fosters transformation through a free and inclusive religious community that encourages lives of integrity, service, and joy.

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Cultivating Faith

The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries, and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

> *Faith development is all we do. Unitarian Universalism is the faith we teach. The congregation is the curriculum.*
>
> — Connie Goodbread

This month's theme is Cultivating Faith, and Oscar's recently acquired antique plow and yoke keep coming to mind. They're fitting reminders of the slow, intentional work that cultivation requires. And as UUs, we often begin with the existential questions: *What is faith? Can I even use that word in a UU congregation? Do I have faith? Do I need it?* Unitarian Universalism offers no guaranteed afterlife and no promises that everything will turn out well if we believe hard enough. For some, that is a relief. For others, it muddles the work of cultivating faith.

For many of us, "faith" is a complicated, even dangerous word. It may remind us of past harm — times when someone urged you to "just have faith" in the middle of your worst moment, or reassured you that "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." Words meant to comfort often left deeper wounds.

And life happens. Someone you love gets sick or dies. A job disappears. Bills pile up. Medication becomes a luxury. Now we're confronting outright fascism — neighbors being "disappeared," children denied food, billionaires launching rockets for their own amusement while people go without basic care in this supposedly "free" country. In moments like these, telling someone to "just have faith" feels not only inadequate but unkind. It wouldn't be true, and it wouldn't be helpful.

How do we intentionally cultivate faith?

Maybe by acknowledging that *every* action can be an act of faith. A colleague once shared that on their hardest days, simply getting out of bed and getting dressed felt like a profound act of trust in the possibility of another day.

> *None of us knows what might happen even the next minute, yet still we go forward. Because we trust. Because we have faith.*
>
> — Paulo Coelho

How do we trust? If trust is integral to being faithful, and if we have been harmed in the past, how can we rebuild it as a partner to faith? My answer is: slowly, and with intention. Trust grows over time, through small risks and careful observation — testing whether someone or something can hold what we offer. Practicing trust requires choice. We can give others the opportunity to be trustworthy, and in return we can hold ourselves accountable for being trustworthy.

When we are building trust in a community, we intentionally lean toward the faith that the community will show up for us. This is neither easy nor simple. People — and communities, which are made of people — will make mistakes. They will disappoint us. Trust will break. And yet, part of the work is finding a way through those moments, rebuilding what was damaged, and renewing our faith that trust is still possible.

I want to acknowledge my own privilege in having faith. I have never lived through war. I have never been unhoused. I have not endured violent assault. My family has enough food, enough clothing, meaningful relationships, meaningful work — and a 16-year-old Chihuahua who still expects to be snuggled in my bed at night. These things make room for faith. They do not make me better; they simply give me space that others may not have.

While I have a practice of faith, I believe things will potentially get even more difficult in the next year. But what does it do to one's purpose to lose faith? What does it do to our families and wider community? Did great leaders who suffered tragedies lose faith? I would argue that faith is what kept them grounded into taking yet another step. That's all we need to do. Take another step.

For me, faith is not a badge of honor but a responsibility. It is the conviction that something better is possible, and that I have a part to play in creating it. I cultivate faith by reading, listening, and learning from people who faced impossible odds and still chose to believe in possibility. I cultivate it by noticing the people who call their neighbors, give money to someone unhoused, tend gardens, make soup, tell jokes, and laugh with joy while holding the full knowledge of the world's suffering.

This is not turning away. This is turning *toward* — toward what is possible, toward what we can build together, toward joy that coexists with truth.

Faith can be as simple as trusting that this congregation will still be here, and choosing to be part of its ongoing life. Faith can be the quiet conviction that community matters — and that you matter within it. Faith may not promise us a perfect world. But it can guide us as we work, plow, and plant together toward a better one.

Amy Brunell
Hallman Ministerial Intern
on behalf the theme team.

Just Words

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister

I'm writing this month with an update on Unity's Ministry of Congregational Care, an office/portfolio that has seen a lot of transition over the last five years.

In 2021, longtime Senior Ministers of Unity Church Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs retired after over twenty years of service. From 2000-2021, Janne Eller-Isaacs held the primary pastoral care portfolio, as a Co-Senior Minister and member of the Executive Team. After Janne and Rob's retirement, Unity hired an Assistant Minister of Congregational Care to maintain the pastoral ministry of the congregation while a new (presumably solo) Senior Minister was brought on board.

The interim period after 2021 was complex. The Senior Minister search took multiple years, including an unsuccessful vote to call a candidate in spring 2022. In April 2024, the congregation called me to serve as Senior Minister.

During this period, the Minister of Congregational Care role also saw significant transition. Rev. Karen Hering was the first person to hold the role, during the 2021-2022 congregational year. She departed in June 2022 and was followed by Rev. Karen Gustafson. Rev. Gustafson retired in spring 2023. Rev. Lara Cowtan was hired in the summer of 2023 and served two years before accepting an offer to serve the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ottawa in spring 2025.

As Rev. Lara was departing, the Executive Team (ET) created a search committee of ET members and lay participants, drawing from worship associates, congregational care associates, and the recent Ministerial Search Team, to develop a congregational record, consider the role of congregational care at Unity Church, and interview applicants. While that search did not result in a hire, it gave us clear information about what and who we were looking for, and the toll the repeated transitions in this role have taken on our volunteers and staff.

In August 2025, we were fortunate to welcome Rev. Shay MacKay as Acting Minister of Congregational Care. Rev. Shay has quickly become a valued colleague, bringing warmth, skill, and deep pastoral presence to the role. Recently, Rev. Shay notified the Executive Team that she would like to be considered for the permanent role of Associate Minister of Congregational Care.

Following Unitarian Universalist Association guidelines, we are first considering Rev. Shay as an internal candidate before opening the search more broadly. Over the next month, the Executive Team, which holds responsibility for this hire, will work closely with a cohort of lay leaders, drawing on what we learned from the congregation last spring, as well as through our time with Rev. Shay and formal interviews, to make a decision about this important position in the life of the church.

Congregational care is the heartbeat of any church, and we have an opportunity this year to deepen our understanding of how it lives in this particular church. It is an exciting moment, and I look forward to bringing you more information soon!

commUNITY Newsletter

To access all of the hyperlinks in this newsletter, please scan this QR code.

Congregational Care

Do you have a concern or celebration you wish to have shared in the Embracing Meditation during Sunday worship? Would you like to request a call from the Minister or a helping hand or listening ear of a Care Team member? Send an email to pastoralcare@unityunitarian.org.

If you are experiencing an urgent need for pastoral support, call 651-300-9123.

Theme Resources

For further reflection on the theme Cultivating Faith, please see this month's spiritual practice packet, available online at unityunitarian.org/chalice-circles.

Donate to Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

Our donations to our community partner, Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf, are steadily going up each month. In October we collected 361 pounds of food. Thank you!

In December the food shelf needs canned sweet potatoes, corn and green beans, pie filling and other holiday foods. Household cleaning supplies and personal hygiene produces are also greatly needed. Financial contributions to purchase turkeys or hams are also gratefully accepted at hallieqbrown.charityproud.org/donate.

