

Reverence

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 own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.

As the winter solstice nears and the nights here in the north are growing longer, I notice how the many lights, both shimmering and ordinary, beckon my gaze. How festive twinkling bulbs and flickering candles make the simplest places a little bit enchanted. How the inner spaces glowing into the darkness outside issue their invitations to come in, and the stars in the sky shine brighter in the cold. In this season of shortened daylight, my heart turns toward the luminous, far and near.

To call it reverence is not quite right, but close. Perhaps as close as the English language gets to naming that overarching wonder and awe, admiration and longing, that beckons us out of our separate shadows and into relationship with the sacred sparks within all being. What Albert Schweitzer called “reverence for life.”

Is it reverence that stirs when we sing “Silent Night” by candlelight? Was it reverence, in the ancient story two millennia ago, that brought shepherds and kings to their knees before a poor and homeless baby born in a barn? What awe, awakened by a bright star in the vast night sky, beckoned the travelers to the child’s side, a more distant admiration deemed not enough? All were called in close to witness the infant’s small, new life. How could they not bow to see the humble child whose light so powerfully drew them near?

Mary Oliver, in a different time and place, wrote, “*And someone’s face, whom you love, will be as a star/ both intimate and ultimate, / and you will be both heart-shaken and respectful.*”

We humans have countless defenses against the heart-shaking risks of proximity and love, of reverence and the relationship from which it grows. There is propriety, practicality or plain old

pride. Individualism and independence. Cynicism and skepticism. Autonomy and analysis. Freedom or fatalism. Denial, disengagement or difference. Each of these — and more — can hold us many paces out from true encounter with the holy spark inside ourselves and others.

Reverence does not depend on a belief in God. But it does run into barriers with those who believe only in themselves — and others like them. How can we experience reverence if we are unwilling to humbly draw near, to cross the differences and distances that divide us today?

In the early 19th century William Ellery Channing, whose praise of human goodness gave shape to our emerging American Unitarianism, said, “I do and I must reverence human nature.” But that reverence began with a close up, clear-eyed view of both our best and worst possibilities.

“I shut my eyes on none of [humanity’s] weakness and crimes,” he wrote. “But injured, trampled on, and scorned as our nature is, I still turn to it with intense sympathy and strong hope. And I thank God that my own lot is bound up with that of the human race.” For Channing, reverence was a call into relationship with humanity’s goodness and its failures too. Perhaps this was also what the ancient travelers following the star to Bethlehem discovered — the sympathy and hope that rises when our own lot is bound up with the whole human condition, both beautiful and broken. It is the promise of the Beloved Community as well.

Of course, being bound into relationship with all of humanity may arouse our fear. Who has not known the inner quaking that comes from love’s heart-shaken way of exposing us to loss and disappointment? Are we willing to choose it anyway?

So the angels commanded the shepherds to “Fear not.” Which is another way of saying, come closer. Draw near.

Perhaps this is the season’s call to reverence: to see the lights shining around, above and within us all as invitations to come closer. To be guided across unknown distances — into relationship with a new life often found in the most unexpected places. To reverently pay homage to our human goodness *and* our frailty, born in the humble hay of every day, waiting for us to draw near. How else will we be blessed by love’s light, intimate and ultimate, in this season of lengthening nights?

*By Associate Minister Karen Hering on behalf of this month’s theme team:
Ahmed Anzaldúa, Drew Danielson,
Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs
and KP Hong*

Reverence Theme Resources

BOOKS

Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue by Paul Woodruff

What Does It Mean to be Human: Reverence for Life Reaffirmed by Responses from Around the World, ed. Frederick Franck, Janis Roze, and Richard Connolly

Doors in the Air, a children’s book, by David Weale and Pierre Pratt

POETRY

Behind My Eyes by Li-Young Lee

MOVIES

Harold and Maude (1971)

The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble (2017)

In the Light of Reverence (clip from 2016 PBS feature: <https://to.pbs.org/35aWV6e>)

Just Words



When I think of Christmas magic I find myself at the church of my childhood. Dressed in crimson choir robes we gathered in the chapel off the crypt beneath the sanctuary. Each of us held an unlit candle. Murmuring and restive, some of us sucking on lemon slices to clear our throats, we listened for Chris Moore's command. "Silencium." One word, imbued with power by the latin suffix, was enough to cause sixty children between the ages of seven and thirteen, to snap into silence and straighten our lines. As the bell sounded high above us, we each lit our candles. Then two by two we made our way up the curved stone staircase into the silent, darkened sanctuary singing... *Hodie Christus natus est.*

There was magic in the singing. There was magic in the silence. There was magic in the sounding of the bell that called us all to notice what was being born. I can't remember Christmas ever changing. Twenty years ago when we were exploring the possibility of becoming your ministers we were amused to read the admonition in your packet: **Thou shalt not change our Christmas pageant.** This year as we celebrate a hundred years of Dr. Eliot's Christmas pageant, our amusement has mellowed into deep appreciation for the singing and the silence and the reassurance that it brings.

The great Afro-Futurist Octavia Butler asserts in her novel *Parable of the Sower*, "God is Change. Shape God." Rest assured, the Christmas pageant, will remain a permanent anchor in the life of the church. That said, Unity Church is alive with changes underway as we live into the new Ends established by the congregation in the spring of 2018. Those of us who plan and offer worship are used to attempting to balance "risky" services when we raise discomfoting issues like racism and economic disparity with more inward or "spiritual" considerations.

The good news is that the liturgy alone is strong enough to provide both comfort and challenge every time we gather. The good news is that God is truly Change and that in order to be true to the Prophet's word, in order to be true to the words of the one we await in this season of turning, we have no choice but to strive to shape change in our lives and in the world. Mary is in labor now. There is no turning back.

As always,

Rob Eller-Isaacs



This KARE11 documentary follows a North Minneapolis principal Mauri Melander Frestleben at Lucy Lane Elementary for an entire year. It is a story of inspiration, heartbreak, perseverance and the power of love.

The Wheel of Life

In Memoriam

Eleanor Doris Felker

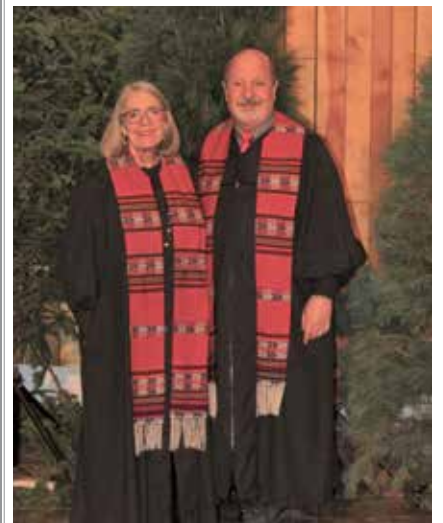
May 12, 1922 – November 8, 2019

Rejoice at the River

All Congregation Worship

Service and Retirement

Celebration for Janne and Rob



Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 31, 2020, at Harriet Island. An all-congregation, outdoor worship service will be followed by lunch, program, and party!

commUNITY is the newsletter of Unity Church–Unitarian. It is published monthly, except the month of July. Deadlines are the 15th of each month. Subscriptions are free to those who make pledges to Unity Church and are available to others for \$30 per year.