Sunday Services

Sunday services are held at 9:00 and 11:15 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service is also offered via livestream. Find the livestream links, sermon podcasts, and worship theme resources at unityunitarian.org/sunday-services.

December 7: *Polyculture*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Betsy Hearn, Worship Associate

"Roses love garlic." Gardens abound with stories of different plants that grow together, sometimes unexpectedly. Polyculture, or companion planting, uses that diversity to create more resilient, beautiful garden beds. The same might be true for our churches: rather than a monoculture of a single creed, Unitarian Universalists plant our diverse faiths side by side, and in doing so cultivate wild and resilient communities.

December 14: *Who Tells Our Story*

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair | Dick Buggs, Worship Associate

Join us for a service of song and story, as Unity's music program shares selections from Benjamin Britten's *Saint Nicolas*. Britten wrote *Saint Nicolas* intentionally for performance by amateur musicians, and we will reflect on what it means to tell, and retell a story over generations.

December 21: *Winter Solstice*

Rev. Shay MacKay | Charlie Caswell, Worship Associate

The shortest day and longest night of the year are upon us. Since ancient times, people have gathered on this day to share in rituals and song to mark the gift of returning light, warmth and hope. Join Rev. Shay, Ellen Wold, and Worship Associate Charlie Caswell in honoring this longest night and celebrating the slow return of the light.

On Family Sundays, children experience the entire worship together with their families in the Sanctuary. A story for all ages and activity books related to the stories and sermon help children to engage in the experience of worship. Regular religious education programming does not take place on Family Sundays, however, the nursery is open for children under three years of age.

December 28: *Employing Faith to Keep Going*

One service only at 10:00 a.m.
Amy Brunell, Hallman Ministerial Intern
Ollie Stocker, Worship Associate

Many of you will be glad to know that this month's "after Christmas service by the intern" will not be "The Massacre of the Innocents." Instead, we will consider how to cultivate faith to move forward into the new year.

December Holiday Services and Events

Please turn to page 9 for holiday details!

Offering Recipients

Each week, sixty percent of our Sunday offering is given to a community non-profit and forty percent supports the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church. Donations are gratefully accepted online at bit.ly/sundayoffering.

December 7: BLUU

BLUU (Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism) Cooperative Housing Initiative is supporting Black and Indigenous single parents by creating a community-owned, affordable cooperative. Instead of a traditional mortgage, families will pay a monthly payment to own a share of the cooperative and cover the costs of maintaining it. The first site is expected to be completed in early 2026. At the end of this project, 17 Black and Indigenous families will be empowered as homeowners in Minneapolis, which will fundamentally transform access to resources and wealth for generations.

December 14: Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf

Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf, a lighthouse of hope in the Summit-University community since 1929, operates a food shelf and clothing closet serving families in the neighborhood. The food shelf is a client-choice model where community members can pick food items they will use instead of being handed a stock bag which may contain items that do not meet their dietary or cultural needs. Unity's Evergreen Quilters partners with the food shelf and coordinates the congregation's food collection.

December 21: Unidos MN

Unidos MN, an intersectional, intergenerational, feminist Latinx led organization, is a key community partner with Unity's Sanctuary Justice Team. Its mission is honoring the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings regardless of age, race, class, gender identity, dis/ability and/or immigration status. Unidos provides solidarity and rapid response support in the face of ICE actions targeting our immigrant neighbors. Unity Church member Sara Ford is a volunteer with the Unidos Upstander/Rapid Response Committee.

December 28: ACT

Asylum Coalition for Transition (ACT) works in partnership with diverse faith communities to walk alongside asylum seekers as they transition to new lives in the United States. ACT was founded in 2020 in collaboration with various Twin Cities faith communities wanting to live out their shared values of caring and compassion for asylum seeking people in the Twin Cities. This collection will support a fund created by ACT with the Center for Victims of Torture to help cover transition costs.

Nominate an organization to receive the Sunday offering! Details and a nomination form are online at unityunitarian.org/sunday-offering.html.

We Can't Undo Racism Without Undoing Capitalism

Rev. KP Hong, Beloved Community Staff Team

In the summer of 2020, the largest protest movement in U.S. history surged across the nation and reverberated in global demonstrations of solidarity. Voices in the streets demanded the dismantling of prisons, borders, and police, calling not for reform but for abolition, redistribution, and radical transformation. Protesters understood racism as a *structural* force, asking not for infrastructures of violence to be softened through better officer training or diversity workshops, but for the defunding and dismantling of policing, carceral systems, and border regimes themselves. And for a moment, it seemed as if a true racial reckoning might be underway.

Yet the revolutionary clarity of those demands was swiftly absorbed and deflected as Amazon, Walmart, and other corporate giants declared that Black Lives Matter, branded themselves as allies, poured resources into diversity trainings, and rescripted the cry for abolition as calls for representation and more "Black faces in high places." This is the hallmark of ***liberal antiracism***, a politics of inclusion and interpersonal bias correction that leaves intact and untouched the machinery of racial capitalism. In contrast, the Black tradition of ***radical antiracism*** — carried forward by luminaries like W.E.B. Du Bois, Claudia Jones, Kwame Nkrumah, Cedric Robinson, C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jamil al-Amin, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor insists that racism is inseparable from capitalism itself, and that justice requires dismantling the structures of policing, prisons, borders, and militarism that sustain the extraction, expropriation, and exploitation of an underlying racial capitalism.

When Larry Fink, billionaire CEO of BlackRock, the largest multinational investment management company in the world, wrote a letter in 2020 to colleagues of racism as a "deep and longstanding problem in our society and must be addressed on both a personal and systemic level," did he mean canceling his donations and corporate influence on the New York City Police Foundation?[1] Terminating BlackRock's investments in arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Boeing, Raytheon Technologies, and the military-industrial complex supplying weapons for the wars in the Middle East? Redistributing the vast wealth he manages to confront the grotesque scale of global inequality? No, his response to "systemic" racism was not to focus on systems at all, but to "talk to each other and cultivate honest, open relationships and friendships... and [build] a more diverse and inclusive firm."[2] In other words, the solution to *structural* racism was to double down on *interpersonal* bias work and liberal antiracism's familiar script of diversity and inclusion.

Interpersonal remedies matter, but they are painfully inadequate for structural injustices. Antiracist work "within" and "among" remain necessary, but it must not be confused or substituted for the work "beyond." The racially differentiated effect of Covid was not rooted in individual prejudice, poor health habits, lack of education, or other narratives that gaslight communities of color. Such factors may always be present, but the pandemic's disproportionate effect on nonwhite people was structurally rooted in the political economy of racial capitalism: the exploitation of "essential" labor, precarity of housing, unequal access to healthcare, policing of lockdowns and health mandates, unchecked outbreaks within prisons and detention centers, and the scapegoating and intensification of racial discrimination. It is the structural which frames the interpersonal, as racial capitalism organizes our reality through educational apartheid, mass incarceration, segregated neighborhoods, redlining and bluelining, segmented labor markets confining workers to unequal tiers, persistent wage gaps and job insecurity, and militarized borders that inscribe violence on collective life. From the slave patrols of the plantation to the strike breaking squads of the factory, policing has always functioned to guard property and control labor. Border regimes allow capital and goods to freely move across borders, while migrant labor remains violently restricted. The vilification of migrants as terrorists, criminals, drug dealers, "illegals who are taking our jobs" and "bogus asylum seekers" rehearses the old script of colonial racial capitalism. Most forcefully, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, renowned public scholar-activist, punctuates how racism and capitalism have always been structured together:

> *Capitalism requires inequality, and racism enshrines it. Racial capitalism, which is to say all capitalism, is not a thing but a relation. If we look back through the history of capitalism as it developed, we see that the ways those who owned the means of production understood their differences from those whose labor they exploited were practices we recognize today as racial practice. So, all capitalism is racial from its beginning. The capitalism we have inherited, constantly producing and reproducing itself, will continue to depend on racial practice and racial hierarchy, no matter what. This is another way of saying we can't undo racism without undoing capitalism.*

Continued on page 5...

BELOVED COMMUNITY NEWS

Beloved Community Staff Team continued from page 4...

Detention and deportation are not aberrations at the edges of racial capitalism but border violence designed to preserve a global racial division of labor.

The violence persists not because officers or capitalists fail to examine their biases, but because the system itself requires racialized control to sustain exploitation. Racism has never been incidental to capitalism; it is one of its core operating principles. To be an antiracist, then, is not merely to change minds or diversify institutions, but to collectively expose structures that require diseased imaginations to rationalize inequality. Antiracism means dismantling the infrastructures of racial capitalism hiding in abstract financialized economies, systems of land ownership, and global trade agreements that codify and normalize extraction. Antiracism means committing to the redistribution of wealth, repairing deep inequalities inscribed upon our world for centuries, and prophetically reimagining beyond the strictures of racial capitalism where political economies serve life rather than devour it.

[1]Morris Pearl, "Dear Larry Fink: it's time to stop lavishing your wealth on the police," *Guardian*, August 1, 2020.

[2]Alexandra Sternlicht, "We Must Do More—What CEOs Like Tim Cook, Jamie Dimon, Larry Fink Say About Racial Inequality Protests," *Forbes*, June 1, 2020.

Welcome Words

Philippa Anastos
Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant

I love the language around the worship theme for this month. The idea of cultivating faith brings so much rich imagery to mind: not only tending to our faith, making sure that our mind provides a rich environment for growth, but also viewing our faith as something that exists, wild-growing, beyond us. We do not create — or even control — it, but instead, try to help it reach its healthiest, most abundant form.

Finding Yourself at Unity

Finding Yourself at Unity: For Visitors and Inquirers
Sundays 10:15 a.m. | Center Room | Childcare available

Join the repeating eight-session cycle at any time. If you have questions or would like one-on-one conversation about getting connected or about membership, contact Philippa Anastos, Membership Coordinator and Program Assistant, philippa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x110.

December classes include:

- December 7: UU History
- December 14: Congregational Care
- December 21: Membership 101
- December 28: No session

New Member Ingathering

Please join us at the 9:00 a.m. service on Sunday, December 7, for a short ceremony to welcome the newest members of Unity Church. After the service, there will be a reception in the Center Room.

Request Childcare

Nursery care is provided during Sunday services and Wellspring Wednesday programs. Care is available upon request for any church program by emailing katrina@unityunitarian.org at least one week in advance.

Religious Education Enrollment

Enrollment in Religious Education at Unity Church is ongoing. Please email Nelson Moroukian at nelson@unityunitarian.org to enroll a child.

Stay Connected

commUNITY is the monthly newsletter of Unity Church. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication. Subscriptions to this monthly newsletter (digital and USPS) and our weekly e-news are available by contacting Martha at martha@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x105.

Access all the hyperlinks in the newsletter with this QR code.

What Shape Will Love Take

Claire Cooke, Secretary, Board of Trustees

At every board meeting, two trustees and one Executive Team member are tasked with sharing the state of the congregation: what they have learned and observed of the congregation that month in relation to our ends. Acting as linkage between the moral owners of the church (those who yearn for the Beloved Community and see Unity Church as an instrument for its realization) and the work of the board. At our November meeting, I was one of the people responsible for this task. So, in this column, I thought I would reflect back the wisdom and learnings you shared with me throughout the month around the two themes that stood out to me most, storytelling and radical imagination.

One of the many events that I attended was a Wellspring Wednesday discussion about economic justice. During this discussion a congregant offered a definition that reframed my perspective on abundance. This participant proposed that abundance isn't just a synonym for wealth, but having an understanding of all of your resources (money, time, skills, materials, social capital, political power), where those resources exceed your needs, and where your surplus can meet the needs of the world. This definition, a gaining of clarity, created a new story for me of what abundance could be.

I saw this reimagining again in attending Regulation for Resistance, a somatics training facilitated by Lucinda Pepper. In this training, Lucinda said that instead of using the phrase "hurt people hurt people," they like to say "healing people heal people." A seemingly small shift in the narrative, that for reasons I could not yet name, struck me as holding great significance.

And then, while at work, I came across the article "Stories can be Seeds, Stories can be Weapons" by Rowen White, where Rowen says:

> *My mentor Martin Prechtel states beautifully: "Metabolism is where things start to break down; composting is where things start to come together. Metabolism is revolution; composting is culture re-emerging. ...When the only thing holding you up is what you hate, then when what you hate disappears, you die with it. You're dead. As long as you think that you're better than everyone else and are going to fix everything, then you're dependent on your enemy for your identity. Struggling for what you Love is very different than Fighting Against What You Hate."*
>
> *Radical imagination, creative visioning, and speculative dreaming of our future is an act of love…*

This gave me a new perspective on the paradigm shift hidden in Lucinda's and this congregant's reimaginings. In a few short words, they transformed a story we tell about the world from one centered on what we are working against (harm) to the world we wish to move towards (love).

How powerful, beautiful, and, I think, true to the Unitarian Universalist tradition. I see this sentiment in our living tradition, where we framed article two with love at the center and in our new ends statements, where we are looking to evangelize love. To me, this is a deliberate orientation of the narrative towards what could be. An orientation that brings us into conversation about what is, that recognizes and builds understanding of our present moment in all its joy and hurt, and that propels us beyond what is wrong now, into what could be beyond the bounds of the present.

I hope that in the coming months and years, we each become skilled practitioners of storytelling and imagination as together we take on the task of discerning the shape love might take if it were truly always at the center.

Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, December 7
1:00 p.m. | Sanctuary and Zoom

Registration if participating by Zoom: bit.ly/annualmeetzoom

Unity Church will hold its Annual Meeting of the Congregation on Sunday, December 7, at 1:00 p.m. Please plan to participate either in-person in the Sanctuary or online via Zoom. This year's meeting will include the election of three new trustees, the election of Debbie Cushman to complete the term of Jackie Duffus-Boyd (one year), and a vote to approve the 2026 operating and capital budgets. All meeting details can be found on the Board of Trustees webpage on Unity's website.

All are welcome to attend the meeting. Only voting members can vote! If you have questions about your membership status, please contact Laura Park at laura@unityunitarian.org.