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DECEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Worship

Sunday worship services are held at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., and 4:30 p.m. except where noted. Religious education classes are available during all three services. Sermon podcasts and archives are online at www.unityunitarian.org.

December 1 • *The Narrow and Crooked Path to Reverence*

Thoreau once advised: "Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence." Often that path is hard to find amid the pressures of daily living and a starkly troubled world. But, perhaps, this is exactly when we need to cultivate reverence the most? Join Rev. Lisa Friedman and worship associate Kara Younkin Viswanathan as they explore what a practice of reverence might offer us this holiday season and beyond. Musicians: Unity Singers (9:00/11:00). No soup supper.

December 8 • *Take a Knee: Witness in the Practice of Reverence*

In 2016, 49er quarterback Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the playing of the National Anthem setting off a national debate about the role of witness and resistance in settings like football games. Worship associate Shelley Butler and Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs will examine the role of witness and resistance in the spiritual practice of reverence for life. Musicians: Unity Choir (9:00/11:00), Women's Ensemble (4:30)

December 15 • *Love the Guest*

In the season of waiting, as the cold deepens, and old comforts take hold, we do what we can to prepare our homes and our hearts to welcome the one who is on the way. Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs and worship associate Richard Lau will invite us to consider how best to welcome our guests. Service music at 9:00 and 11:00 will be offered by the children and youth of the church. Musician at 4:30 is Gabriela Solis, alto.

December 22 • *When the Guns Fell Silent*

Come worship with the whole church family! After the carols have been shouted or requested and sung, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rev. KP Hong, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, and worship associate Erika Sanders will pause to reflect on the spiritual courage of the soldiers who defied their orders and lay down their guns and exchanged carols, cigarettes, and photographs from home, with their enemies on the battlefields of World War I. Musicians: Unity Singers and Unity Choir

December 29 • *Because They Were No More* • 10:00 a.m. only

In his great poem "Journey of the Magi" Eliot asks; "Were we led all this way for birth or for death? I had seen birth and death but thought they were different." Called "Innocents Sunday" among our Anglican friends, the Sunday following Christmas is set aside to recall and acknowledge the children left behind in Bethlehem when Mary and Joseph took the baby and fled into Egypt. Having always asked our interns to preach on what happens when evil comes into the story, in this, his final year at Unity Church, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs will wrestle with the story on his own. Musicians: Unity Choir

Offering Recipients

Each Sunday, thirty percent of the offering goes to support the Community Outreach Ministry at Unity Church and seventy percent is given to a chosen community non-profit recipient. Please make checks payable to Unity Church.

December 1: Days for Girls

Days for Girls creates washable feminine hygiene kits for girls in developing countries in order to help keep them in school, avoid early marriages, and breaking the cycle of poverty. Sewing days take place throughout the Twin Cities, and finished kits will last three to five years. This collection will go support the purchase of sewing supplies, and shipping the kits internationally. Unity's Denise Dejarlais is a member of the Days for Girls Arden Hills team.

December 8: Amicus Winter Warm Up Drive

Reconnect, a program of Amicus, is an information and referral service especially for ex-offenders. Each week up to 200 people pass through Amicus' Minneapolis office seeking Reconnect assistance in housing and employment. This collection will support Amicus' annual Winter Warm-Up Drive which provides clients with gloves, scarves, and headgear essential for winter survival. Unity Church has a long partnership with Amicus with many members involved in Amicus' one-on-one inmate visitation program.

December 15: Sierra Leon Foundation for New Democracy

Sierra Leon Foundation for New Democracy works in partnership with local communities to bring about non-adversarial alternatives that nurture democratic relationships. Its outreach includes work in food sovereignty and ecological resilience, mass crucial literacy, and cooperative economics. SLFND is currently building a eco-village in Sierra Leon whose mission is to return villagers to indigenous ways, and bring about healing in a country traumatized by colonization and war. This collection will provide project supplies. Unity's Emma Mathews-Lingen will be traveling to Sierra Leon in January 2020.

December 22: Minneapolis Crisis Nursery

Minneapolis Crisis Nursery works to end child abuse and neglect and create strong, healthy families. The Crisis Nursery supports families in crisis 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, through their free, voluntary services.

December 29: Monarch Joint Venture

Monarch Joint Venture is a partnership of federal/state agencies, NGOs, and business and academic programs working together to protect the monarch migration across the United States. Its mission is to protect monarchs and their migration by collaborating with partner groups to conserve habitats, educate community members, and research monarchs and their habitats. Its vision is thriving monarch populations that sustain monarch migration into perpetuity. Unity's Therese Sexe serves on the board of Monarch Joint Adventure.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / FINANCIAL GIFTS



Reverence of Membership

Clover Earl, Trustee

Mea Culpa. I put the reminder in my calendar that it was my turn to write the board column for the December issue of the *commUNITY* newsletter, on December 1, instead of November 1, so I just learned yesterday that my piece was due two days ago! I have limited time, and so will keep this brief.

December 11 marks the one-year anniversary of my joining Unity's Board of Trustees and it has been a journey filled with myriad opportunities for learning and growth. I did not always show up in a way that I would ideally like, and I appreciate the opportunity for self-reflection board service offers.

This month's theme is reverence, which dovetails nicely with the feeling I had as I was leaving church on Saturday, November 16, following the 148th Annual Meeting of the Congregation. I actually do stand in awe of the history of this place, and the people who bring the church to life through their engagement. Over 140 people made it to the meeting to participate and have their voices heard. The week prior, over thirty congregants showed up to two sessions Barbara Hubbard offered to answer questions about the budget. That was more than double the number that attended last year.

As a congregation we will be crossing a significant threshold in January as we enter the year in which our co-ministers Janne and Rob will retire after twenty years of service. The calling of a settled minister (or ministers) is the congregation's responsibility.

Do you value what Unity Church offers you? Do you want your voice to be heard? If you are not a voting member, what will it take?

The process for forming the search team to call a new minister will start in January, and the board will be reaching out to all voting members to ask for suggestions about who to nominate to be a part of this team. Then in April, the congregation will vote to help decide who serves on the team.

If you feel a reverence for this place, its people, and the work we do in the world, the board invites you to step up and play an active role in ensuring the next chapter in Unity's future. Please become a voting member.

Ministerial Transition

Communication Resources

Unity's Board of Trustees is making all congregational communication regarding the ministerial transition process available online at www.unityunitarian.org/ministerial-transition.html. This webpage also contains contact information for Unity's Board of Trustees.

EVERYBODY IN

2020 Pledge Drive Update

Thank you to all who have made 2020 pledges! 631 households have pledged \$1,267,826 to our approved 2020 operating budget goal of \$1,350,000, which puts us \$82,000 from our goal! If we don't come within \$25,000 of our goal by February 1, 2020, we will need to adjust the budget.

If you are one of the 80 households that has not yet renewed your pledge for 2020, or if you are active in the church and are not pledging, please make your pledge today! It's never too late! Pledge online at www.unityunitarian.org/annual-pledge.html or call the church office. A pledge of any amount is gratefully accepted!

Other fun facts from the fall canvass:

- 585 households renewed their pledges (so far!) with an average pledge of \$2,101 and an average increase of 2.3%
- We have 46 new operating pledges for 2020
- 331 households have made capital pledges for 2020, totaling \$207,577
- 2021 pledges total \$528,730 and \$114,221 for operating and capital, respectively

Consider a Year-end Gift

As we come near the end of 2019, we look back with tremendous gratitude for the gift of community and the new possibilities that we witness each day. One way that the congregation is sustained financially is through the tradition of year-end giving. If such a gift is possible for you, we invite you to make one during the month of December.

Donations are gratefully accepted online at <http://bit.ly/yearendgift2019> (please enter the amount in the "year end" gift field) or by contacting Barbara Hubbard at barbarah@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x116.

Thank you for your generosity in sustaining and stewarding the church into the future!

Spring Fundraiser

Unity Church's annual fundraiser will be on Saturday, March 21, 2020 (the first day of spring!). Save the date and start planning your donations!

If you'd like to join the planning team, please contact Barbara Hubbard at barbara@unityunitarian.org. We need folks with a variety of skills — creative, detail-oriented, artistic, techy, and visionary.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Unity's Emergency Action Plan

This is the third in a series of articles to present Unity's Emergency Action Plan (one section each month). Read the entire plan at <https://www.unityunitarian.org/ept.html>.

III. Emergency Evacuation due to fire, gas, chemical, or water break

The building will be evacuated in the case of fire, gas leak, or other event deemed necessary. All persons in the building will be evacuated. The lead staff and other staff will advise people to leave immediately with no stops for personal belongings and will help those in need of assistance. Children will be accompanied out of the building by teachers and helpers in the rooms. The nursery personnel, along with additional resources as may be assigned, will carry the children out of the building as needed.

The elevator will not be used. Exit signs are in each hallway directing the way out.

Everyone must be at least 100 feet away from the building in case of a fire. **The gathering place is in the House of Hope park to the west of the building. Families will be reunited there.**

Evacuation chairs may need to be used, given that the elevator will not be in use.

They are located:

- Lower level: in the hallway near the elevator
- Upper level: outside of the Foote Room (west door)

The Sanctuary exits are at the SE corner leading to Portland Ave., the SW doors leading to the main Portland Ave. entrance on the west, and the double doors leading to and across the Parish Hall to the chapel exit.

The other first floor exits are the Holly Ave. main door and the east parking lot double doors.

The lower floor exits are the stairway from the Whitman lobby (on the south end) to the main lobby on Portland Ave, the stairs at the west end of the Jr. High hallway out the Ames Chapel doors, the north stairway by Spirit Play rooms to the Holly Ave entrance and the east stairway by the restroom/shower room leading to the first floor and out the entrance to the parking lot.

On the second floor there are three stairways, one at the east entrance to the Ames Chapel leading to the parking lot, another at the southwest corner of the Ames Chapel leading to Grotto Ave. and the third stairway is outside the Foote Room on the south end, leading to the Holly Ave. exit.

The church owns and employs a walkie-talkie system, with key staff and volunteers carrying these devices. There are dedicated walkie-talkies in the nursery and spirit play rooms for safety and emergency purposes. During times of worship, staff in the Sanctuary can change to channel two for segregation of messages.

This evacuation plan needs further signage and the congregation is asked to perform an evacuation drill occasionally.

Fire pulls are located:

Upper level

- At the entrance to the Ames Chapel from the hallway
- At the top of the stairs from the Holly Ave entrance

Main level

- At the entrance of the Holly Ave doors
- Just outside the entrance to the Parish hall from the hallway
- The entryway from the parking lot adjacent to the building
- The southeast corner of the Sanctuary
- The Portland Ave. entryway
- On the west side of the kitchen by the convection oven

Lower level

- No pulls are located on this level.

Fire Extinguishers are located in the following locations. **(Call 911 first!)**

Upper level

- In the Ames Chapel in the NW corner
- At the entrance to the Ames chapel in hallway
- At the top of the stairs at Holly entrance stairway

Main level

- The hallway on the south end of the Eliot wing between the center room and kitchen
- The west wall of the kitchen
- In the hallway outside of the Parish Hall to the DeCramer Room
- The South East corner of the Sanctuary
- In the Balcony of the Sanctuary
- In the Bell Tower room

Lower Level

- Across from Men's Bathroom
- Across from Women's Bathroom

The kitchen also has a wet chemical suppression system over the ovens in case of fire in this part of the kitchen.

Fire doors will automatically close with a fire alarm. They are located:

- In the hallway outside the NE door of the Parish hall
- at the west end of the kitchen in the hallway by the restrooms
- in the lower level hallway just south of the elevator and at the entrance to the Whitman Lobby

The building sprinkler system will only activate in areas of high heat.

- In the event of a gas leak,
- Do not pull the fire alarm; alert occupants by word of mouth
- Do not turn on or off electrical switches
- Avoid using electrical device or telephone of any type
- Do not start up or shut down motor vehicles or any other electrical equipment
- Do not strike a match. Avoid open flames or other ignition sources.
- Move to a location a safe distance away
- Call Xcel Energy (from outside) at **1-800-895-2999** or **911** in an emergency
- Stay away until Xcel Energy or the emergency responders have told you it's safe to return

WELCOME WORDS / WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome Words



Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement

Each December the paradox arrives — how to heed the call to peace and wonder amid the hustle and bustle of so many high hopes and expectations. Whether you love the holidays or dread them, Unity Church can help you ground your spirit this season.

There is strength and comfort to be found together, whether it is singing a beloved carol, sitting in the reverent quiet of the sanctuary, baking cookies or making wreaths, or collecting warm mittens and supplies for those who need them. There is also hope to be kindled in sharing all that stirs in our hearts in this time of year — the joys and sorrows, the dreams and struggles, the moments of grace and repair. Join us and let us know how we can help you find your stillness and keep your balance in these holy days. Blessings of the season to you and yours! See you in church!

Pathway to Membership Classes

Sign up for Pathway to Membership classes at the Welcome Table on Sundays or contact Rev. Lisa Friedman, Minister of Congregational and Community Engagement, at lisa@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x 107. Lisa is also happy to meet with you personally to answer questions and to welcome you into the congregation.

Finding Yourself at Unity: A Deeper Inquiry

Finding Yourself at Unity is offered on a regular basis on Sundays from 10:20-11:15 a.m. in the Ames Chapel. Attend sessions in the order that works for you! In these classes, participants will share parts of their religious journey, take a more in depth look at the history of Unity Church, discuss the expectations and benefits of membership, and get to know the programs and ministries of the congregation. Childcare is available in the nursery.

December 1: Building Tour

December 8: Membership 101 and Congregational Life

December 15: Pastoral Care

No classes on December 22 and 29 for winter break. Classes resume January 5.

Finding Yourself at Unity: All-Inclusive Session

Saturday, January 11 • 9:00 a.m.-noon

This half-day session is designed to share information about Unitarian Universalism and Unity Church in a one session format. Childcare provided; families with young children are especially invited to attend.

Committing to Unity: Joining Unity Church

Wednesday, January 29 • 7:15-9:00 p.m.

This class explores the deeper meanings and expectations of membership and shared ministry. The class concludes with a ceremony as participants sign the membership book and officially join the church!