Ends Statements

We the people of Unity Church-Unitarian, grounded in a joyous vision of beloved community, within, among, and beyond ourselves,

- understand the interconnected roots of oppression and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices, and hard work of antiracism, multiculturalism, and climate and economic justice;
- cultivate a multigenerational community of joy, care, and belonging, and evangelize love to meet the deep and abiding hunger in all of us;
- practice lifelong faith formation, grounded in Unitarian Universalist theology, that breaks us open and allows us to be transformed.

UUSC Partner Team

Krista Finstad Hanson and Clover Earl

There is still time for you to contribute to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). Unity's UUSC Partner Team requests that you send your gifts before the end of the year!

In his "Yoked Together" sermon on Sunday, October 26, Rev. Oscar spoke about the UUSC and invited us to participate in their annual fundraising program, Guest at Your Table (GAYT). The program is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, and this year's theme — Planting Seeds of Justice — couldn't be timelier.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has already committed to supporting the UUSC. We learned from staff that prior to this year's effort, 82 church members were registered UUSC members. Ten years ago — the last time the congregation participated in GAYT — there were 300 members. We are excited and hopeful that this year we can meet, or even exceed, that number once again.

Guest at Your Table participants will learn more about Ruth Lopez and Noah Bullock with the organization Cristosal in El Salvador. They are working to promote justice and defend human rights and the rule of law. Their leader Ruth Lopez, a lawyer, has been imprisoned. The organization is working in exile in Honduras and Guatemala, extending their work throughout Central America.

Also in Honduras, Juan Lopez was working to preserve fresh water and the environment and keep residents and workers from the dangerous and toxic conditions found in extractive mining. He was murdered in 2024 for his leadership role in this fight against the mining industry. The Fundación San Alonso Rodriguez carries on the work to protect the Guapinol River and the community.

Join us in renewing our congregation's connection to this vital service committee provided by our fellow Unitarian Universalists to act on our values here at home and throughout the world.

Visit UUSC's website to learn more: uusc.org/congregation-hub/guest-at-your-table.

UNITY CHURCH – UNITARIAN
integrity · service · joy

The Unitarian Post Office Mission

Louise Merriam for the Archives Team: Pauline Eichten, Patt Kelly, Louise Merriam, Carol Miller, Betsy Moore, and Deb Woodburn | archives@unityunitarian.org

Not all stories about Unity's history are based on our extensive archives. Some historical tidbits are simply missing from the documentary record. One such story is that of the Post Office Mission, a 19th century effort by many Unitarian congregations to spread their faith via the mail to thinly populated parts of the country.

Although the Post Office Mission does not appear in our archives, Unity Church played an important role. In 1881, the Minnesota Unitarian Conference appointed one of Unity's early members, Jennie McCaine, to head up the mission effort in Minnesota and adjacent Canadian provinces, focusing on communities with populations large enough to be ripe for the planting of new congregations. Jennie sent tracts, wrote letters, and nominated missionaries to spread the liberal gospel. She eventually married one of those missionaries, Björn Pétursson, and moved to Winnipeg where she and her husband helped found the first Unitarian church in Western Canada.

Others involved in this work were former Unity Church ministers William Channing Gannett and Frederick May Eliot. Around the turn of the 20th century, Gannett, now serving a large congregation in Rochester, New York, began sending regular letters to a widespread group he named the "Church of All Souls." During WWII, Eliot, then president of the American Unitarian Association, proposed something similar for military members and isolated religious liberals, an effort that became the Church of the Larger Fellowship, or CLF. Not surprisingly, the Universalists developed a similar program. When the two denominations merged in 1961, they agreed that the work of serving those with no access to Unitarian Universalist congregations should continue.

Most people don't think of Unitarians and Universalists as evangelists. However, we have this history that reflects the desire of both groups to share the good news of liberal religion, a desire that lives on today in the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

Photo note:

- Image of Jennie McCaine from First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg website

For more information about the Post Office Mission:

- Church of the Larger Fellowship
- History of Unitarian Church in Winnipeg
- Jennie McCaine

WELLSPRING WEDNESDAY

Wellspring Wednesday gathers a multigenerational church community to nourish right and holy relationship among us and deepen our life of faith, grounded in spiritual practice and antiracist multicultural work.

December 3

Dinner: Celery leek soup, shaved vegetable salad, Will's homemade boule, oatmeal chocolate chip bars

Community Grief Ritual | Foote Room | This program will last until 9:00 p.m.
Join Rev. Shay and the Twin Cities Grief Collective for a Community Grief Ritual — a practice of gathering with others to tend to sorrow, longing, and loss in a supportive circle. It is rooted in the wisdom that grief is not meant to be carried alone. Through song, reflection, movement, and deep listening, we witness one another with compassion. In this space, all grief is welcome, and all expressions of grief — whether tears, wails, silence, laughter, or story — are honored. Our rituals are not meant to solve grief, but to make space for it.

2026 Budget Information Session | Anderson Library
Join Senior Minister Oscar Sinclair, Executive Director Laura Park, and Director of Finance Julie Fliflet to review the 2026 proposed operating and capital budgets including the values and assumptions behind the numbers. The congregation will vote on whether to approve these budgets at the December 7 annual meeting.

Unity Green Team Nature Craft Night | Art Room
Unleash your creativity to make holiday decorations out of natural materials! Unity's Green Team seeks to help our children build community while strengthening their relationship with the earth. Please send Anna Newton (asnewton3@gmail.com) an email by December 2 if you plant to participate, as space and materials are limited.

Donations of the following items are needed and should be placed in the collection basket near the coat rack at the Holly Avenue entrance: pinecones, alder cones, acorns, small colorful sticks, Goldenrod galls, empty milkweed pods, dried flowers and pods, *whole* spices, thin ribbon, spray glitter, red and white beads, low temp glue sticks (.27 inch diameter), cardboard egg cartons (not plastic or styrofoam).

Five Theological Questions – Large Group| Robbins Parlor
What is our role in striving for the Beloved Community?
Come prepared to engage in personal reflection and share your responses with participants of all ages in a large group format. The small group session for this question will be held on January 7. All participants are invited to share a statement of faith at the final session on April 15, 2026.

Somatic Yoga | Body Room
Experience a gentle, nervous system-informed yoga practice designed to help you pause, tune into yourself, and release tension stored in the body. The class is accessible to anyone comfortable sitting on the floor. Bring a yoga mat, blanket, or blocks for added comfort. Led by Dr. Tamara Kraft, a somatic psychotherapist and holistic health coach.

Young Adults Group | Center Room
A fun, reflective group working to build multifaith and multicultural community.

Religious Education New Family Orientation | Gannett Room
Learn about Unity's religious education programs for children and youth. Email Nelson Moroukian at nelson@unityunitarian.org one week in advance.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room
Join Mayra Mendoza for beginning violin lessons appropriate for all ages. Email mayraquitzia@hotmail.com by 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday to ensure a lesson.

December 10

Dinner: Bolognese with penne, Caesar salad, gingerbread cake

Becoming the Twin Cities
Parish Hall & Zoom
Join Unity Church member Drew Ross for the launch of his new book, *Becoming the Twin Cities: Swindles, Schemes and Enduring Rivalries*, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. In this engaging and deeply researched book, Drew tells the story of how first geography, but soon politics, commerce, confident men and outright crooks kept St Paul and Minneapolis separate cities, not one great city on the Upper Mississippi, that contemporaries thought inevitable.