New members, l-r: Linda Valeri, Deb Johnson, Elizabeth Karre, Ray Ann Hommeyer, Mary Greene

Mary Greene (a former Catholic) grew up in a suburb of Chicago, **Deb Johnson** (a former Lutheran) grew up on a farm in northwestern Minnesota. They married in 2013 and have been together for 29 years. Both retired in 2018, Mary from a cytotechnology profession and Deb from information technology profession, and are enjoying traveling, reading, continued learning, and volunteering at Barack and Michelle Obama school. Looking for a different spiritual experience, they came to Unity Church three years ago and have been slowly getting more involved.

Ray Ann Hommeyer began attending Unity Church in sixth grade with their family. Coming back to Unity as an adult, and working in children and youth ministries, clarified Ray's call to ministry. They are now studying at United Theological Seminary, pursuing a Master of Divination in UU church leadership.

Elizabeth Karre came to Unity Church with her husband, Andrew, and kids, Henry (11) and Edmund (7), seeking a religious education program and stayed for all the great things Unity has to offer. She enjoys attending services at various congregations in the Twin Cities, teaching R.E., reading, writing, editing, and managing the food shelf garden at House of Hope church, Unity's neighbor.

Linda Valeri, mother, grandmother, friend, community builder, and life-long learner, enjoys bringing people together around common interests/goals. She's a "get things done" person with diverse interests that include hiking/camping, entertaining, reading, and all things "outdoors." Her current passion is knitting warm things for people she loves.

Mentoring at Unity

Unity Church has a mentor program available to all visitors and new members. A mentor serves as a guide and a resource in the congregation. For more information, please email Rev. Lisa Friedman at lisa@unityunitarian.org.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Happy Holidays (and happy reading)!

From the Library and Bookstall Team

We on the Library and Bookstall Team want to wish you all happy holidays this year — Solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. We have a lot for which to be grateful and celebrate.

Give a Gift that Helps Your Church!

When you purchase a book from the Unity Bookstall, the proceeds go to support the Unity Libraries: The Whitman Children's Library (lower level, R.E. Story Room) and the Anderson Library (second floor, Eliot Wing). With that in mind, we hope you will consider purchasing holiday gifts from the Bookstall — give a book, help your church! Here's a few suggestions...

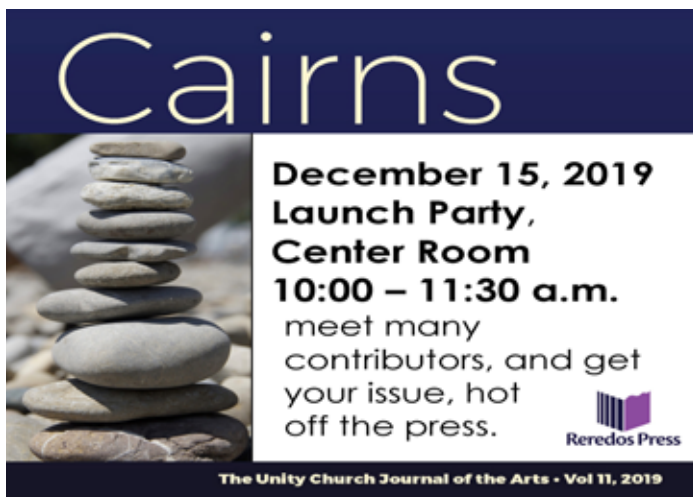
Speaking of gifts, *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde with foreword by Margaret Atwood is out this fall in its third edition. Illuminating and transformative, *The Gift* is a triumph of originality and insight — an essential book for anyone who has ever given or received a work of art.

For politically engaged adults, take a look at the highly regarded, recommended from the pulpit, *New York Times* bestselling history and manifesto of liberalism, *A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism* by Adam Gopnik. He contends that the happiness of the world depends on the renewal of liberty, democracy, humanity, reform, tolerance, pluralism, self-realization, and autonomy; all are part of liberalism.

Poetry is a gift that keeps on giving, as it is one of the few literary genres that lends itself to reading and re-reading and never gets old. Find books by beloved poets such as David Whyte and Mary Oliver, Unity poets Lia Rivamonte and Jean Olson, and by the Poet Laureate of the United States, Joy Harjo.

And, did you know that you can purchase gift certificates for the Bookstall? Ask about it next time you are in the Parish Hall.

Not to forget, that Unity's own journal of the arts *Cairns*, featuring the work of your ministers, fellow travelers, artists, writers, and youth — makes a great gift, too!



Fellowship Groups

These 12-step groups meet at Unity Church: Al Anon meets Wednesdays, 5:00-6:00 p.m., Science Room; Fresh Air AA meets Thursdays, 8:00-9:30 p.m., Anderson Library; Debtors Anonymous meets Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Drama Room

Afterthoughts offers time to discuss the service. This group meets after the 9:00 a.m. service. Contact Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Caregivers Group: An informal support group for caregivers. Third Thursday of the month, noon–2:00 p.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Evergreen Quilters: The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. (at Unity Church), and fourth Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (offsite). Contact Peggy Wright, 651-698-2760

Families Living with Mental Health Challenges: A support group for families living with mental health challenges. Meets the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Living With Grief Group: For people living with grief and loss. Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Contact Janne Eller-Isaacs, janne@unityunitarian.org

Men's Conversation Group meets the second and fourth Monday of each month, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., in the Gannett Room, to discuss a wide range of topics. Contact Terry McDanel, tmcdanel@gmail.com

Men's Retirement Group: Monday, December 2 and 16, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Tom Zell, tomzell@me.com

National Alliance on Mental Illness support group for young adults with a mental illness meets the first, third, and fifth Sunday of each month, 6:30-8:00 p.m., COA/OWL room.

New Look at the Bible: Meets the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Paul Gade, 651-253-1493

Recovery from White Conditioning: Wednesdays, 6:00-7:00 p.m., Gannett Room. Contact Dayna Kennedy, daynamelissa@icloud.com

Textile Arts Group meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 7:15-8:30 p.m. Bring your knitting, embroidery, needlepoint, etc. Contact Linda Mandeville, lindamandeville41@gmail.com.

Unity Book Club: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Contact Jack Hawthorne, jack.hawthorne@comcast.net. December 10: *Before We Were Yours* by Lisa Wingate

Women In Retirement: Meets the second and fourth Thursday of the month, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact Lisa Friedman, lisa@unityunitarian.org

Young Adult Group (ages 18-35) meets Sunday, December 8 and 22, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Contact KP Hong, kp@unityunitarian.org

Zen Meditation: Find renewal and grounding. Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00 p.m., Ames Chapel. Instruction offered November 5 at 4:30 p.m. Contact KP Hong, kp@unityunitarian.org.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Parish Hall Artist • Mano a Mano Exhibit



Photo by Paul Rogne

Mano a Mano is a highly regarded partner organization with Unity Church that was founded twenty five years ago by congregation members Segundo and Joan Velasquez. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to partnering with impoverished Bolivian communities to improve health and increase economic well-being. It collaborates with Bolivian communities, municipal governments, and its counterpart organizations in Bolivia to build sustainable projects that improve quality of life for the long-term. All of these projects are more than just constructing a reservoir, well, road, or a building; there is a huge focus on training, education, and continuing community and government support to ensure that projects are used for their intended purpose and that the level of service remains high.