Economic Justice and Dismantling the Discovery Doctrine
Robbins Parlor & Zoom
Join Doe Hoyer, Organizing Director of the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, for a conversation on how economic justice must be linked with the liberation of Indigenous Peoples and sacred lands. Doe will share about the Coalition's focus on alternative economies and investment justice, and how we can include projects of reparative justice, land rematriation, mutual aid, and legislative change in our movements. Our discussion will include a scenario from the Coalition's new training Economic Justice, Jubilee, and Reenvisioning Security — a cohort training series available to Unity Church members in early 2026.

Lectio Divina | Gannett Room & Zoom
Come experience the alchemy that occurs through focused reflection on an inspirational text. Many people find Lectio Divina sessions to be a time of rejuvenation and insight.

Cultivating the Sacred Well of Resilience | Anderson Library
Join educators Jackie Smith and Sara Ford for the final session of a four-month series designed to cultivate resilience and wellbeing in the lives of educators.

Beginner Violin | Choir Room

DECEMBER HOLIDAYS AT UNITY CHURCH

Holiday Services

Blue Holiday Service
Thursday, December 18 | **7:00 p.m.** | **Ames Chapel**
For some, the holiday season is "the most wonderful time of the year." For others, the holidays are a bittersweet time filled with mixed emotions. We gather for a service of words, music, and sharing.

Winter Solstice Family Sunday
Sunday, December 21 | **9:00 and 11:115 a.m.**
Rev. Shay MacKay | **Charlie Caswell, Worship Associate**
The shortest day and longest night of the year are upon us. Since ancient times, people have gathered on this day to share in rituals and song to mark the gift of returning light, warmth and hope. Join Rev. Shay, Ellen Wold, and Worship Associate Charlie Caswell in honoring this longest night and celebrating the slow return of the light. On Family Sundays, children experience the entire worship together with their families in the Sanctuary.

Find a Stillness
Wednesday, December 24 | **10:00 a.m.** | **Ames Chapel**
Join us for Unity's annual Christmas Eve communion service. In the midst of a busy season, we take time to center ourselves in this ancient ritual of community and blessing.

Christmas Pageant
Wednesday, December 24 | **4:00 & 5:30 p.m.** | **Sanctuary**
This rich tradition dates to 1919, when Unity Church minister Frederick May Eliot compiled the script and music for our retelling of the Christmas story. Whether you are new to our pageant, or you have been part of it for years, we look forward to gathering together in the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve.

All children and youth are invited to participate in the Christmas pageant! Details including registration for pageant cast and children's choir are online at unityunitarian.org/pageant.html. Questions? Please contact pageant director Kelley Loughrey at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net.

If you would like to sing in the adult pageant choir, please email ahmed@unityunitarian.org. Rehearsal is Sunday, December 14, 10:15 a.m., Foote Room.

Lessons and Carols
Wednesday, December 24 | **9:00 p.m.**
Sanctuary and Livestream
Join members of Unity's ministry team in celebrating the ancient story of a baby, born in a manger, told through scripture, song, and candlelight.

If you would like to sing with the candlelight choir on Christmas Eve, please email ahmed@unityunitarian.org. Rehearsals are Monday, December 22, and Tuesday, December 23, 7:30-9:15 p.m., in the Sanctuary choir loft. Call time on Christmas Eve is 8:00 p.m.

Holiday Events

Mitten Tree
Our annual Mitten Tree is waiting downstairs in Whitman Lobby (near the nursery), to be decorated with warm hats, gloves, scarves, socks and mittens. All donated items should be new and will be distributed to families in our community. Donations will be collected throughout December.

Tower Club Wreath and Cookie Sale
Sunday, December 7 | **Parish Hall**
Unity's high school group will sell decorated wreaths and made-from-scratch cookies to raise money to support their annual trip to Boston and other activities.

Holiday Boutique
Sunday, December 7 and 14 | **Parish Hall**
Bolivian-made sweaters, totes, shawls, scarves, hats, tablecloths, and more from Mano a Mano. Hand-sewn and quilted table runners, wall-hangings, bags, purses, ornaments, tickets for a raffle quilt, and other gift items from Evergreen Quilters.

Santa Pause
Wednesday, December 10 | **5:30-8:30 p.m.** | **Parish Hall**
Unity Church families can enjoy the gift of free, drop-off holiday childcare for children age 3+. Take a moment to pause in the midst of a season that asks so much of parents. We will begin at Wellspring Wednesday dinner, then enjoy chapel together, and then art, play, and a short movie. RSVP required by December 3: unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.

Unity's "tweens" are absolutely welcome to attend and/or help out! Teens and adults are also invited to volunteer. Please contact katrina@unityunitarian.org with any questions or to inquire about volunteering.

Music Ministry Winter Concert: Saint Nicholas
Saturday, December 13 | **Sanctuary**
6:30 p.m.: Carol Sing
7:00 p.m.: Concert
8:00 p.m.: Potluck Dessert Buffet
Bring a dessert to Parish Hall before the concert: nut-free, labeled, cut and ready to serve.

Holiday Caroling
Sunday, December 14 | **1:00 p.m.** | **Meet in Parish Hall**
Share your sweet voices and holiday cheer! We will meet in Parish Hall, eat a quick bowl of soup (come at 12:30 for soup), and then head out to visit various senior residences where church members live. Caroling song books provided.

Writing for Wellbeing Workshop

Saturday, December 6 | 9:00 a.m.-noon | Robbins Parlor
Registration: bit.ly/wellbework

Grief is one of the most challenging and emotionally painful experiences all of us face. In living with grief, we often experience a fragmentation of our self and our understanding of the world. Integration of loss requires not only the expression of grief and meaning-making, but also the rebuilding of identity. Writing for Wellbeing is an effective and powerful research-based method to empower us to integrate and transform our grief. All who are grieving, who have experienced loss and are struggling, who want to explore new and different ways of writing their stories, are welcome to join Rev. Shay in a morning of reflection, writing, and sharing.

Practice Hospitality at Unity Church

Saturday, December 13 | 10:00 a.m.-Noon | Center Room

Join Rev. Shay MacKay, Welcome Team Coordinator Philippa Anastos, and our existing welcome team members for a hands-on workshop exploring what radical hospitality looks like in real life. Welcoming those who look, act, or communicate differently can feel uncomfortable at first — but with practice, it becomes natural, joyful, and deeply strengthening for our whole community. Through reflection, discussion, and roleplay, we'll learn how to greet every person with genuine warmth and dignity. Together, we'll build the confidence and skills that help transform strangers into neighbors, and neighbors into friends.

Sangha Practice

Tuesdays | 4:30-6:00 p.m. | Ames Chapel

At the heart of Buddhist practice is the commitment to awaken –- to step into our doubts and predicaments and hear the roaring of life at the still point of a turning universe. Through weekly practice of meditation, we discover a clarity of mind attentive and accountable to each moment of life's flow, and touch the mystery of our original face. This group is open to anyone interested, no experience is necessary, and instructions will be provided. Email kp@unityunitarian.org if you would like to join the weekly practice.

Lectio Divina

Second Wednesday and Fourth Tuesday of Each Month
7:10 p.m. | Zoom: bit.ly/lectioucu

Is it poetry? Is it meditation? It's a bit of both — Lectio Divina! Come experience the alchemy that occurs through focused reflection on an inspirational text. Many people find Lectio Divina sessions to be a time of rejuvenation and insight. Led by Shelley Butler and Lisa Wersal; facilitated by your own heart. Register once, attend as you are able.

Fellowship Groups

Email Philippa at philippa@unityunitarian.org to get connected or visit unityunitarian.org/fellowship-groups.html.

Afterthoughts: Sundays, 10:15 a.m., Middle School Room 021, to discuss the service

Caregivers Support Group: third Thursday of the month at noon, Zoom

Evergreen Quilters: second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Anderson Library, and fourth Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m.-noon, off-site.

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: third Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Zoom

Living With Grief Group: third Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Zoom

LGBTQ+ Group: This group coordinates some of the LGBTQ+ programming with the congregation.

Men's Coffee Group: Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m., Center Room, for light-hearted conversation

Men's Conversation Group: Monday, December 8 and 22, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Zoom. Discuss a range of topics, offer support, and connect.

Men's Retirement Circle: Monday, December 1, 15, and 29, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Robbins Parlor

New Look at the Bible meets the second Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m., at Unity Church

Recovery from White Conditioning: Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Zoom

Textile Arts Group: first and third Friday of the month, 9:30-11:00 a.m., Crothers Room, bring your knitting, stitching, etc.

Unity Book Club: second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Zoom.
December 9: *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon
January 13: *The Art Thief* by Michael Finkel
February 10: *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett

Women in Retirement: second and fourth Thursday of each month, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Center Room

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35): every other Wednesday at 7:10 p.m., Center Room. A fun, reflective group of people working to build multi-faith and multi-cultural community. Email kp@unityunitarian.org to be added to the Young Adult email list.

Holiday Housing Miracle

Through untiring work and many funding sources, Project Home recently purchased the Best Western building at 1010 Bandana Blvd. W in Saint Paul. Renovations are well underway. The completed first floor is currently occupied by 29 families (97 people in total). When the second floor is ready, this number will double. Unity's Housing Justice Team is in partnership with Project Home.

Because of Project Home's success, they are bustling with volunteer opportunities at the Bandana site:

Volunteer Drivers: Until a commercial kitchen is built, meals for families are created at Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet. Drivers are needed to pick up weekday lunch meals from there and drive them to the Bandana location. Details and sign up: bit.ly/phlunchdelv.

Front Desk Volunteers: Needed for shifts Monday-Friday from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. whenever you're available. Tasks include checking in visitors, distributing mail, etc. Details and sign up: bit.ly/phfrdesk.

Holiday Dignity Shop volunteers and gifts needed: Bring unwrapped gifts for children in the $15-$25 range (new items only, no toy weapons). Parents can then choose a few gifts and wrap them. Be a shopping elf or set-up elf. Or, be an activity elf and watch children while their parents "shop." Gifts accepted Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., through December 19. Details and sign up at bit.ly/phgifts.

Winter Gear Project: Adopt a Project Home family and supply new boots, coats, hats, etc. (depending family needs). Details and sign up at bit.ly/phwarm.

MUUSJA Is Celebrating 25 Years

Tuesday, December 2 | 6:00-7:30 p.m. | Register: bit.ly/muusja25
United Theological Seminary and Zoom
Celebrate 25 years of UUs in Minnesota, western Wisconsin, and the Dakotas organizing for social change. Join the celebration, hear inspiring stories, and help sustain the work of the Minnesota Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance!

Movie Night: *Sugarcane*

Friday, December 5 | 7:00 p.m. | Robbins Parlor
Unity's Indigenous Justice Team is hosting a showing of *Sugarcane*, an Oscar-nominated documentary film following an investigation into the Canadian Indian residential school system, igniting a reckoning in the lives of survivors and descendants. Popcorn will be provided.

Obama School Team

We are truly celebrating the response we've had this fall to our invitation for you to be involved with Barack and Michelle Obama Montessori Elementary and Middle School! We have 26 volunteers assisting in classrooms and 10 more volunteers working in the library. That's twice as many volunteers as we had last year! A truly amazing response. Thank you!

Unity Church members have shown up in other ways as well. A number of you were present at the groundbreaking in September. Several of you volunteered to help teachers set up their classrooms in the newly renovated building. Five of you helped teachers download apps onto student iPads. Some of you set up orange cones and made lemonade for the field day "fun run" in October. And many of you contributed generously to the Sunday offering this fall, an amount that far exceeded any previous collection for the school.

Here's a new opportunity: Help fight food insecurity for children in St. Paul. The elementary school counselor is looking for a couple of people to distribute Every Meal food bags to student backpacks on Thursdays or Fridays each week. There would be no student contact in this work because of the confidentiality associated with the program. Contact Nancy Heege at nancyheege672@gmail.com if you would like to know more.

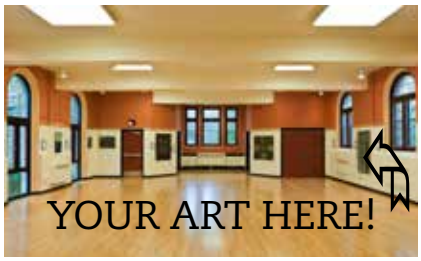
Light in the Storm: Agenda Launch and Strategy Training

Saturday, December 13 | 1:00-6:00 p.m. | Minneapolis Convention Center
ISAIAH and Faith in Minnesota leaders from across the state will come together to launch an agenda through 2027, and plan a path to protect our state, neighbors, and families in the face of rising authoritarianism. Join the work of making Minnesota a place where families across race, place, and religion can thrive. Registration is required and several thousand people are expected so please read the details of the day carefully: bit.ly/isaiah1225.

Mano Trip to Bolivia

Join Rev. Oscar and Mano a Mano International, May 17-27, 2026, for a trip to Bolivia to witness the work of Mano a Mano. This trip will focus on water, food, health and education, with Rev. Oscar helping guiding us to connect the work of Mano a Mano to our Unitarian Universalist faith. The trip will help us to understand the interconnected roots of oppression and yoke ourselves to the demands, sacrifices, and hard work of antiracism, multiculturalism, and climate and economic justice. For more information, contact trip leaders Ann Mabbott at amabbott@hamline.edu or Segundo Velasquez at segundo@manoamano.org.

Our Creative Community Exhibit Reminder



Art as gift and spiritual practice, art as creativity and exuberance, and art as spirit and joy. Unity congregants, we bring you a special opportunity! We want to include you in Unity's Second Congregational Art Show, Our Creative Community in February and March of 2026. Partake in the joy of showcasing and sharing your art with the church community when we fill Parish Hall with the works of visual craft and art makers from the congregation.