Paul Rogne is a hobbyist photographer who travelled to Bolivia in March and September 2019 on tours led by Mano a Mano. His documentary and artistic photographs from those trips constitute the majority of this exhibit. They show the people of Bolivia, rural and urban scenes, plus the work that Mano a Mano has been doing there. He would encourage anyone to take this same journey to Bolivia. It is an eye-opening transformative experience, one that participants will surely enjoy and be impacted by forever.

During the month of December Unity Church will host a Parish Hall exhibit of photos and other items along with programs — all focused on the work of Mano a Mano in Bolivia. In addition to the exhibit there will be events happening throughout the month that share information about and celebrate the work of Mano a Mano.

Mano a Mano Bolivian Arts and Crafts Sale
Sunday December 1 and 8 • After Sunday Services • Parish Hall

Transformation in Bolivia: Personal and National
Wellspring Wednesday, December 4 • 7:15 p.m. • Center Room

Hear from Paul Rogne and others who traveled to Bolivia this year and view many of the photos taken during those trips. The talk and discussion will focus on how the trips are a personally transformative experience for travelers and also how Bolivia is undergoing a noticeable transformation.

Mano a Mano Parish Hall Exhibit Reception
Friday, December 13 • 5:30-8:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

Meet Mano a Mano co-founders, Segundo and Joan Velasquez; exhibit photographer, Paul Rogne; and members of Mano a Mano staff and Unity's Mano a Mano ministry team. Enjoy light snacks, beverages, and a live performance of Bolivian music.

Spotlight YOUR Art

Choose your favorite piece of art — anything from your personal creation, your child's creation, or art that's been on a wall in your home for a long time. Your piece, along with a statement of why it's a favorite, and a photo of you, will be displayed for two Sundays in the **Art Share** space in the Parish Hall.

Art Share's goal is to encourage members of the congregation to know each other better and to enrich the focus on art at Unity Church.

Sign up on the calendar on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall. You'll be contacted by a member of the Art Team and asked to write a statement of why it's a meaningful piece to you. A photo of you will introduce you to viewers of your one-person show.

The Art Team looks forward to spotlighting your art and getting to know you. Questions? Email Marty Rossmann at rossm001@umn.edu.

Men's Breakfast

On Saturday, December 7, the men of Unity Church will gather for good food, friendship, and conversation. The breakfast will run from 8:00 until 10:00 a.m. All men are welcome!

Queer Retreat

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Unity Church is hosting a retreat for all those who identify under the queer and/or trans umbrella, and especially for people who don't fit into the gender binary. The planning team is currently seeking volunteers for a variety of roles! For more information check out Unity's LGBTQ webpage at unityunitarian.org/lgbtq.html or contact Ray Hommeyer at ray@unityunitarian.org.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Wellspring Wednesday

Wellspring Wednesday is a multi-generational opportunity to gather midweek at church for food, fellowship, and fun. Dinner begins at 5:45 p.m., followed by worship in the Ames Chapel at 6:45 p.m., and an evening of rich programming beginning at 7:15 p.m. Childcare is available, no sign up required.

Dinner: The cost for dinner is: \$8/adult, \$4/child ages 5 to 12, \$2/child ages 2 to 4, and \$20/family. (Children under the age two are free.)

December 4

Breakfast for dinner: Tom Zell and the men's breakfast team will prepare a meal that will include pancakes, sausage, and egg bake.

A Photographic Journey to Bolivia with Mano a Mano

Bolivia has been undergoing transformation, yet it still has a long way to go. Paul Rogne, whose photos are on display in the Parish Hall traveled to Bolivia with Mano a Mano in March and September, 2019. He documented the people he met, the rural and urban scenes he saw, and the amazing transformative work that Mano a Mano has been doing for nearly 25 years. Mano a Mano has worked to upgrade medical and educational services, improve the water supply, train farmers in more sustainable techniques, and care for seriously ill or injured patients by providing air transportation to hospitals and clinics. Paul and others who have visited Bolivia will describe — using many of his photos — this transformative work and experience.

Exploring the Pathways of Adult Faith Formation

Unitarian minister A. Powell Davies once observed that, "Life is just a chance to grow a soul." We might add, in that spirit, that church is a just a chance to grow our souls together. Join KP Hong and Lisa Friedman in this series of conversations introducing this work to more clearly articulate pathways for adult faith formation here at Unity Church. Come and learn about opportunities to explore pathways together, as well as further reflections and next steps for those who attended an earlier presentation.

Invitation to Creativity as a Spiritual Practice: Reverence + Collage

The group, led by Heather Benedict, will view works of art that explore the theme of reverence and then engage in the theme through the practice of collage making. Learn different techniques and leave with an invitation to creatively engage with the monthly worship theme in your daily life.

How to Welcome Pollinators to Your Yard

Learn from Kathy Sidles about Minnesota's Lawns to Legumes program and how to ID our new state Bumble Bee (the endangered Rusty Patched) that the lawns will help. See pictures of how the Sustainable Living Team is upgrading Unity's Children's Garden area for pollinators, and take home a kit to grow your own pollinator friendly plants.

Religious Education New Family Orientation

This session is for families new to Unity Church who would like to learn more about religious education.

Textile Arts

Open to textile creatives of all ages. Bring your knitting, embroidery, needlepoint, etc.

Embodied Spiritual Practice: Yoga

Pamela Scott will offer a practice of mindful movement and gentle yoga. Dress comfortably, bring a mat and a small blanket if you have one. All levels welcome!

Embodied Spiritual Practice: Kung Fu

Explore our rich Five Animal Kung Fu to develop a personalized style that suits your temperament and body type. Beginners and experienced martial artist welcome!

Open Page

Writing Sessions

Led by Consulting Literary Minister Karen Hering and held at Unity Church, Open Page writing session participants use stories, poetry, images and objects as well as wisdom from religious teachings, science and history, and provided prompts, to reflect on the monthly theme. No writing experience is necessary. Bring something to write with and on; the rest will be provided! Free; RSVP requested to karen@unityunitarian.org.

Reverence

Sunday, December 8

2:00-4:00 p.m.*

**Different session timing and length.*
"Without reverence, things fall apart," writer Paul Woodruff has observed. "To teach reverence," he says, "you must find the seeds of reverence in each person and help them grow." This writing session uncovers the seeds of reverence planted within each of us and help them grow.

Tai Ji

The Tai Ji practice circle continues, meeting on Thursday, December 5 and 19, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Offering balance, flexibility and peace of mind, the circle is open to those new to Tai Ji as well as experienced participants. Please email lisaschlingerman@gmail.com if you plan to participate. A free will offering will be taken.

Kung Fu

Explore the rich Five Animal Kung Fu (Leopard, Snake, Tiger, Crane, and Dragon) to develop a personalized style that suits your temperament and body type. Beginners and experienced martial artists welcome! Class is Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.- noon, in the Body Room. Questions? Contact Bryan Kujawski at barney.kujawski@gmail.com.



Christmas Pageant

100 years — and we're seeing stars!

Kelley Loughrey, Pageant Director

To commemorate this significant anniversary for the church of our beloved pageant, we have created centennial star ornaments! These beautiful laser cut wooden stars are simple in their design, just like the pageant. This is a once in a lifetime chance to purchase your own Unity Church Christmas pageant star as a special keepsake. We want to celebrate this milestone with the entire Unity community. Not every midwestern church has a 100-year tradition so we think it's pretty awesome that we do. On Sundays during December, after services in the Parish Hall, there will be a special tree, strung with our ornaments, that will be available for purchase for \$10. The proceeds will be a gift to the church. This is the only December that you'll be able to buy these, so don't miss out!



Also new this year will be the opportunity to purchase centennial pageant t-shirts! Order by December 15 and you'll have them in time for rehearsal on December 23. (Watch for an order form.)

We are still looking for pageant photos or programs from years past to be a part of our celebration collection. If you have such items, please contact Kelley at kelleyloughrey@comcast.net or 763-607-7520.

Pageant participation registration is open through December 6 and the cast and children's choir lists will be posted online the week of December 9. If you have questions about registration, please contact Kelley Loughrey, pageant director, at 763-607-7520 (call/text).

If you haven't seen the pageant before and aren't able to come on Christmas Eve, you are welcome to join us at our rehearsal on Monday, December 23, between 2:45 and 4:00 p.m. to see what the magic is all about!



Holiday Boutique

Evergreen Quilters and Mano a Mano

Sunday, December 1 and 8

After Morning Services • Parish Hall

Mano a Mano will have goods for sale after the 4:30 service.

- Artisan-made knitted and woven sweaters, totes, shawls, scarves, hats, tablecloths, and more from Bolivia
- Hand-sewn and quilted table runners, wall-hangings, zippered bags, purses, ornaments, and other gift items made by Evergreen Quilters
- 100% of the proceeds from the sale will benefit the communities that these two organizations support
- Cash and checks preferred, but credit cards are also accepted

Evergreen Quilters is a group of church members and friends who collaborate on quilting projects and share knowledge, creativity, and skills with each other and the wider community. The group sells their hand made items and contributes the money to help homeless and hungry people in our community.

The Mano a Mano Outreach Ministry Team supports the work of Mano a Mano International, connecting our church community to communities in rural Bolivia. Money from the sale of items will help bring in speakers, sponsor trips to Bolivia, and help build schools, roads, and medical clinics in Bolivia.

Mitten Tree



Our mitten tree will stand in the Whitman Lobby on the lower level waiting to be decorated with warm hats, gloves, scarves and mittens! All donated items should be new. Children's items will be distributed to Obama Elementary, adult items will be shared with Amicus.



DECEMBER HOLIDAYS



Holiday Service Information

Blue Holidays Service

Wednesday, December 18 • 7:00 p.m. • Ames Chapel

For many the holidays only accentuate a lack of connection or bring back the grief we all carry. Join Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs and Ahmed Anzaldúa for an evening chapel service of poetry, music, mediation, and sharing.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 21 • 7:00 p.m. • Parish Hall

Come join us for a contemplative, fun and family friendly, Celtic inspired ritual to mark the turning of the year as darkness gives way to the growing light. This participatory ritual will include chanting, meditation, candle lighting, singing and cauldron jumping. Children and youth are especially welcome and are invited to bring noise makers and animal masks. Questions? Contact Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org.

Family Sunday: When the Guns Fell Silent

Sunday, December 22 • 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., 4:30 p.m.

Come worship with the whole church family! After the carols have been shouted or requested and sung, Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rev. KP Hong, Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs, and worship associate Erika Sanders will pause to reflect on the spiritual courage of the soldiers who defied their orders and lay down their guns and exchanged carols, cigarettes, and photographs from home, with their enemies on the battlefields of World War I. Musicians: Unity Singers and Unity Choir

Christmas Eve Services

Tuesday, December 24

Find A Stillness • 10:00 a.m.

In the full rush of Christmas Eve morning, come gather in the quiet of Ames Chapel. There will be extended periods of silence to provide time for relief and contemplation. The service will include an invitation to join in communion.

Christmas Pageant • 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs narrate the story of the nativity as Unity's children and youth act out the story in the Sanctuary. Families with children age three and under are encouraged to attend the 4:00 p.m. service. Participant information is online at www.unityunitarian.org. Want to sing in a pageant choir? See page 15.

Christmas by Candlelight: Family Lessons and Carols • 7:00 p.m.

This service is a collaboration between Above Every Name Ministries and Unity Church. This is a service for the entire family, with carols and stories that children and adults will enjoy. Nursery care available for infants and toddlers.

Christmas by Candlelight: Lessons and Carols • 10:00 p.m.

Join worship leaders KP Hong and Janne and Rob Eller-Isaacs as they retell the Christmas story and celebrate the promise of peace within. If you are interested in singing with the choir during this service, see page 15 and contact Ahmed Anzaldúa at ahmed@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x118.

Tower Club Wreath and Cookie Sale

Purchase your holiday wreath and treats from our high school youth in support of their pilgrimage to Boston. Wreath and cookie sales start Sunday, December 8, following each service, and continue until all the goodies have been sold!

Caroling Opportunity for Singers of All Ages

Every year a group of singers from Unity Church visit some of our members who can no longer get to church. The group sings Christmas carols for the members, but also for the community of people living together at the facility homes. It is a wonderful opportunity to sing and bring joy into the lives of the most appreciative folks on the planet. Carolers leave from the Holly Avenue reception desk after the 11:00 service, on December 8 and 15. If you have questions, please contact Janne Eller-Isaacs at janne@unityunitarian.org or 651-228-1456 x106.



REGIFT...and REJOICE

Holiday Regifting Sale
Sunday, January 5, 2020
Turn to page 13 for details.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Sustainable Living Team News

Simplify for the Holidays

From Nicole Lynskey

The holidays are almost upon us! There are things to love about them: our kid's excitement, seeing family, or celebrating the sacred. However, some find the season hard. And some wish for less hustle and less shopping. It is also not the planet's favorite season. According to one study, the average Christmas, with its food, gifts, travel, lights, trees, and more, creates 650 kg of carbon, the equivalent of driving 1,600 miles (www.epa.gov)! Still, I am not suggesting we become perfect environmentalists. In this imperfect system, it is difficult to do. Rather, I strive for a do-better-ness.

One way to do this is to simplify our gift-giving. And yet, the season has an undeniable undertow, a pull of obligations and expectations that can draw us into more busyness and shopping than we want. Intuitively we know that "stuff" does not really create happiness (for those of us with means), though it can feel like it does. According to researcher Tim Kasser (bit.ly/timkasser), this is because shopping gives our brain a dose of the happy brain chemical, dopamine. He also found that materialistic values reduce happiness: decreasing pro-social behavior and self-esteem, and increasing depression.

In his book *Happiness*, Ed Deiner discusses factors that can change our happiness set point: which includes things like forgiveness and gratitude, spending time with friends and family, art, or mastering something you enjoy. Circumstances — new cars, new toys, new jobs, marital status — may give us a temporary bump in happiness but do little to change that setpoint long-term.