Valerie Tremelat, a Unity artist highlights her pleasure when sharing her art, "I do my creating alone in my little studio. For many years I have just focused on the freedom in creating whatever appeals to me. I am fond of organic shapes and asymmetry. More recently I am trying to do storytelling through my wearable sculptural work. And what is a story if there is no one on the other end to receive it? The viewer is my partner in that way and so I look forward to sharing with Unity folks."

This show is a platform to bring your art into a space that is full of people who are on a spiritual journey. Please consider submitting your art to this show!

Deadline for the application is December 15. If you have art or fine craft that you want to be part of the show, please find all the details and complete the online submission form at unityunitarian.org/art-lives-at-unity.html.

Creative Storytelling

"We have art so that we shall not die from reality" —Nietzsche

The December artists exhibiting in Unity's Parish and West Halls are masters of storytelling with fanciful and imaginative style.

Rod Bland is a Canadian born, Minnesota based artist known for creating photographs that push beyond what would be observed or taken in everyday life. His photographs are staged, composed and constructed carefully as if they were stills taken from a movie, book or play that does not actually exist. Rod started his career as a visual effects artist for film and television and initially did not have reservations about creating images that were heavily manipulated through computer graphics. Over time, he has reconsidered this process and has cut back radically on using these techniques. Part of reason is the fact that images can now be manipulated so easily through AI and he feels there is a loss of humanity in this. Consequently, he now photographs many things on film and limits his "manipulation" through attentive lighting, staging and whatever can be done in a darkroom. His hope is that these efforts and this process can translate back into humanity.

Heather Leigh Digolo is an acrylic painter who started painting (as a hobby in 2014) about her relationship with animals through the recovery process. She carries her deep love of animal connection, music, and daily process in her body of work. She includes collage in some of her processes, and insights received from dreams and visions. She was born in St. Paul and paints from the Twin Cities area.

Ann Solyst is a local painter whose work is both whimsical and meditative. Loosely inspired by bizarre descriptions of animals in medieval Bestiaries, her playful animal combinations are sometimes puns, sometimes ironic, and sometimes simply evocative. Although fanciful, Ann's sensitive style and subdued palette suggest wildlife or storybook illustrations rather than fantasy drawing and the captivating individuality and sweet personalities of her creatures asks the viewer to slow down, come closer, and relate. How did this creature come to be? Where do they live? Are they friendly, thoughtful, or playful? Through these delicate and beautifully odd animals Ann celebrates the abnormal, the unusual, and the uncategorizable.

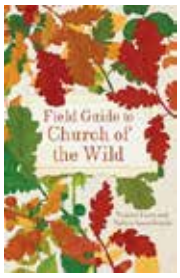
The Bookstall, Hearth of a Community

Kim Tyson, Library-Bookstall Team

When I first began attending Unity Church, I accepted the invitation during the service to join others in Parish Hall for coffee and conversation. Not knowing anyone, I felt a little hesitant. As I scanned the room, my eyes landed on the Bookstall — a welcome refuge in unfamiliar surroundings.

Browsing the shelves gave me a natural way to connect. Conversations sparked easily around the books on display, and I quickly discovered how much this little corner enriches our community. I'm grateful for both the well-stocked Anderson Library and the Bookstall — whether borrowing a book, purchasing one for personal reflection, or finding the perfect gift.

Here are some of the newest additions to the Bookstall. I encourage you to stop by, explore the offerings, and enjoy a chat about books with fellow seekers.

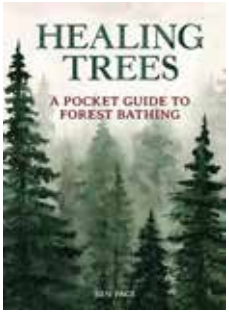


Field Guide to Church of the Wild (Church of the Wild #2)
by Victoria Loorz and Valerie Luna Serrels. Broadleaf Books, 2025.
A guide for all who long to reconnect their spirituality with the rest of the living world. With a wide-ranging collection of stories, rituals, and practical resources, its pages lead us toward prayer and mountain, ritual and wren, gatherings and forests.

A Grandmother Begins the Story
by Michelle Porter. Algonquin, 2024.
Five generations of Métis women and their ancestral bison interweave their stories of healing, family bonds, and spiritual connection as they navigate between the living world and Afterlife.

Gilead by Marilynne Robinson. Picador Paper, 2020.
In 1956, a dying minister writes a letter to his young son, reflecting on his family's legacy of faith and abolition. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel explores fathers, sons and spiritual devotion. Rev. Oscar highly recommends it:

> *My Grandfather introduced me to Marilynne Robinson, that book,* Gilead. *I've given away dozens of copies of it. I've read it seven, eight times. I've never finished it. It's so beautiful, I don't actually want it to end.*



Healing Trees: A Pocket Guide to Forest Bathing
by Ben Page. Mandala, 2021.
A walk in the woods is great but unless you understand the ancient practice of Shinrin-yoku, you're missing out on the full restorative power of nature. This book is intended as an easy approach to forest bathing, a concept that is now making its way into health and wellness practices. Part spiritual guide and part practitioner's handbook, this positivity-rich book is designed to encourage mindfulness, contentedness, and presence in the moment.

The Justice Database

In The Justice Database: The Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) was founded decades ago to combat an emerging human rights crisis: the targeting of immigrants for mass imprisonment and deportation.

Shop for Good!

A new shipment of PeaceCYCLE tote bags and zipper pouches from Haiti is here. These super-strong totes are the best you'll ever have; the colorful zipper pouches have a myriad of uses. Your purchase helps keep a small company afloat in Port au Prince *and* supports the Unity Anderson Library. Totes and pouches make great gifts!

Pitter-pattering Questions

[…like raindrops on the window, and little feet running through the house]

Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation

From concert halls to cathedrals, acoustic considerations require careful attention to the invisible pathways of echoes and reverberations. The aim is never to silence echoes but to sculpt them for definition, timbre, clarity, dynamic range, dimension, envelopment, and even silence. Too much echo clutters the ear, as lingering tones obscure new ones. Too little echo flattens a space into dullness, lifeless and inert. Concert halls typically sustain reverberation for about two seconds, while cathedrals may stretch it to eight, producing a sound less clear but more mellow, resonant, and enveloping. But whatever the setting, echoes give space its voice, character, and depth of meaning. Where there is no echo, our sense of space — both physical and relational — thins to the point of vanishing.

The early church named the faith formation of children *catechesis*, a word rooted in the Greek *ēkhē*, meaning "to echo." Catechesis was the art of echoing the church's teachings and practices, guiding children to navigate the world by a kind of spiritual echolocation. But what exactly is echoed in our own catechism with children, when Unitarian Universalist faith claims no single doctrine, no creed, no single authoritative text? Certainly, we echo the history and tradition carried forward by our forebears. We echo the *Principles* and *Sources* that shape and guide our path. Yet beyond these, what resounds most profoundly at the heart of our catechism is something more remarkable, demanding, and daring: that peculiar way of being in holy relationship called *covenant*.

Our covenant is our catechism, in the long run teaching not *what* to believe but *how* to live in relationship with one another, with the wider world, and with the transcending mystery and wonder that surrounds us. Covenant is catechesis in motion, as our children grow up hearing the echoes of our shared promises, reverberating across generations, describing how we want to be in relationship with one another and the kind of community we aspire to create. In these lived echoes, children discover that faith is not a static creed but a dynamic practice, an unfolding rhythm of relationship that teaches them how to belong, how to trust, and how to shape a world grounded in an unshakable love and steadfast responsibility.

Faith is not a solitary note left unanswered, nor a single melody carried alone. It is nurtured in resonance, in the living chorus of a multigenerational community. Children's laughter, struggles, and questions fill our halls and return to them transformed by the harmonics of shared wisdom and care. Echoes do not erase the original note but extend it, layering timbre, depth, and dimension that invite variation and improvisation. Is this not so with faith, as our children's wonderings and questions resound back to them, reshaped by the teachings and practices of generations, until the whole community becomes a resonant chamber sustaining, guiding, and enlarging the very journey of faith itself?

Sharing questions that pitter-patter across our sacred journeys…

Childcare for Church Events

Unity Church offers childcare for church-wide events, free of charge. Nursery care is consistently provided for Sunday services and Wellspring Wednesday programs — no reservation is needed. Outside of these times, reservations for childcare are required. Please request childcare one week ahead of time by completing the online form: unityunitarian.org/childcare-request-form.html.

Youth Musical

The Youth Musical is a unique production created each year for the congregation of Unity Church.

All middle school kids (grades 6, 7 and 8) are invited to audition, and everyone who auditions will get a part. Auditions are Thursday, January 8, 2026.

Rehearsals will be held Sundays, 1:30-3:30 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Performances are March 19, 20 and 21, 2026.

Learn more at an informational meeting on Wednesday, December 3, at 7:10 p.m., in the Science Room or Sunday, December 7, at 10:30 a.m., in the Gannett Room. Please email unityyouthmusical@gmail.com with questions.

December 2025 Religious Education

Wednesday, December 3: New Family Orientation 7:15 p.m. (RSVP to nelson@unityunitarian.org)

Sunday, December 7: Regular Religious Education; Cookies and Wreath sale; Youth Musical Parent Meeting 10:15 a.m.; Celebration of New Lives (11:15 a.m. service).

Wednesday, December 10: Santa Pause 5:30-8:30 p.m. (holiday childcare for ages 3+, RSVP required: katrina@unityunitarian.org

Sunday, December 14: Regular Religious Education

Tuesday, December 23: Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 12:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 21: Family Sunday, all children worship in Sanctuary, nursery care available.

Sunday, December 28: Winter break: no Religious Education classes, one 10:00 a.m. service only; activities for school-age kids, nursery care available.

Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

I love Christmas carols. I love them so much that my final doctoral degree recital at the University of Minnesota was an entire program of Christmas carols. Most conductors use the resources and budget available for this final recital to program one of those big "bucket list" pieces — Brahms's *Requiem*, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor* — and I received a fair amount of teasing for my love of Christmas music.

My favorite types of carols do not include sugarplums or sleighs (and certainly not Santa or Rudolph); they tend to be in Latin, would sound great played on a bagpipe, often contain some truly bonkers non-canonical adventures of the Holy Family, and feature words like "flesh," "rage," "fire," or "burn." They frequently have terrible rhymes from a time when English was pronounced differently, and they have no qualms about bringing Satan and his demons into the Christmas season.

Some good examples of my favorite carols include "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen," which mentions Satan in the very first verse, and "Good King Wenceslas" (how much fun is it to sing "Bring me flesh and bring me wine!" like some sort of petulant prince?). I want to imagine "I Saw Three Ships" as a spin-off of the New Testament, where all the main characters are now pirates going on maritime adventures. "The Cherry Tree Carol" is another favorite of mine, with lyrics that are just bonkers: Mary is pregnant and sees some cherries on a tree. Being incapacitated, she asks Joseph to fetch them for her, but Joseph is in a mood and replies, "Why don't you get the father of your child to get them?" And then, from inside the womb, little fetus Jesus commands the tree to bend down and give Mary the cherries! I definitely don't remember that episode anywhere in the Gospels.

Unity Church turns Christian in December, and we spend a whole month rehashing Christianity's One Big Story. This year, the timing of it lined up with our monthly Wellspring Wednesday hymn-singing and discussion group. After discussing the eight hymns dedicated to "The Jewish Spirit" in the hymnal, we looked ahead and realized that the next sixty hymns were dedicated to the One Big Story, starting in Advent and ending with Pentecost. I'm not complaining: I love Christmas carols.

I am very excited this December to present Britten's *Saint Nicholas* at Unity Church, a huge endeavor that involves all of the Music Ministry, past and present music staff (including Ruth Palmer at the organ!), and an orchestra of Unity members, some of whom hadn't picked up their instrument in decades. The piece is demanding but also fun and exciting, and it includes stories about Santa Claus that we rarely get to hear. We won't be singing about the North Pole, reindeer, or elves. However, we *will* be singing about an evil innkeeper who pickled children in a barrel until Saint Nicholas swooped in to bring them back to life, and about that one time when Nicholas was annoyed at the sailors on a ship who were gambling (gasp!) so he brought on a huge storm until they were all on their knees praying for salvation… and of course, the episode when all the bishops gather at Nicea and Santa Claus stood up angrily and punched Arius — perhaps one of the first Unitarian Universalists — right in the face!

Music Ministry Winter Concert: *Saint Nicholas*

Saturday, December 13 | Sanctuary
6:30: Carol Sing | 7:00: Concert | 8:00: Potluck Dessert Buffet
Please bring a dessert to Parish Hall before the concert: nut-free, labeled, cut and ready to serve.

Sing in a Choir on Christmas Eve

Rehearsal for the adult pageant choir is Sunday, December 14, 10:15 a.m., in the Foote Room.

Rehearsals for the 9:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols candlelight choir are Monday, December 22, and Tuesday, December 23, 7:30-9:15 p.m., in the Sanctuary choir loft. Call time on Christmas Eve is 8:00 p.m.

Email ahmed@unityunitarian.org to participate.

Border CrosSing

Details and tickets at:
bordercrossingmn.org

Border CrosSing continues its holiday tradition of performing *Navidad Nuestra* by Argentine composer Ariel Ramírez paired with villancicos from Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru, performed in Spanish and Nahuatl. The music on this program centers the Holy Family's role as refugees in the Christmas story, a perspective that is often left out in concert programming in the United States. Don't miss these powerful concerts!

Performances
Saturday, December 20 | 7:00 p.m.
Academia Cesar Chavez School, Saint Paul

Sunday, December 21 | 4:00 p.m.
Incarnation Catholic Church, Minneapolis

UNITY CHURCH–UNITARIAN

Sanctuary Entrance: 733 Portland Avenue | Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
Business Entrance: 732 Holly Avenue | Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-228-1456 | fax: 651-228-0927 | www.unityunitarian.org | unity@unityunitarian.org

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sinclair, Senior Minister
Rev. KP Hong, Minister of Faith Formation
Laura Park, Executive Director
Mary Baremore, Chair, Board of Trustees

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Benjamin Britten's

SAINT NICHOLAS

Unity Church Music Ministries
Winter Concert

Saturday, December 13
7:00 p.m.
Sanctuary