So how can we simplify? Often, we need to renegotiate gift-giving with family or friends. One thing my family did to reduce gifts was to draw names both between the kids and the adults. We donate those extra funds to charity as a family. It makes for a less stressful and more meaningful holiday. I would also return us to what creates real happiness. Instead of giving a thing, give an experience to share — theater or dinner. Instead of the mad dash of shopping, have a gift-making party. Instead of buying cheap goods likely to end up in the landfill or possibly made in a factory with human rights violations, buy something local or high quality. Consider some of these ideas: <http://bit.ly/ucgiftideas>. Whatever you do, I wish you more joy in your holiday season.

Looking for more ways to help the planet? Join us for a workshop on pollinator-friendly lawns on December 4. Or be a part of the sustainability team's efforts! Email us at unitysustainabilityteam@gmail.com for more information.



Gun Sense Ministry Team Update

From Sue Conner and Joan Duke

The next Minnesota legislative session convenes on February 11, 2020. This will be another opportunity to pass the "**Big Two**" sensible gun policy bills which we, and our partner, ProtectMinnesota, would like to see become Minnesota law. The two bills are:

1. **Extreme Risk Protection Order (Red Flag)**
2. **Universal Background Check**

Both bills passed in the Minnesota House in the 2019 session, but the leader of the Senate refused to give them a hearing and never brought them for a floor vote.

In 2020, the bills will need to start again in the House Ways and Means committee before they can come for a House vote. They are in good position for passing. The real question is: what happens in the Senate? Will they get a hearing? Will they get a vote? The leaders of the Senate will still have control of that.

Public opinion in Minnesota supports these bills.

There are several districts with representatives who support the bills, but a senator who does not or who is reluctant to do so publicly. Here is an opportunity for helping to change the mind or the position of such a senator. Find out who they are. If you are in their district, then you can contact them (or even if you are not). If you know someone who lives in their district, urge that person to contact the senator.

Why not send your state representative and senator a holiday card, and in it, tell them about your support of these two bills. Tell your friends to send those messages to those "reluctant" senators, let them know where they stand, and urge them to support sensible gun legislation to make Minnesota safer for everyone.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Obama School Ministry Team News

From Nancy Heege

Board books for the Pre-K classrooms: Church member Sandra Burton (pictured here with Ms. Doenges) headed up a project to collect board books for the Pre-K classes at school. With three Pre-K rooms, Sandra collected 138 little books — 46 for each room. Half-Price Books of Roseville donated over a hundred. The teachers are thrilled!



Thank you to the 52 Unity volunteers who are working at the school. Our volunteer goals are: to enhance the learning of Obama scholars; to support the faculty and staff at Obama School; to promote Obama School in the community; and to create a Unity Church team that supports and encourages a positive volunteer experience, bringing to life the terms “integrity, service, and joy.” These goals are being well met for the diverse group of scholars who arrive on 16 buses from all over the city. Thank you, volunteers!

There’s been a request for a clothes drive (new clothing, please) for the scholars at Obama. Items needed are gloves/mittens, underwear (all sizes for both boys and girls), socks (small or medium), and small or medium sweatpants that are suitable for boys or girls. Items will be collected in designated boxes near the Mitten Tree during December. Thanks for your help!

Remember: if you shop at Kowalski’s on Grand Avenue, put your receipts in the Obama giving box, lower left side. The more receipts, the larger their quarterly donation to the school.

Regift and Rejoice

Holiday Regifting Sale

Sunday, January 5 • Parish Hall

*Donate your unwanted treasures!
Shop for fabulous regifted bargains!
Regift...and rejoice!*



Bring your unused new (or indistinguishable from new) items to the “regifting tables” on Sunday, January 5, before any service that day. All items will be sold at a discount at the Regifting Sale. Unsold items will be given to charity. All proceeds from the Regifting Sale benefit the work of the Community Outreach Ministry Team that supports Mano a Mano International Partners. Mano a Mano builds clinics, schools and infrastructure, and trains teachers, doctors and subsistence farmers in rural Bolivia.

Make Winter Warmer for People Seeking Second Chances

Unity’s Racial and Restorative Justice Outreach Team

Men and women released from prison face huge challenges on their way to rejoining society. Challenges start with finding a bed and enough to eat on the first day out — nothing compared to finding employment and a home. Doing either is difficult without transportation, especially during the winter, and who would want to apply for a job or an apartment without the basics for personal grooming? These little things mean a lot to those trying to make good after doing their time.



That’s why Unity’s Racial and Restorative Justice Team asks you to help provide the following items for its community partner Amicus who assists those leaving prison during a time of need:

- Hygiene items such as washcloths, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hand lotion, deodorant, dental floss, razors and shaving cream (all items should be unopened)
- New winter coats, gloves, hats, scarves, boots (men’s) and socks suitable for the job site (sizes XL and above always needed)
- Hand and foot warmers
- Bus passes or the cash to buy bus passes

This collection continues through January. On Sundays, please bring donations to the Racial and Restorative Justice table in the Parish Hall. Donations delivered during the week should be brought to Lisa Friedman's office.

Food Shelf Donations

Thank you for supporting the families served by the Hallie Q. Brown Food Shelf! Food shelf collection trunks are located at the Holly and Portland Avenue entrances. Non-perishable food, toiletries, and pet food are all gratefully accepted. Donations for the holidays are especially needed as is food to help families get through winter break when free school breakfast and lunch is not an option.

Help Provide a Meal for Jeremiah Families

Help cook a meal at The Jeremiah Program, a residence and education program for single moms and their children. Volunteers are needed from 4:00-7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21; Thursday, February 6; Thursday, April 16; and Thursday, May 12. Contact Karen Buggs at 651-297-0111 or buggs745@hotmail.com.

MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Non Scientific Fantastical Thinking

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

The brutal snap from “crisp fall weather” to “cold dark winter” hit me hard and fast this year. Bleah. I was depressed until it dawned on me in Tower Club that I could now start talking about Christmas — and not just because I enthusiastically look forward to the holiday season. I’m really not kidding when I say the underpinnings of my entire theology are found in the sacred texts of Charles Dickens and Dr. Seuss, in my willful blurring of differences between God and Santa Claus. It may be the one time each year when I have complete confidence in what I preach, and I defy anyone to try to trivialize the message of Scrooge or the Who’s down in Whoville on Christmas morning.

I’m listening closely to our ninth graders in Coming of Age this year and making a concerted effort to get them to talk to each other before any of the adults say anything they’ll immediately refute on principle. It’s harder for them to talk about faith and beliefs than it was to talk about puberty and orientation and all that simple stuff from Our Whole Lives. Who knew? I would guess not a one would admit to a peer that they believe in Santa Claus — what, do we think they are simple? Gullible? Stupid? And by Santa Claus of course I mean anything metaphysical. Magic, an Afterlife, Elves, Higher Power.

They’re grown, and grown folks don’t have a lot of room for non scientific fantastical thinking. Except maybe around Christmas when the relentless promise of magic and warmth and human kindness is hard to resist. I admit I wish they’d stay receptive to all that a lot longer, even into adulthood. And not just during the holiday. I wish we all did. In another seminal text, *The Polar Express* author Chris Van Allsburg tells of how an adolescent’s wavering faith is rewarded with a sleigh bell given to him by Santa. The bell rings with a beautiful, shimmering note — but only for those who believe. The narrator sadly expresses how for most, as they age, the bell no longer rings out its magical tone.

What rings true for me, is that we won’t experience anything we don’t believe in. We won’t witness the Christmas spirits, and we won’t become intoxicated by the milk of human kindness, if such things are nothing but humbug. So again this year I will at some point tell the youth here that I believe in Santa Claus, they will laugh with or at me, hopefully you’ll indulge me. I want us all to hear the ringing.

2020 Children’s Musical Parent Information Meeting

Every year the Unity Church community comes together to write, compose, direct, choreograph, and perform a unique show for Unity Church. If you have a 6th, 7th, or 8th grader, consider whether this fun, team building experience might be right for them. To learn more, come to the parent information session on Sunday, December 8, from 10:15-11:00 a.m., in the OWL/COA Room. Questions? Contact Dave Smith at david.smith52@yahoo.com.

Santa Pause

**Wednesday, December 11
5:30-8:00 p.m. • Parish Hall**

Sign your child(ren) up for two-and-a-half hours of free holiday fun at church so that you can finish making gifts, planning gatherings, or just take a moment’s pause during this full season. Dinner, crafts, games, and a movie for children ages 3 to 10. Advance sign up required to ray@unityunitarian.org.

Religious Education Calendar: December 2019

Sunday, December 1: No R.E. Classes (Thanksgiving weekend); activities for school-age kids, nursery care available

Wednesday, December 4: New Family Orientation, 7:15 p.m.

Sunday, December 8: Regular R.E.; Cookies and Wreath sale; Celebration of New Lives (9:00 a.m. service, RSVP required)

Wednesday, December 11: Santa Pause holiday childcare 5:30-8:30 p.m. (for ages 3 and older, RSVP required)

Sunday, December 15: Regular R.E.; Cookies and Wreath sale; no COA

Sunday, December 22: Family Sunday: Christmas (all children worship in Sanctuary, nursery care available)

Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve services (see page 11)

Sunday, December 29: No R.E. classes (one service 10:00 a.m.); activities for school-age kids, nursery care available

Board Game and Potluck Family Fun Night

**Saturday, January 10
5:30-8:30 p.m. • Parish Hall**

All ages welcome! Bring a favorite dish and/or board game for any age. Please RSVP online so we can balance food choices: <http://bit.ly/ucugamenite>.

This event is hosted by Unity’s Unitarian Universalist Families Initiative.

MUSIC MINISTRY



Music Notes

Ahmed Anzaldúa, Director of Music Ministries

I absolutely adore the choral music of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Throughout history, composers have been inspired by the stories and emotions associated with this season — mystery, anticipation, joy, celebration, hope, reverence — to write some of their most imaginative, effective works. Furthermore, having grown up in a conservative Muslim household, this was often the musical repertoire that I was not allowed to sing because of its religious content; I would often have to sit out the winter season music programs at school, which typically featured some of the most fun music to sing and perform.

I love this music and the pageantry of the season so much that for the final recital to obtain the doctoral degree in music conducting at the University of Minnesota I presented a service of Lessons and Carols. This was not a halfhearted affair either: the concert took place at St. Mark's Cathedral and included a procession, candles, robes, lots of descants, and the greatest Christmas hits of composers such as John Rutter and David Willcocks. To put this in context, this final recital is where most doctoral candidates will typically have the opportunity to conduct the University ensembles in a great, "serious" masterwork of the Western canon, works such as the Brahms Requiem or the Bach Magnificat... I was, and still am, teased by my colleagues for wasting this opportunity on chestnuts and sugarplums instead of on some "real" music like, you know, Stravinsky.

It is through this love for the season that I approach my first December at Unity Church, a time of the year that seems to be full of revered musical traditions: a Holiday Concert, a Christmas Pageant in its hundredth year, carol shouting, multiple Christmas Eve services, candlelight choirs; new Advent songs to learn, and more! I am grateful to be entrusted with this rich musical legacy and am learning how it all works. I will, inevitably, make some mistakes, but the best part of traditions like these is that we get a chance to try again year after year and that, over time, we get to shape where that tradition will go next and what it means for the next generation. Let us approach this December season with reverence and also ready to keep what is good as we create new traditions for the many Decembers that will follow.

Unity Church
HOLIDAY CONCERT
Saturday, December 7 • Sanctuary
6:30 PM • CAROL SING
7:00 PM • CONCERT
Children's Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble
8:00 PM • DESSERT BUFFET
We invite you to bring a holiday dessert to share!

Border CrosSing Presents

Puentes: El Mesías

Friday, December 13

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Church of the Ascension

1723 Bryant Avenue N, Minneapolis

Saturday, December 14

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church

401 Concord Street, St. Paul

El Mesías is a bilingual (Spanish-English) version of Handel's Messiah combined with Navidad Nuestra, a cantata by Argentine composer Ariel Ramírez that focuses on the Holy Family's role as refugees in the Christmas story. This is the most popular Border CrosSing program and is on its way to becoming an annual musical event embraced by the Latinx communities of our two venues and the wider Twin Cities audience. Details and tickets at <https://bordercrossingmn.org/>.

Sing with a Choir on Christmas Eve

Children's Pageant Choir

Rehearsal: Sunday, December 22

10:15 - 11:00 a.m. • Foote Room

Kathleen Radspinner, director

On Christmas Eve meet at 3:15 p.m. in the Foote Room. Pageant performances are at 4:00 and 5:30.

Adult Pageant Choir

Sunday, December 15

10:15-11:00 a.m. • Choir Room

Jeffrey Hess, director

On Christmas Eve meet at 3:15 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Pageant performances are at 4:00 and 5:30.

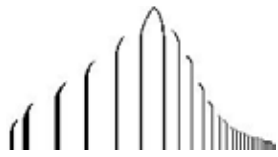
Christmas Eve Candlelight Choir

Rehearsal: Thursday, December 19

8:30-9:30 p.m. • Parish Hall

Ahmed Anzaldúa, director

On Christmas Eve meet at 9:00 p.m. in the Choir Loft. Sing at the 10:00 p.m. candlelight service. Email Ahmed at ahmed@unityunitarian.org if you plan to participate.



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

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REV. KP HONG, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BARBARA HUBBARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REV. LISA FRIEDMAN, MINISTER OF CONGREGATIONAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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**TIME SENSITIVE
MATERIAL**

Unity Church
HOLIDAY CONCERT
Saturday, December 7 • Sanctuary
6:30 PM • CAROL SING
7:00 PM • CONCERT
Children's Choir, Unity Choir, Unity Singers, Women's Ensemble
8:00 PM • DESSERT BUFFET
We invite you to bring a holiday dessert to share!

Winter Parking

Unity Church has a commitment to accessibility which includes parking near the church for members and friends who have mobility issues. Therefore, each Sunday, the entire parking lot located directly east of the church is now reserved for handicapped parking, assisted parking, and electric vehicle charging.

Parking for everyone else is available in Unity's lot on the corner of Portland and St. Albans, on the street, and on Sundays in the Obama Elementary parking lot.

While the entire lot is restricted parking on Sundays only, please continue to observe and respect posted parking signs during the week.

The Gathering

*Stories of Resilience and Struggle:
How We Keep the Faith*

Saturday, January 25, 2020

Keynote Speaker: The Rev. Meg Riley
A retreat for women; trans-inclusive.